

**The endurance of the pre-bureaucratic and eGovernment
hybridity at the street-level: An ethnographic study**



Mohammad Alshallaqi

This dissertation is submitted for the degree of Doctor of

Philosophy

November 2019

Department of Organisation, Work, and Technology

Lancaster University Management School

Declaration

This thesis has not been submitted in support of an application for another degree at this or any other university. It is the result of my own work and includes nothing that is the outcome of work done in collaboration except where specifically indicated. Many of the ideas in this thesis were the product of discussions with my supervisors Professors Niall Hayes and Darren McCabe.

Excerpts of this thesis have been presented at the following conferences.

Alshallaqi, M. (2018). *On Ethnographic fieldwork in the Middle East: Power relations, trust, positionality and Wasta*. Presented at the 13th Annual Ethnography Symposium, Copenhagen, Denmark.

Alshallaqi, M., Hayes, N., & McCabe, D. (2018). *E-Government Hybridity in a Non-Western Context: The Resilience of the Pre-Bureaucratic and the Bureaucratic in the Post-Bureaucratic Organisation*. Presented at the Latin American & European Organisation Studies LAEMOS 2018, Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Alshallaqi, M., McCabe, D., & Hayes, N. (2019). *Recovering the Pre-Bureaucratic: An Ethnographic Study of E-government in a Middle Eastern Context*. Presented at the 14th Organisation Studies Workshop on Technology and Organisation, Mykonos, Greece.

Alshallaqi, M. (2019). *On eGovernment and the unofficial street-level bureaucracy: An ethnographic study*. Presented at the European Group for Public Administration (EGPA) Conference, Belfast, UK. (Won the best paper award at the permanent study group on eGovernment track).

Abstract

How is a post-bureaucratic reform under the rubric of eGovernment enacted at the street-level in a Middle Eastern, specifically, Saudi Arabian context? And ‘what insights can be gained from describing this enactment to advance debates on bureaucracy versus post-bureaucracy as well as debates on street-level bureaucracy?’ These questions underpin the focus of this ethnographic study. The conventional wisdom in the debate on bureaucracy versus post-bureaucracy is that the outcomes of post-bureaucratic reforms indicate hybridisation of bureaucratic and post-bureaucratic characteristics. In this thesis, I argue that this debate is limited by its overlook of the ‘pre-bureaucratic’ (Weber, 1978). The pre-bureaucratic manifests clearly at the street-level (Lipsky, 1983), where it has been argued that street-level bureaucrats exercise discretion in ways that deviate from the formal bureaucratic rationality toward the pre-bureaucratic. In the Middle East, the pre-bureaucratic at the street-level is intermeshed with local cultural practices that suffuse everyday work in bureaucratic organisations. Public sector post-bureaucratic reforms in the guise of eGovernment were poised to overcome not only bureaucratic inertia but also pre-bureaucratic practices in this context. The findings of this thesis demonstrate that eGovernment at the street-level is enacted through a negotiated order (Strauss, 1978) that indicates hybridisation of the pre-bureaucratic, the bureaucratic, and the post-bureaucratic. The emerging pattern is characterised, drawing on Gouldner (1954), as a ‘mock *post*-bureaucracy’ pattern. The theoretical contributions of the thesis are discussed in relation to the debates on bureaucracy versus post-bureaucracy and street-level bureaucracy. The thesis also extends empirical and methodological contributions.

Acknowledgements

I want to acknowledge the outstanding supervision I received from Professors Niall Hayes and Darren McCabe. Darren and Niall contributed immensely to my academic development and progress. Thank you, Niall and Darren, for your patience, outstanding supervision, and your valuable company throughout this rewarding journey. I would also like to thank the community at the department of Organisation, Work, and Technology (OWT) for making my experience at OWT an enriching one. I would like to especially thank Dr Martin Brigham and Professor Brian Bloomfield for their helpful guidance in my annual progression reviews, and special thanks to Wendy Wang for her outstanding administrative support. I would like to also record my thanks to Professor Damian Hodgson and Professor Theo Vurdubakis for the time, effort, and feedback they kindly provided during the examination of this thesis.

I would also like to thank the University of Hail, Saudi Arabia and the Saudi Arabian Cultural Bureau, and the staff at both institutions for their valuable support throughout this journey. I would like to especially thank all those who participated in this research for granting me the privilege of access to their world and taking the time to contribute to this research. Thank you also to Kayla Friedman and Malcolm Morgan of Cambridge University, UK, and Charles Weir of Lancaster University, UK, for designing the Microsoft Word template used to produce this thesis; the template was a time saver.

Contents

1 INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 The focus of the thesis and its contributions.....	5
1.2 The structure of the thesis	12
2 THE PRE-BUREAUCRATIC, THE BUREAUCRATIC, AND THE POST-BUREAUCRATIC: A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE.....	14
2.1 Rationalisation, bureaucracy, and modernity: A prelude.....	15
2.1.1 <i>Bureaucracy</i>	20
2.2 The persistence of the pre-bureaucratic	27
2.2.1 <i>Indulgency patterns and negotiated orders</i>	29
2.2.2 <i>Wasta, Guanxi and Jeitinho as pre-bureaucratic cultural practices</i>	34
2.2.3 <i>Street-level bureaucracy as an expression of the pre-bureaucratic</i>	42
2.3 The Post-bureaucratic age: Deterministic prescriptions and hybrid outcomes..	47
2.3.1 <i>The New Public Management (NPM) reforms: The agenda</i>	49
2.3.2 <i>The eGovernment as a post-bureaucratic form</i>	52
2.3.3 <i>Outcomes of New Public Management and eGovernment reforms</i>	59
2.3.4 <i>Street-level bureaucracy and eGovernment</i>	63
2.3.5 <i>Post-bureaucratic hybridity</i>	65
2.4 Conclusion	70
3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	72
3.1 Researching social life in organisations: Ontological and epistemological assumptions.....	72
3.2 Ethnography: ‘Writing culture’	79
3.3 Empirical sites.....	82
3.3.1 <i>The Department of Citizens’ Affairs (DCA)</i>	82
3.3.2 <i>Tracer offices</i>	86
3.4 Access negotiations and ethical implications: A case of the pre-bureaucratic ..	87
3.4.1 <i>Access negotiations with the DCA</i>	88
3.4.2 <i>Access negotiations with Tracer offices</i>	92
3.4.3 <i>Ethical implications</i>	97
3.4.4 <i>Contributions to the literature on qualitative methodology</i>	101
3.5 Data collection and analysis.....	104
3.5.1 <i>Ethnographic shadowing</i>	104
3.5.2 <i>Interviews</i>	106
3.5.3 <i>Documents</i>	110
3.5.4 <i>Data Analysis</i>	111
3.6 Summary	116
4 POST-BUREAUCRACY IN THE SAUDI CONTEXT: A HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL BACKGROUND.....	118

4.1 The local culture and the history of modernisation.....	119
4.1.1 <i>Religion and the Arab tribal culture</i>	120
4.1.2 <i>Saudi Arabia’s history of modernisation</i>	124
4.2 Post-bureaucratic reforms for a post-oil economy	136
4.2.1 <i>The Vision Toward the Information Society (2005): The National Communication and Information Technology Plan (NCITP)</i>	137
4.2.2 <i>The National eGovernment Strategy and Action Plan (2006)</i>	140
4.2.3 <i>Resolutions and institutional building: Translating plans into action</i>	142
4.2.4 <i>National Transformation Program 2020: Reaffirming eGov</i>	148
4.3 Summary	150
5 THE STREET-LEVEL ENACTMENT OF EGOVERNMENT AT THE DEPARTMENT OF CITIZENS’ AFFAIRS.....	152
5.1 The implementation of eGovernment at the DCA.....	153
5.1.1 <i>Document ordering service at the DCA</i>	154
5.1.2 <i>The enactment of the redesigned model: Maintaining the paper-based model for security’s sake</i>	160
5.2 Hybrid outcomes of the street-level enactment of eGov.....	168
5.2.1 <i>Work conditions before and after eGov: Improvements and efficiency gains</i>	168
5.2.2 <i>The endurance of the pre-bureaucratic</i>	172
5.2.3 <i>The note system: An “authorized but-not-quite-official system”</i>	183
5.3 Summary and concluding thoughts.....	189
6 TRACER OFFICES: THE RESILIENCE OF THE HYBRID STREET-LEVEL BUREAUCRACY	192
6.1 Tracer offices as street-level organisations.....	194
6.1.1 <i>The organisation of work inside Tracer offices</i>	194
6.1.2 <i>Distinctive features of the Tracer office service model</i>	197
6.1.3 <i>Tracer office clients</i>	208
6.2 Following Tracers into the public bureaucracy.....	212
6.2.1 <i>The use of permits to regulate the work of Tracers at the DCA</i>	213
6.2.2 <i>Tracers at the DCA’s service centre</i>	214
6.2.3 <i>Front-line staff-Tracer relations</i>	215
6.3 Tracers after eGovernment.....	224
6.3.1 <i>Endurance of the unofficial ‘outsourcing’ to Tracers</i>	224
6.4 Summary and concluding thoughts.....	234
7 EGOVERNMENT HYBRIDITY AT THE STREET-LEVEL: A ‘MOCK POST-BUREAUCRACY’ PATTERN.....	236
7.1 Cultural relations, the negotiated order, and everyday work: A prelude	237
7.1.1 <i>An indulgency pattern at the DCA</i>	239
7.1.2 <i>The resilience of the pre-bureaucratic</i>	244
7.1.3 <i>Cultural relations and street-level discretion</i>	247
7.2 Technology, the negotiated order, and ‘mock post-bureaucracy.’	250

7.2.1 A ‘mock post-bureaucracy pattern.’	251
7.2.2 Recovering the pre-bureaucratic in the bureaucracy versus post-bureaucracy debate.....	254
7.3 Hybridity at the street-level.....	260
7.3.1 Defining hybridity: A prelude	260
7.3.2 Tracers’ hybridity and the enactment of eGovernment	262
7.3.3 Tracers as pre-existing hybrids: Insights for the relevant debates.....	266
7.3.4 Epochalism and the ‘mock post-bureaucracy pattern.’	269
7.4 Summary	274
8 CONCLUSION	276
8.1 Summary of the thesis.....	276
8.2 Contributions of the thesis	281
8.2.1 Contributions to the debate on bureaucracy versus post-bureaucracy	281
8.2.2 Contributions to the street-level bureaucracy literature	286
8.2.3 Bridging the gap between the street-level bureaucracy and bureaucracy versus post-bureaucracy debates.....	288
8.2.4 Empirical contribution.....	289
8.2.5 Methodological contribution	289
8.3 Limitations and Future Research	290
9 REFERENCES.....	294

List of Tables

Table 1: Tracer offices that participated in the study.....	87
Table 2: Stages of data collection.	109
Table 3: Break down of interviews by participant groups.	109
Table 4: List of documents collected.	111
Table 5: Illustration of relevant codes.....	115

List of Figures

Figure 1: Rationalisation process in Western societies.....	16
Figure 2: Pre-bureaucratic, bureaucratic, and post-bureaucratic practices and rationalities.....	58
Figure 3: Old paper-based service model	157
Figure 4 Redesigned electronic-based service model	160
Figure 5: Enacted redesigned electronic-based model.....	166
Figure 6: Tracer office service model	196

List of Appendices

Appendix 1: Total population of Saudi Arabia (Saudi and non-Saudi) as of 2018 ...	343
Appendix 2: Participant Information Sheet	344
Appendix 3: Participant Consent Form.....	349

List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

BPR: Business Process Reengineering

CRM: Customer Relationship Management

DCA: The Department of Citizens' Affairs

eGov: eGovernment

GDP: Gross Domestic Product

GRP: Government Resource Planning

ICT: Information and Communication Technology

JUG: Joined-up Government

NPM: New Public Management

OTP: One-Time Password

PBO: Post-bureaucratic Organisation

PFI: Private Finance Initiative

PPP: Public-Private Partnership

SAR: Saudi Arabian Riyal

TQM: Total Quality Management

1 Introduction

This thesis focuses on the enactment of a post-bureaucratic form of organising; namely eGovernment, in the less explored context of the transformation of a Saudi Arabian street-level bureaucracy (Lipsky, 1983). It contributes to the debate on the shift from bureaucracy to post-bureaucracy and the debate on street-level bureaucracy. Since the 1960s managerial writers have announced the ‘coming death of bureaucracy’ (see Bennis, 1966, 1973). It was proclaimed that “[b]ureaucracy was a monumental discovery for harnessing the muscle power of the Industrial Revolution. In today’s world, it is a lifeless crutch that is no longer useful.” (Bennis, 1966, p. 60). It was also proclaimed that the “old bureaucratic solutions are no longer effective nor adequate to cope with the twentieth-century management problems. Totally new management structures are predicted.” (ibid., p.51). This epochalist narrative gained wide popularity (du Gay, 2003). Management consultants (Giroux, 2006; Knights & McCabe, 2003; Newell, Robertson, & Swan, 2001; Sturdy, 2004) seized the popularity of this narrative and furnished prescriptions and reform programs legitimised by the “predictions about the death of bureaucracy and the evolution of a “post-bureaucratic” managerial system” (Miewald, 1970, p. 65). The 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s witnessed the rise of several

managerial reform prescriptions such as Peters and Waterman's (1982) 'In Search of Excellence' or Hammer and Champy's (1993) 'Reengineering the Corporation' that sought to bring forth post-bureaucratic modes of organising.

Relevant to the focus of this thesis on a public sector reform program are the ideas of Osborne and Gaebler's (1992) "Reinventing Government" or what is broadly known as the 'New Public Management (NPM)' reforms (Brunsson & Sahlin-Andersson, 2000; Dunleavy & Hood, 1994; Hood, 1995a). Central to Osborne and Gaebler's (1992) ideas was the notion of injecting an entrepreneurial spirit in the operation of public bureaucracies through importing practices from the private sector and departing from bureaucratic red-tape and officialdom (du Gay, 1994; du Gay & Salaman, 1992). It was thought that rationalities of the market such as competition and customer-centricity could instigate paradigm shifts in the operation of public bureaucracies thus enhancing their efficiency, responsiveness and reducing the cost of their operations (du Gay, 2004, 2006; Dunleavy, Margetts, Bastow, & Tinkler, 2006; Hood, 1995a). Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) became prominent in the 1990s as a result of advances in computerisation and processing capacities (Kling, 1991; Knights & Murray, 1994; Prasad, 1993; Woolgar & Grint, 1991). Hence, ICTs were portrayed as a central force driving such public sector reforms (Henman, 2010). Indeed, "the discourse about computerization advanced in many professional magazines and the mass media is saturated with talk about revolution" (Kling, 1991, p.363). It became accepted that "[d]igital technologies are implicated in an historic shift dissolving bureaucratic organizations." (Clegg, 2011, p. 215).

Following Osborne and Gaebler's (1992) reinventing government prescriptions, ICTs were thought of as fundamental means through which this reinvention can be

realised (Fountain, 2001; Lips & Schuppan, 2009). This was especially evident in the US government's 1993 'National Partnership for Reinventing Government' reforms (Bannister & Connolly, 2012). Underpinned by a private sector logic, it was ascertained that "[with] help of the big IT vendors, governments are realising that by applying the same principles and technologies that are fuelling the e-business revolution, they can achieve a similar transformation. The result: the emergence of e-Government." (Silcock, 2001, p. 88). The general assertion hence became that "information technology can create the government of the future, the electronic government." (National Partnership for Reinventing Government, 1993, sec. Executive summary). Therefore, eGovernment is best understood as a program of reform that aims to depart from traditional bureaucratic modes of work in the public sector through the utilisation of ICTs (Bloomfield & Hayes, 2009; Harris, 2006; Meijer, 2008). The eGovernment reforms tend to move beyond typical bureaucratic modes of public service delivery to institute customer-centric electronic as well as physical 'one-stop' shops, which are underpinned by digitisation and joined-up solutions that depart from paper-based operations and bureaucratic departmentalism and officialdom (Bannister, 2005; Hayes, Introna, & Petrakaki, 2014; Introna, Hayes, & Petrakaki, 2009).

Given the fact that managerial ideas and reforms travel in the global economy (Czarniawska & Sevón, 2005), eGovernment reforms were widely adopted, not only by 'leading-edge' countries (Dunleavy et al., 2006, p. 467) but also by other developing countries (Christensen, Dong, Painter, & Walker, 2012; Ciborra, 2005; Ciborra & Navarra, 2005; Heeks & Stanforth, 2015). It has been adopted by countries in the Middle East, such as Saudi Arabia, in their quest for modernisation and development (Al-Filali, 2006; Al-Filali & Gallarotti, 2012). This thesis aims to examine the

enactment of eGovernment as a post-bureaucratic reform in the Saudi Arabian cultural context.

Post-bureaucratic reforms and precisely the extent to which they result in eliminating or transcending bureaucracy have been studied extensively; albeit, mostly in Global North contexts. The dominant assertion in this literature is that the outcomes of post-bureaucratic reforms indicate hybridisation of bureaucratic and post-bureaucratic rationalities and practices (Alvesson & Thompson, 2004; Clegg & Courpasson, 2004; Clegg, 2011; Courpasson & Reed, 2004; Hodgson, 2004; Josserand, Clegg, & Teo, 2006; McSweeney, 2006; Reed, 2005; Sturdy, Wright, & Wylie, 2016). This assertion has become the conventional wisdom; especially in studies of eGovernment as a post-bureaucratic reform (Bloomfield & Hayes, 2009; Cordella, 2007; Introna et al., 2009; Meijer, 2008). In view of this, the narrative through which post-bureaucracy is promulgated is criticized as epochalist, and its protagonists as guilty of purporting the fallacies enshrined in such epochalism (du Gay, 2003). Du Gay defined epochalism as a logic of periodical dichotomisation where the “key dichotomy is between the ossified ‘old’, which is in need of urgent ‘re-invention’, and the ‘visionary’ new, whose demands must be heeded” (ibid., p.667). The ‘old’ in the post-bureaucracy narrative is ‘bureaucracy’, and the new is the ‘post-bureaucratic’. Du Gay (2003) succinctly pointed to the fallacies of such epochalist narratives supported by evidence, which “indicate that *‘hybridization’* rather than ‘paradigm shift’ may be a more accurate description” (Reed, 2005, p. 133 original emphasis) of the outcomes of post-bureaucratic reforms.

Nonetheless, the debate on bureaucracy versus post-bureaucracy; especially the attacks on epochalism in the literature, seem to overlook the continuing relevance of an

earlier epoch; namely the pre-bureaucratic. Indeed, while the debate has revolved since its inception around the bureaucracy-post-bureaucracy epochal dichotomy, it seems to have forgotten the pre-bureaucratic. It could be argued that the pre-bureaucratic might even have been taken for granted as indicative of a past epoch that is no longer relevant. This thesis will, therefore, contribute to the literature by bringing the pre-bureaucratic back into the debate on bureaucracy versus post-bureaucracy and reflect on the implications of its continuing relevance.

1.1 The focus of the thesis and its contributions

The thesis, in recovering the pre-bureaucratic, adopts an ethnographic approach to study the enactment of eGovernment in a Middle Eastern cultural context, specifically Saudi Arabia. In 2005, Saudi Arabia embarked on a reform program under the rubric of the transformation toward an ‘Information Society’. Central to this reform program is the intention to transform the public bureaucracy based on the notion of ‘eGovernment’. It was underpinned by a desire to align the public bureaucracy with the country’s strategy to depart from reliance on oil as the main source of income and embark on economic diversification (Al-Filali, 2006; Al-Filali & Gallarotti, 2012; Ramady, 2010). This reform was renewed in 2015 under a new program titled the ‘National Transformation Program 2020’. The motivation for this research project was triggered by debates in public media throughout the Middle East on whether eGovernment can bring an end to undesirable, yet widespread, cultural practices such as *wasta*, which is a form of favouritism (see Alghamdi, 2011; Dixon, Bhuiyan, & Üstüner, 2018; Zayani, 2018), and the use of for-profit bureaucratic intermediaries called ‘Mu’*aqqib*s’ (translated as Tracers) who are known to help process unsanctioned cases from the public bureaucracy.

Wasta stems from the tribal cultural relations and customs of Middle Eastern societies (Al-Ramahi, 2008; Brandstaetter, Bamber, & Weir, 2016; Cunningham & Sarayrah, 1993; Lackner, 2016). It is a form of intercession where an intercessor (usually an esteemed person) intercedes on behalf of another person to solicit a favourable treatment (Aldossari & Robertson, 2016; Gold & Naufal, 2012). In organisational settings, wasta is used to solicit favourable outcomes on case processing, receive promotions, and establish business deals either through intercession or through using one's esteemed position and influence (Barnett, Yandle, & Naufal, 2013; Tlaiss & Kauser, 2011; Weir, Sultan, & Bunt, 2016). Wasta thus suffuses everyday work in organisations in this context. It is a manifestation of the pre-bureaucratic in contemporary organisations in the Middle East as it contradicts the ethos of bureaucracy and resembles pre-bureaucratic practices such as favouritism described by Weber (1978).

Mu'aqqibs (henceforth, Tracers) are bureaucratic intermediaries who are hired by citizens to ensure smooth case processing and favourable outcomes. Tracers possess knowledge about bureaucratic regulations and develop favourable 'wasta' relations with public servants to process cases smoothly on behalf of their clients. Tracers can be seen as a structural manifestation of 'wasta', or in other words, the pre-bureaucratic. The use of Tracers and the cultural practice of wasta imbue organisational practices in the Middle East (Al-Jassem, 2010; Rakan, 2015; Weir et al., 2016).

As highlighted earlier, the introduction of eGovernment, specifically digitisation, was heralded as constituting an end to such pre-bureaucratic practices. It was argued that through digitisation, Tracers would be dis-intermediated and wasta eradicated (Alnimer, 2012). It was asserted that eGovernment "could help stop the

spread of *wasta* because [it] allow[s] for rules to be embedded in technology” (Alghamdi, 2011, para 4). Given this, the Middle Eastern cultural context provides a suitable setting to bring the pre-bureaucratic back into the contemporary debate on bureaucracy versus post-bureaucracy.

In addition to a Middle Eastern cultural context, the thesis also focuses on the street-level as an organisational context where pre-bureaucratic practices proliferate. The street-level bureaucracy is a concept introduced by Lipsky (1969, 1983, 2010). Street-level bureaucratic organisations are those that provide direct public services to citizens such as ID offices, police organisations, social work organisations, low-level courts, hospitals and similar organisations. A significant body of literature emerged around the notion of street-level bureaucracy (see Brodtkin, 2012; Hupe, 2015; Hupe et al., 2015a). The central concern in this literature is that street-level bureaucrats exercise discretion in ways that tend to depart from official policy and the bureaucratic formal rationality and engage in rule-breaking, favouritism, and unsanctioned activities (Evans, 2011; Maynard-Moody & Musheno, 2015; Radoynovska, 2018; Smart, 2018). Since ‘*wasta*’ is predicated on exercises of discretion, it is widespread in Middle Eastern street-level bureaucracies. Moreover, Tracers work is enacted at the street-level as they specialise in processing cases at street-level bureaucracies for their clients, who are often directed to them by official street-level bureaucrats. Tracers themselves and their private offices, which operate separately from the official bureaucracy, can be seen as an interesting additional tier of street-level bureaucracy entirely unexplored in this literature.

The debates on street-level bureaucracy tend to conceive discretion negatively hence many writers on this topic are concerned with finding ways to curtail street-level

discretion (Brodkin, 2007; Evans, 2015; Evans & Harris, 2004). The eGovernment reforms, specifically the idea of digitising street-level work, was received by street-level bureaucracy theorists as a salient force in curtailing street-level discretion and by consequence *wasta* and the use of Tracers (Bovens & Zouridis, 2002; Buffat, 2015; Busch & Henriksen, 2018; Reddick, 2005; Snellen, 2002).

The thesis is thus positioned at the nexus of street-level bureaucracy, where pre-bureaucratic practices such as *wasta* and the use of Tracers proliferate, and eGovernment as a post-bureaucratic reform program. The thesis, by focusing on this nexus, can contribute to the debates on bureaucracy versus post-bureaucracy as well as street-level bureaucracy. Broadly, the thesis, therefore, aims to explore the following two interrelated questions:

‘How is eGovernment as a post-bureaucratic reform enacted at the street-level in the Saudi Arabian cultural context?’

‘What insights can be gained from exploring this enactment of eGovernment to advance the debates on bureaucracy versus post-bureaucracy as well as street-level bureaucracy?’

These two questions emerged through the research and guided the focus, research design, and the representation of the findings of this thesis. Answering the first question helps to reveal how cultural relations might suffuse the enactment of eGovernment in everyday street-level work. This helps to illuminate the relevance of the pre-bureaucratic in the guise of *wasta* and use of Tracers and its relationship with bureaucratic as well as post-bureaucratic elements. This will help elucidate rich findings through which the thesis can address the second question and draw insights and

contributions to the debate on bureaucracy versus post-bureaucracy and the debate on street-level bureaucracy.

The thesis contributes to the debate on bureaucracy versus post-bureaucracy through reflecting on the implications of the continuing relevance of the pre-bureaucratic for the debate and how it can be advanced. Moreover, by drawing on this research focus, the thesis is well positioned to extend the relevance of this debate beyond Global North contexts. Doing so advances knowledge by elucidating novel insights that have implications for studies of post-bureaucracy even in Global North contexts.

Additionally, the thesis also contributes to the street-level bureaucracy literature by pushing the debate to consider street-level bureaucrats outside the formal bureaucracy such as Tracers, who exist widely in other cultural contexts throughout the world but are unexplored in this literature. Moreover, there is little discussion of how discretion is exercised in practice and within non-Western cultural contexts. Additionally, the relationship between eGovernment and street-level discretion is largely understudied. The thesis, by having this focus, is well positioned to contribute to this debate by addressing these gaps in knowledge.

Theoretically, the thesis will utilise three key influences. First, the thesis will draw on the seminal writings of Weber on bureaucracy. Weber was concerned with explaining the transition from pre-bureaucratic modes of work and social relation to bureaucratized and rationalised ones. Weber's work on the pre-bureaucratic, nonetheless, is forgotten and unutilised in the debate on bureaucracy versus post-bureaucracy. Therefore, I will draw on Weber to critically reflect on the bureaucracy

versus post-bureaucracy debate and recover the pre-bureaucratic and demonstrate its continuing relevance.

Second, the thesis will draw theoretical inspiration from Gouldner (1954) because his work directs attention to how cultural relations suffuse everyday work in bureaucratic settings. Drawing on Gouldner (1954) is important because he succinctly brought to the fore the ongoing influence of the 'pre-bureaucratic' through the notions of 'mock bureaucracy' and the 'indulgency pattern' that indicated unique patterns of practice combining pre-bureaucratic and bureaucratic characteristics. Hence, Gouldner's work can help to understand the local patterns of practice through which the pre-bureaucratic is enacted at the street-level. Drawing on Gouldner also reflects recent calls in organisation studies to revisit the 'classical foundations' of the field (see Adler, 2009). Gouldner (1954) is one such classic that is absent in the debate on bureaucracy versus post-bureaucracy.

Thirdly, the thesis will draw on the work of Strauss (1978). Strauss's notion of the negotiated order helps to elucidate the pre-bureaucratic in everyday organisational life and how it endures despite bureaucracy. The negotiated order construct suggests that social order is negotiated and hence to understand social order (e.g., organisations) it is fundamental to study everyday life in organisations (Bechky, 2011; Bishop & Waring, 2016; Fine & Hallett, 2014; Huang Chua & Myers, 2018; Watson, 2015). It posits that organisations

may appear rigidly regulated, routinized, bureaucratized. But it is not the bloodless framework that gives them their special qualities and makes them survive and do their work, but a living, often seething, ebb and flow of human interaction, bargaining, and adjustment (Strauss, 1964, p. 15).

Hence, Strauss's notion of the negotiated order draws attention to the local social interactions and practices through which eGovernment is enacted at the street-level and the characteristics of this enactment.

These three theoretical influences complement each other in the task to recover, elucidate, and understand the pre-bureaucratic in the context of bureaucracy versus post-bureaucracy. Each adds a vital layer of meaning important to understand the significance of the pre-bureaucratic. Weber's work provides the first and most important layer because it helps to define the pre-bureaucratic and position it meaningfully alongside the bureaucratic and the post-bureaucratic. Gouldner's work provides rich constructs that help identify and categorise pre-bureaucratic patterns of practice. Lastly, Strauss's work helps to explain how the pre-bureaucratic endures despite the bureaucratic and how it is enacted alongside it through the notion of the negotiated order.

Methodologically, the thesis is underpinned by an interpretive research philosophy that gives attention to how meanings are developed and shared through social interactions (Berger & Luckmann, 1967; Cunliffe, 2011). An ethnographic approach is adopted for this qualitative inquiry (Geertz, 1973; Van Maanen, 1988; Watson, 2011). Ethnography helps to explore and write in greater detail about the everyday organisational life in the Saudi cultural context (Watson, 1994a). A large Saudi Arabian street-level bureaucratic organisation called the Department of Citizens' Affairs (DCA) [pseudonym] has been chosen as the main empirical site of this ethnography. Additionally, the thesis also draws on ethnographic material collected during fieldwork at nine Tracer offices that provide government services to the public through mediating the relationship between citizens and government organisations such

as the DCA. The thesis, drawing on the experience of engaging with wasta during the fieldwork, will also extend a methodological contribution.

1.2 The structure of the thesis

The thesis is structured as follows. Chapter two, provides a review of the literature on bureaucracy versus post-bureaucracy, specifically in relation to eGovernment. The chapter highlights the significance of Weber's work in defining the pre-bureaucratic. The chapter will also review literature on the pre-bureaucratic such as Gouldner (1954) and Strauss (1978) and continues to show how it remains relevant yet overlooked in the debate on bureaucracy versus post-bureaucracy. Chapter three discusses the methodological underpinnings of the design of this research inquiry as well as the ethnographic approach adopted in the thesis. The chapter also describes the DCA as the focal empirical site and sheds light on the access negotiations and data collection. A contribution to the literature on methodology is derived from a discussion of the engagement with the practice of wasta during the fieldwork. The process of data analysis is discussed in a penultimate section in this chapter.

Chapter four describes the cultural context of Saudi Arabia; it draws attention to the cultural practice of wasta and outlines the work of Tracers. The chapter also depicts the pertinent reform plans, their objectives and intentions, as well as the key resolutions and policies. This chapter aims to provide contextual information that helps the reader understand the findings in the subsequent chapters.

Chapter five considers the enactment of eGovernment at the DCA. It begins by juxtaposing the older paper-based model of the central document ordering service at the DCA and the redesigned electronic-based model. Then, it describes the enactment of the redesigned model highlighting how it is negotiated, altered, and adjusted in ways

that sustained the older paper-based model. The chapter then explores how the pre-bureaucratic in the guise of the cultural practice of *wasta* endures despite the enactment of eGov, which was poised to eradicate it. The chapter ends with an elucidation of the unofficial practices through which the pre-bureaucratic is enacted at the DCA.

Chapter six examines the work of Tracers and why citizens use them? It also draws on ethnographic findings highlighting how Tracers process cases at the DCA and the favourable relations between Tracers and official employees. The chapter then describes how Tracers not only endure despite eGov but also how they are playing a vital role in facilitating the enactment of eGov at the street-level. This is highlighted in relation to an unofficial practice of outsourcing cases to Tracers by official employees. Overall, chapters five and six are dedicated to reporting ‘thick descriptions’ (Geertz, 1973), of the enactment of eGovernment at the street-level elucidating how the pre-bureaucratic (in the guise of *wasta* and Tracers) endures.

Chapter seven provides an analysis and discussion of the empirical findings of the thesis. The chapter also relates these findings to themes in the literature and explicates the contributions of the thesis. The practice of ‘*Wasta*’ at the DCA is understood as resembling an ‘indulgency pattern’ (Gouldner, 1954) that is enacted and maintained through a negotiated order. A ‘mock *post*-bureaucracy’ pattern is identified to indicate how eGovernment in this context is enacted through a negotiated order that reveals a melding of the pre-bureaucratic, bureaucratic, and the post-bureaucratic. An overall summary of the thesis and its main contributions along with a discussion of its limitations and potential future research are presented in a conclusion chapter.

2 The pre-bureaucratic, the bureaucratic, and the post-bureaucratic: A review of the literature

This chapter reviews the debate on the shift from bureaucratic organising to post-bureaucratic modes of organising, specifically eGovernment; in addition to reviewing the literature on street-level bureaucracy. The literature on bureaucracy versus post-bureaucracy is predicated on a presumed shift from bureaucracy to post-bureaucracy (du Gay, 2003). In the narrative on post-bureaucracy, Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) and market structures are ascribed the power to overcome bureaucratic inertia and bring forth post-bureaucratic forms of work (Clegg, 2011; Harris, 2006, 2008; Henman, 2010; Heydebrand, 1989; Plesner, Justesen, & Glerup, 2018). While a considerable body of literature has emerged that questions the transition from the bureaucratic to the post-bureaucratic, I will argue that this literature has largely overlooked the pre-bureaucratic. I return to three sociological thinkers, Weber (1978), Gouldner (1954), and Strauss (1978), as well as, draw on the literature on street-level bureaucracy to bring back the pre-bureaucratic into the bureaucracy versus post-bureaucracy debate.

The chapter is structured as follows. The first part is framed around the shift from the pre-bureaucratic to the bureaucratic where I review Weber's work on rationalisation and bureaucracy. Then, I review classic studies that showed the

endurance of the pre-bureaucratic such as Gouldner (1954) and Strauss (1978). I will also review and compare cultural practices widespread in contemporary non-Western organisations such as *wasta*, *guanxi*, and *jeitinho* that indicate the continuing relevance of the pre-bureaucratic. The street-level bureaucracy literature is also reviewed in the second section. The third section focuses on the advent of post-bureaucratic reforms such as eGovernment and examines the central claims accompanying it and reviews empirical studies reporting on its outcomes. The shift from the bureaucratic to the post-bureaucratic is then critically reflected upon drawing on key studies conducted on this topic where I show how the pre-bureaucratic, even though evident in those studies, is, nonetheless, neglected.

2.1 Rationalisation, bureaucracy, and modernity: A prelude

This section is a prelude to a discussion of the shift from pre-bureaucratic to bureaucratic organising. The objective of this section is to contextualise the emergence of bureaucracy. The dominant narrative through which bureaucracy is described in the literature situates its growth in relation to the emergence of an epoch of modernity characterised by a logic of rationalism that pervades social and economic relations (Blau, 1956; du Gay, 2000; Kallinikos, 2004). Max Weber, who is considered one of the founding figures in the field of sociology, is broadly concerned in his work with studying this process of rationalisation (Giddens, 1971). Weber's (1978) work seems to paint a picture of the changes toward rationalisation and capitalism as interrelated on the social, economic, administrative and legal levels. Changes in social relations in the guise of new or modified religious values, for instance, are intertwined with the advent of the capitalistic economic creed (Weber, 1930). These changes are in turn interrelated with the modern development in science that yielded practices of calculability and experimentation (Latour, 1993). These conditions are favourably intertwined with

bureaucratic and legal rational modes of organising, which in turn helped to expand capitalism (Clegg, 1994b; Clegg, 2005; Waters & Waters, 2015). These elements mutually reinforce each other leading to more rationalisation and the increased influence of capitalism in social and economic lives in modern Western societies. I depicted this relationship in figure 1 below.

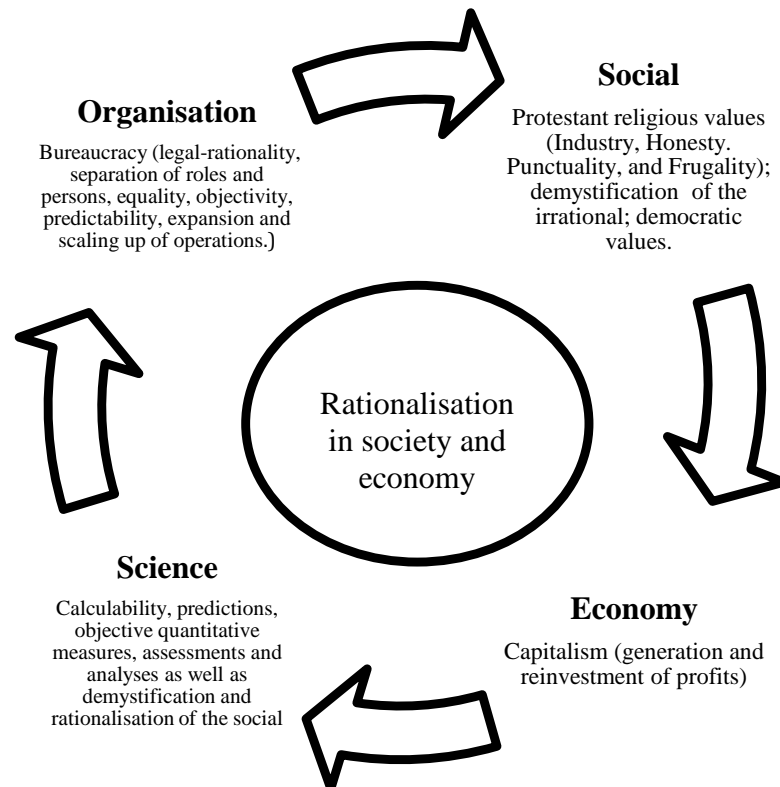


Figure 1: Rationalisation process in Western societies.

The illustration above shows how the process of rationalisation and its different elements are intertwined as understood from a reading of Weber's work. It provides a conceptual frame of reference illustrating how religious values favourable to capitalism have come to gain prominence over what the now thought to be irrational religious creeds and practices in the guise of mysticism and superstitions and other-worldliness, which are considered unfavourable to capitalism (Tawney, 1926). Weber, in the 'Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism', vividly illustrated how capitalism was brought to prominence through protestant religious values. R. H. Tawney (1880-1962),

a prominent British Economic Historian and thinker, in his forward to the English translation of the 'Protestant ethic' wrote reflecting on Weber's thesis:

Labour is not merely an economic means: it is a spiritual end [...] So far from poverty being meritorious, it is a duty to choose the more profitable occupation. So far from there being an inevitable conflict between money-making and piety, they are natural allies, for the virtues incumbent on the elect—diligence, thrift, sobriety, prudence—are the most reliable passport to commercial prosperity. Thus the pursuit of riches, which once had been feared as the enemy of religion, was now welcomed as its ally. (cited in Weber, 1930, p.3).

The advent of capitalism and rationalisation is thus predicated on earlier shifts in the spiritual realm in Western societies. While capitalism has been in existence for a long time and in different societies, the religious values of thriftiness and hard work and dedication to one's calling purported by Protestantism in the west, according to Weber, advanced capitalism in ways unprecedented in earlier times. It is in this sense that Weber speaks of the 'spirit' of capitalism; on this notion, Weber stated:

The peculiarity of this philosophy of avarice appears to be the ideal of the honest man of recognized credit, and above all the idea of a duty of the individual toward the increase of his capital, which is assumed as an end in itself. Truly what is here preached is not simply a means of making one's way in the world, but a peculiar ethic. The infraction of its rules is treated not as foolishness but as forgetfulness of duty. That is the essence of the matter. It is not mere business astuteness, that sort of thing is common enough, it is an ethos. (Weber, 1930, p.51).

In this quote, Weber illustrates how a new religion has contributed to the advent of capitalism. The desire to follow one's 'calling' in ways that increase wealth accumulation coupled with self-restraint from engaging in worldly indulgence, contributed to the expansion of capitalistic enterprises (Barbalet, 2008). The values of industry and frugality pushed entrepreneurs not to settle for less and search for ways to expand and increase profit, which in this ethos, became an end in itself (Tawney, 1926). This ethos of capitalism was fuelled by the power to calculate, assess, forecast, and analyse that was brought about with the advent of modern science (Weber, 1946). Such practices of the natural sciences then became one of the central means through which the process of organising and rationalising were advanced (Clegg, 2009; Willmott, 2011). In this sense, rationalism in the guise of science became favourably interlocked with advancing capitalism (Waters & Waters, 2015). Gradually, the religious values of Protestantism began to fade away as rationalism became more institutionalised and capitalistic institutions solidified as central pillars of modern society. On this Weber, stated:

[I]t is one of the fundamental characteristics of an individualistic capitalistic economy that it is rationalized on the basis of rigorous calculation, directed with foresight and caution toward the economic success [...] It might thus seem that the development of the spirit of capitalism is best understood as part of the development of rationalism as a whole, and could be deduced from the fundamental position of rationalism on the basic problems of life. In the process Protestantism would only have to be considered in so far as it had formed a stage prior to the development of a purely rationalistic philosophy. (Weber, 1930, p.76).

Science, or rather the role it assumed in demystifying the spiritual realm in Western societies, became a driver of this ‘rationalistic philosophy’ gradually marking a departure from pre-rationalised or ‘irrational’ values, practices, and institutions toward a rationalised, modernised, capitalistic world (Spicer, 2015). These dynamics contributed to the rise of modern rationalised institutions that, according to Weber, shaped the modern Western societies; on this Weber stated:

The Puritan wanted to work in a calling; we are forced to do so. For when asceticism was carried out of monastic cells into everyday life, and began to dominate worldly morality, it did its part in building the tremendous cosmos of the modern economic order. This order is now bound to the technical and economic conditions of machine production which to-day determine the lives of all the individuals who are born into this mechanism, not only those directly concerned with economic acquisition, with irresistible force. Perhaps it will so determine them until the last ton of fossilized coal is burnt. In Baxter’s view the care for external goods should only lie on the shoulders of the “saint like a light cloak, which can be thrown aside at any moment”. But fate decreed that the cloak should become an iron cage. (ibid., p.181).

In this quote, Weber explains that while the foundations of the modern rationalised world and its institutions can be traced back to the religious values of Protestantism, such values no longer take precedence and that the institutions of rationalism and capitalism that they helped to form have become akin to an ‘iron cage’ constraining and patterning the lives of people born into this world (Clegg & Lounsbury, 2009). The focus of this thesis in relation to this process of rationalisation that Weber vividly explained is on ‘bureaucracy’ to which the discussion now turns.

2.1.1 Bureaucracy

In this section, I will discuss bureaucracy as an institution marking a shift from pre-bureaucratic to bureaucratic administration enforcing the rationalisation of the organisation and conduct of work (Kallinikos, 2004). According to Weber, bureaucracy accompanies capitalism as an ideal form that helps the capitalistic enterprise expand, scale its operations, and perform its functions efficiently and effectively (Perrow, 1986). At the level of the state, bureaucracy also accompanies modern democracy as well as the modern welfare state, which differed from pre-bureaucratic states regarding its scope and scale of operations as a provider of modern public services such as education, healthcare, security and social services (Blau, 1956; du Gay, 2005).

Bureaucracy is the means of transforming social action into rationally organized action. Therefore, an instrument of rationally organizing authority relations [...]

Under otherwise equal conditions, rationally organized and directed action (Gesellschaftshandeln) is superior to every kind of collective behavior (Massenhandeln) and also social action (Gemeinschaftshandeln) opposing it. (Weber, 1978, p.987).

Bureaucracy, as an instrument of rationalising work, stands in opposition to pre-bureaucratic modes of work. The shift toward the bureaucratization of work is characterised, according to Weber, by the ability of bureaucracy to curtail the ‘discretion’ of workers through standardising work activities and governing the conduct of work through the development of extensive rules, the enforcement of which is enacted through strict practices of monitoring and control (Delany, 1963; Weber, 2015). Such standardising and rule following constituted a departure from the pre-bureaucratic where, for example, unrestrained discretion was fostered through patronage relations

that governed the assignments of offices or ‘fiefs’ as Weber described, in addition, to the lack of written rules (see also Rudolph & Rudolph, 1979; Theobald, 1982).

The lack of rules and the unpredictable nature of exercises of discretion were impediments to the spread and expansion of capitalistic enterprises as well as to the ability of states to deliver public services on a significant scale (Kallinikos, 2006). This shift from the pre-bureaucratic to the bureaucratic through transforming work activities into ‘rationally organized actions’ can be thought of with regards to two dimensions: 1) a depersonalisation of formal roles or in other words, a rethinking of the relationship between persons and their roles and 2) the precedence of a specific ‘ethos’ of the office. Each will be discussed next followed with reflections on the differences between the pre-bureaucratic and the bureaucratic; then I will move on to the next section to illustrate the ways in which elements of the pre-bureaucratic are still enduring despite bureaucratisation.

The separation of individuals from roles

In principle, the modern organization of the civil service separates the bureau from the private domicile of the official and, in general, segregates official activity from the sphere of private life. Public monies and equipment are divorced from the private property of the official [...] The more consistently the modern type of business management has been carried through, the more are these separations the case. (Weber, 1978, p.957).

This principle of separation thus constituted a clear departure from pre-bureaucratic practices where, for instance, personal social values, relations and practices imbued individuals’ conduct of work in organisational settings (Delany, 1963). In this vein, bureaucracy constituted a departure from what Kallinikos described as “pre-

modern forms of organizing that relied by and large on the *principle of inclusion* for regulating the relationship of people to organizations” (2004, p.22; original emphasis). The separation of individuals from roles allowed for a departure from pre-bureaucratic/pre-modern institutions such as the feudal system where an individual’s work and personal life were interconnected; hence Kallinikos’s ‘principle of inclusion’ (Kallinikos, 2006; Rudolph & Rudolph, 1979; Theobald, 1982). Such separation is also underpinned by democratic principles. It brought forth the notion of career progression, meritocracy, and individualism whereby individuals who possess adequate expertise can, for instance, *climb the ladder* and aspire for vertical progression through hierarchically ordered roles (McKinlay, 2002, 2012).

Such separation also allowed for the proliferation of different roles that can be assembled and organised hierarchically and horizontally thus allowing for expansions in size and scope of work and control (Blau & Scott, 1962; Perrow, 1986). Bureaucracy, therefore, allowed for expansions in organisational structures in ways that facilitated the emergence of large globalised capitalistic enterprises and hence expansions in capitalism and trade (Perrow, 2005; Weber, 1978).

Underpinning the principle of separation of roles and persons is the assumption that such roles are filled in a meritocratic manner by the most qualified persons whose skills and expertise are assessed objectively through examinations and standardised assessments (du Gay, 2006; McKinlay, 2012). In this regard, the tasks for each role are delineated and the requirements to perform them in terms of knowledge, skills, and abilities are specified. This is a departure from pre-bureaucratic forms where for instance assignments of roles were based on social connections and forms of patronage relations or what Weber called ‘administration by notables’ (Weber, 1978, p.984).

The ethos of the office

The ethos of the office refers to the conduct of organisational roles in a depersonalised manner giving precedence to rules over all other considerations (see Bartels, 2009). According to Weber (2015), hierarchically ordered roles come with detailed rules and prescriptions in the form of standard operating procedures of how the role ought to be performed. Such rules and procedures aim to standardise the performances of an organisational role and curtail human discretion (see du Gay, 1994). Bureaucrats hence are expected to perform their roles according to what Weber called the ‘objective discharge of business’:

“Objective” discharge of business primarily means a discharge of business according to calculable rules and “without regard for persons.” [...] calculable rules, is the most important one for modern bureaucracy. The peculiarity of modern culture, and specifically of its technical and economic basis, demands this very “calculability” of results, when fully developed, bureaucracy also stands, in a specific sense, under the principle of *sine ira et studio*. Bureaucracy develops the more perfectly, the more it is “dehumanized,” the more completely it succeeds in eliminating from official business love, hatred, and all purely personal, irrational, and emotional elements which escape calculation. This is appraised as its special virtue by capitalism. (Weber, 1978, p.975).

A dehumanised depersonalised performance is thus the pinnacle of the modern bureaucratic institution (Bauman, 1989). Weber in this regard, as well as contemporary writers such as du Gay (2000) for instance, posit that it is such strict adherence to rules that constitutes a departure from pre-bureaucratic practices that mostly stemmed from unchecked exercises of discretion in a system characterised by the supremacy of patronage relations and personal connections (Delany, 1963; Garvey, 1991; Lai, 2015).

Additionally, a rationalised administration curtails exercises of discretion that are guided by emotions such as sympathy, love, or hatred; on this notion Weber stated:

The crucial point here is that a “freely” operating administration (and possibly the jurisdiction) is not a sphere of *unrestricted* arbitrariness and mercy, nor is it for *personally* motivated favors, as we found within *pre-bureaucratic* systems. But instead, the rule [*Herrschaft*] of rational assessment of purposes, and the commitment to this rational approach, persists as normative behavior. (Weber, 2015, p. 102 emphasis added).

In the rationalised bureaucratic organisation, adherence to formal rules even if such rules conflict with a bureaucrat’s subjective emotions, values, opinion and assessments becomes the ethical duty of the bureaucrat (Bartels, 2009; du Gay, 1999; Weber, 1978). It is only such bureaucratic ethos that maintains the democratic values of modernity as well as advances the interests of and maintains the capitalistic enterprise.

The more complicated and specialized modern culture becomes, the more its external supporting apparatus demands the personally detached and strictly objective *expert*, in lieu of the lord of older social structures who was moved by personal sympathy and favor, by grace and gratitude. Bureaucracy offers the attitudes demanded by the external apparatus of modern culture in the most favorable combination. (Weber, 1978, p.975; original emphasis).

Bureaucracy, hence, as du Gay (2000) seems to stress, presumably becomes a life order with its unique system of morality; namely, the strict adherence to rules regardless of any other individually upheld moral systems. Organisational practices

stemming from other rationalities such as cultural relations and values are hence categorised as pre-bureaucratic as they compromise the principle of separation of the role from the sociality of the person enacting the role.

Individuals coming into the bureaucratic organisation to assume an office are thus expected to abandon all “extra-official ties to kith, kin, class and individual inner conscience” (du Gay, 1999, p. 581), in order to enact their roles as much as possible in a *dehumanised* manner. It is this rationality that makes “bureaucracy [...] the organization form of modernity” (Kallinikos, 2004, p. 22). To also echo Weber, it is this ethos that also makes bureaucracy an instrument of capitalism par excellence. It is, as Weber argued, through the separation of roles from the person and standardising and dehumanising humans’ enactment of such roles that a bureaucratic organisation is sustained and maintained through time without ‘regards for persons’.

On this note, it is prudent to highlight that such bureaucratic principles are enforced through a strict system of discipline that hinges on hierarchical forms of control and domination as well as the use of different practices of monitoring (Kärreman, Sveningsson, & Alvesson, 2002; McCabe, 2015). Central to such monitoring is the use of strict and detailed forms of record-keeping, documents and files as well as a culture of secrecy (McKinlay, 1996, 2012).

To sum up, Weber’s view is that bureaucracy is inextricably interlinked with the logics of rationalism, capitalism and democracy and a product of a unique epoch, namely modernity (Waters & Waters, 2015). In his writings, Weber abstracted the distinctive features of bureaucracy in an ideal type, which is used to assess bureaucratisations and by association categorise pre-bureaucratic forms and practices. Weber argued that such an ‘ideal type’ is an abstraction with which empirical cases of

bureaucratization can be compared (Clegg, 1994). Nonetheless, the general assumption seems to be that organisations in Western societies nearly fit if not epitomise the ideal type more so than organisations in other societies. Even Weber (1978), for instance, wrote: “[T]he Germans perfected the rational, functional, and specialized bureaucratic organization of all forms of domination from factory to army and public administration” (1978, p. 1400). He further added: “Germany continued to maintain a military and civilian bureaucracy superior to all others in the world in terms of integrity, education, conscientiousness and intelligence” (Weber 1978, p. 1405).

Hence, Weber’s writings reflect an assumption that bureaucracy had been perfected, at least in Germany during the early years of the 20th century. This assertion is also indicated in Weber’s, at times, pessimistic views regarding the domination of bureaucracy:

Given the basic fact of the irresistible advance of bureaucratization, the question about the future forms of political organization can only be asked in the following way [...] How can one possibly save *any remnants* of the “individualist” freedom in any sense? (Weber 1978, p.1403).

These assumptions about the transition from a pre-bureaucratic/pre-modern epoch to a bureaucratic/modern epoch are also evident in contemporary studies of bureaucracy in organisation studies (e.g., du Gay, 2000; Kallinikos, 2004). In contemporary studies on bureaucracy; especially in the context of the transition to post-bureaucracy, there is an assumption that the pre-bureaucratic has been displaced and overcome by the bureaucratic; especially in Western contexts where the epoch of modernity is thought to have originated. An implication of this view is that the pre-bureaucratic is cast to other non-Western and pre-modern societies such as “China,

Egypt, India, and other Oriental societies, which lacked, in ways he [Weber] constantly sought to specify, the requisite religious, scientific, and middle class cultural orientations for the Western pattern of development.” (Delany, 1963, p.462).

It must be acknowledged that there is some merit in such assumption; hence, the cultural contexts in Western developed states are indeed different than those in non-Western less developed ones. Nevertheless, as Weber himself indicated, the pre-bureaucratic is not necessarily an element of the past, it still endures; however, it is suppressed by the intensity of rationalism and the pressure of bureaucratisation. Indeed, human emotions such as mercy, sympathy, or ties to kin and clan remain with humans; they are not simply abandoned or forgotten; however, when the pressure to dehumanisation exerted by bureaucratic domination strengthens then these elements are suppressed; hence, Weber’s ‘dehumanisation’ thesis (McCabe, 2014, 2015; McKinlay & Wilson, 2006; Ritzer, 1983). Given this, it could be argued that whenever the domination of the bureaucratic institution weakens then the conditions become ripe for pre-bureaucratic forms and practices to re-emerge. Therefore, the pre-bureaucratic cannot be confined to pre-modern non-Western contexts; it could indeed be present even in Western contexts. In what follows, I will review literature that reveals how the pre-bureaucratic endures especially in Western contexts; the endurance of the pre-bureaucratic can be seen to at least partially help counterbalance the at times pessimistic dehumanisation thesis.

2.2 The persistence of the pre-bureaucratic

In this section, I will review the literature on pre-bureaucratic practices. The pre-bureaucratic as explained by Weber and juxtaposed with the bureaucratic is characterised by exercises of discretion that deviate from the formal bureaucratic

rationality and remain unchecked. This is how the pre-bureaucratic is defined and understood in this thesis. Using this definition, there is a wide range of literatures that speak to the pre-bureaucratic in modern organisations from organisational misbehaviour (Ackroyd & Thompson, 1999; Knights & McCabe, 2000a; Vardi & Wiener, 1996); informality and unofficial social relations and practices (Blau, 1955; Dalton, 1959; Gouldner, 1954; Roy, 1959; Strauss, 1978; Terry, 1977) to studies on how cultural practices in non-Western contexts such as *wasta* or *guanxi* imbue the operation of formal bureaucratic organisations (Aldossari & Robertson, 2016; Xin & Pearce, 1996). Additionally, the literature on street-level bureaucracy (Lipsky, 1983) is another central literature indicative of the persistence of the pre-bureaucratic. What is unique about the street-level bureaucracy literature is that it prioritises exercises of discretion as a fundamental means through which pre-bureaucratic practices and relations are enacted (Brodkin, 2007; Maynard-Moody & Portillo, 2010).

Given the considerable size of the literature on the pre-bureaucratic, I will only focus on three literatures that are especially relevant to the focus and findings of the thesis and clearly demonstrate the continuing relevance of the pre-bureaucratic in both Western and non-Western contexts. First, a set of ethnographic studies on unofficial practices and cultural relations in bureaucratic organisations including Gouldner's (1954) and Strauss's et al., (1963). What is common among these two studies is that they are rich organisational ethnographies that are considered classics in the field of organisation studies (Adler, 2009). Additionally, these two studies are central theoretical influences in this thesis, therefore, they merit a more in-depth review. These two studies are also representative of other studies (e.g., Blau; 1963; Crozier, 1964; Dalton, 1959) that indicate the persistence of the pre-bureaucratic in Western organisational settings. Second, I will review literature on how cultural practices in non-

Western contexts such as *wasta* imbue everyday work in contemporary organisations. Third, building on the previous two literatures on the pre-bureaucratic, I will focus on the literature on street-level bureaucracy. This literature provides a theoretical focus on exercises of discretions as means through which the pre-bureaucratic is enacted in bureaucratic organisations. The street-level bureaucracy literature also provides a clearer typification of the pre-bureaucratic in specific types of organisations, namely street-level bureaucracies, which characterise the empirical focus of this thesis. These three literatures on the pre-bureaucratic have been neglected in the debate on bureaucracy versus post-bureaucracy and they will be reviewed next.

2.2.1 Indulgency patterns and negotiated orders

In Gouldner's (1954) study of a Gypsum plant that underwent an aggressive program of bureaucratic reform, he observed a range of ingrained pre-bureaucratic cultural rationalities and practices in everyday work. He noticed a high degree of 'informal social cohesion' (ibid., p.150) or what Ritter (1948) called 'irrational solidarity groups'. Such groups, Gouldner observed, were organised along kin relations and geographical belonging to one town and one European homeland from which their ancestors migrated. As Gouldner highlighted "supervisors and workers developed personalized informal relations on the job that reflect their community relations." (1954, p.39).

Such informal relations produced a distinctively pre-bureaucratic pattern of practice that Gouldner called the 'indulgency pattern' (1954, p.45). Under the 'indulgency pattern,' most of the bureaucratic principles Weber discussed such a separation of the office from the person and the 'objective discharge of business' were routinely violated. Workers frequently used plant properties such as gypsum boards for

their personal use. Also, formal rules regarding hiring and the day to day functioning of the plant were frequently sidestepped. There was ingrained favouritism in hiring decisions where managers favoured applicants they knew from the local community over other applicants. After the death of the plant manager 'Old Doug', who was a local man, a program of bureaucratisation was introduced by a new plant manager, who came from outside the local community, to curtail such pre-bureaucratic practices. As Gouldner reported, such reform efforts led to power struggles and the persistence of pre-bureaucratic practices under what he called a 'mock bureaucracy' pattern where rules are honoured only selectively and without commitment from workers.

Strauss's et al., (1963) study introduced the notion of the 'negotiated order' to explain the situated cultural character of everyday work in formal organisations. They observed personnel and patients in two psychiatric hospitals, for everyone seemed to be negotiating about something. So central did this negotiation seem to the events being studied that when writing up the conclusions...[they]... made negotiation a key concept, along with several others, and coined the term *negotiated order*. (Strauss, 1978, p.5, original emphasis).

Through their observations of everyday work in these hospitals, Strauss and his colleagues found that formal bureaucratic rules "are continuously negotiated in interaction" (Manning, 1977, p. 45). In other words, "[r]ules and roles are always breaking down—and when they do not, they do not miraculously remain intact without some effort, including negotiations effort, to maintain them." (Strauss, 1978, p. ix). Hospital staff exercised discretion in not only negotiating the application of rules but also in fashioning alternative ones in interactions with other members and groups.

Hospital employees:

[T]herefore interpreted “scripture” to suit their own needs and purposes. Nurses frequently appointed themselves “defenders” of the hospital against “inappropriate” demands of certain physicians. The doctors, on to the game, sometimes accused them of more interest in their own personal welfare and comfort than of that of the patients. (Strauss, 1964, p. 13).

Strauss’s notion of the negotiated order, like Gouldner’s ‘indulgency pattern’, strongly brought to the fore the pre-bureaucratic in everyday organisational life in the guise of cultural relations and social interactions that shaped the conduct of everyday work (Hallett, Shulman, & Fine, 2009). It explains how pre-bureaucratic practices melded with bureaucratic ones in the conduct of everyday work through a process of negotiations and unofficial arrangements (Strauss, 1978). The negotiated order posits that organisations are “complex and highly fragile social constructions of reality which are subject to the numerous temporal, spatial, and situational events occurring” (Day & Day, 1977, p. 132). The central thesis of Strauss’s work, therefore, is that formal bureaucratic structures do not necessarily coercively determine in a linear fashion the patterns of everyday work (Bishop & Waring, 2016; Fine, 1984; Maines, 1982; Watson, 2015). Instead, formal rules and policies “are interwoven into the working arrangements of doctors, nurses, and administrators, who alternatively draw on and ignore them as they go about their work” (Bechky, 2011, p. 1160). In other words, “patterns of interaction constitute negotiated orders that shape how work is accomplished” (Hallett et al., 2009, p. 6). In this regard:

The negotiated order on any given day can be conceived of as the sum total of the organization’s rules and policies, along with whatever agreements,

understandings, pacts, contracts, and other working arrangements currently obtained. These include agreements at every level of the organization, of every clique and coalition, and include covert as well as overt agreements. (Strauss, 1978, p.6).

This definition of the negotiated order indicates that the pre-bureaucratic in the guise of negotiated unofficial arrangements is combined with the bureaucratic through exercises of discretion and social interactions between workers (Bechky, 2011; Fine, 1984). Like classic organisational ethnographies such as Gouldner's (1954), Strauss's nuanced elucidation of the pre-bureaucratic is based on ethnographic fieldwork that reveals the detail and complexity of everyday work (Bechky, 2006; Watson, 2015).

There are two common themes amongst these seminal ethnographic studies that help to clearly define the pre-bureaucratic. First, informal cultural relations and how they come to imbue everyday work in formal bureaucratic organisations. This is evident in the community relations that Gouldner (1954) highlighted as well as Strauss's notion of the negotiated order. Second, exercises of discretion that deviate from the formal bureaucratic rationality; such exercises of discretion are indeed evident in these studies as highlighted earlier. These two themes (informal cultural relations and exercises of discretion) are hence essential to defining the pre-bureaucratic.

These two themes are also evident in a wide range of other studies within the field of organisation studies more broadly. For example, Dalton (1959) in the classic ethnographic study 'Men Who Manage' of four US companies observed that while such organisations had a formal structure, it was the informal web of relations in the guise of 'cliques' that were central to the day to day work. One interesting type of clique is what

he called the “Vertical Parasitic Clique” (1959, p.59) which was organised along kin relations, mutual friendships, and exchanges of favours. He described this clique saying:

[T]his is the clique of popular thought, the one that writers of supervisory manuals have in mind when they make such statements as, “No person may work under the direct or indirect supervision of an officer to whom he is related by blood or marriage.” [...] This clique need not be a family affair. It may be based on a friendship developed earlier in the plant or elsewhere. (1959, p. 59).

Such cliques can be easily seen as pre-bureaucratic forms of solidarity (Ritter, 1948) as they deviate from the strictly formal and depersonalised ethos of bureaucracy that Weber discussed.

Crozier’s (1964) work on two bureaucratic organisations in France, for instance, revealed how favouritism, power relations, conflicts, informal arrangements and everyday politicking took precedence over formal rules and policies in the conduct of bureaucratic work (see also d’Iribarne, 1994). Similarly, Blau’s (1963) study of two US public bureaucracies showed how everyday work was governed by unofficial arrangements and practices between bureaucrats instead of the formal rationality. Additionally, Ouchi’s (1980) notion of clans as efficient modes of organising work in manufacturing organisations stemmed from Japanese cultural relations and is a distinctive form of pre-bureaucratic organisational practices.

Even recent studies such as Casey’s (2004), which reports on how spiritual practices imbue everyday work and influence exercises of discretion in bureaucratic organisations in the UK, Australia, New Zealand and the US, reveal the continuing relevance of the pre-bureaucratic. Moreover, studies on ‘organisational misbehaviour’ can also be seen to epitomise pre-bureaucratic practices (Ackroyd & Thompson, 1999;

Knights & McCabe, 2000a). Additionally, it can be argued that the pre-bureaucratic is salient in how managers' exercises of discretion in deciding to adopt managerial fads and fashions are guided by superstitions and irrationality (see Abrahamson, 1991, 1996; Abrahamson & Fairchild, 1999; Clark & Salaman, 1998). These studies demonstrate the continuing relevance of the pre-bureaucratic even in Western developed contexts. Most of these studies have not been explored in the debate on bureaucracy versus post-bureaucracy.

This thesis, nonetheless, cannot exhaust all the literatures on the pre-bureaucratic in the field of organisation studies. The thesis, therefore, will specifically focus on the work of Gouldner (1954) and Strauss (1978), as expressions of the pre-bureaucratic, because these two studies provide valuable theoretical insights that help to vividly elucidate the pre-bureaucratic in the thesis's findings. Next, I will review studies that demonstrate the significance of local cultural practices indicative of pre-bureaucratic/pre-modern social relations (e.g., *wasta*, *guanxi*) that imbue the operation of work in contemporary organisations.

2.2.2 Wasta, Guanxi and Jeitinho as pre-bureaucratic cultural practices

Another manifestation of the pre-bureaucratic in contemporary organisations, specifically in non-Western cultural contexts, stems from the role of local cultural practices and how they shape the conduct of everyday work. In this section, I will discuss three classic examples of such practices from different and geographically varied contexts; namely, the cultural practice of '*wasta*' in the Middle East, the practice of '*guanxi*' in China, and the practice of '*jeitinho*' in Brazil. I chose these practices for three reasons. First, *wasta* is chosen because it is a central focus of this thesis. Second,

these three cultural practices originate in three different contexts and disparate parts of the globe, and hence it is helpful to draw out their similarities in terms of their pre-bureaucratic underpinnings and how widespread they are to indicate the broader relevance of the pre-bureaucratic. Third, these three practices are the most common cultural practices that have been studied in organisational settings and have been shown to imbue how organisations function in those societies. Each of these practices will be discussed next.

Wasta

Wasta is a cultural practice shaped by collectivistic familial and tribal social bonds and relations that characterise Middle Eastern societies (Aldossari & Robertson, 2016; Al-Ramahi, 2008; Brandstaetter et al., 2016). The word ‘wasta’ is derived from the term ‘waseet’, which can be translated as an ‘intercessor’. Wasta refers to a form of intercession by an influential figure (e.g., a tribal chieftain or any person of notable social status as perceived by the relevant parties), who assumes the role of an intercessor. This intercession is conducted on behalf of an individual or group to resolve a conflict between two parties or vouch for someone to establish trust such as in economic exchanges, for instance (Gold & Naufal, 2012; Lackner, 2016). Historically, the practice of wasta, in its broader sense, is used in resolving conflicts between tribes and maintaining peace (Al-Ramahi, 2008; Cunningham & Sarayrah, 1993; Thomas, 2003). In this regard, it is a pre-bureaucratic substitute for what in other context are formal bureaucratic legal-rational institutions (Lackner, 2016). Cunningham and Sararyrah, one of the earlier writers on wasta, stated that:

Wasta as mediation has a long and honourable history. In a tribal setting, wasta mediation binds families and communities for peace and well-being in a hostile

environment. This face of *wasta* benefits society as a whole, as well as the parties involved. (1994, p. 29)

Wasta thus is vital to how Middle Eastern societies function, especially before the advent of modern 'bureaucratic' institutions, which in theory were poised to replace 'wasta'. As Weber (1978) indicated, modern institutions and legal-rational rules came to 'rationalise' and replace pre-bureaucratic forms of social governance including those enshrined in cultural practices such as 'wasta'. The close-knit social bonds that characterise *wasta* stand in contrast to the 'distance' and 'depersonalisation' that a bureaucratic institution tends to bring forth (Bauman, 1989; McCabe, 2015). Nonetheless, this transition from what is presumably the pre-modern/pre-bureaucratic to the modern/bureaucratic has not materialised fully not only in Gouldner's (1954) plant or Strauss's (1978) two hospitals, but also especially in other cultural contexts such as the Middle East, where *wasta* became woven into the fabric of modern bureaucratic organisations.

Several studies have shown how *wasta* suffuses organisational practices. In the context of public sector organisations, Barnett et al., (2013) explained that:

One is said to "have *wasta*" when those from whom one can request assistance are in positions of power that make it possible for them to grant the requested assistance. Those who have *wasta* can jump the queue in acquiring public services while those who do not will struggle through the normal bureaucratic process. (ibid., p. 40).

In Middle Eastern organisations, therefore, social obligations inherent in the practice of *wasta* exist in tension with formal bureaucratic rules and what Weber called

the 'ethos of the office'. Obligations to family, clan and kin as well as customs and local social values are imbued with, and at times subvert, bureaucratic distance, formalisation, and commitment to follow the rules in the conduct of everyday work. Tribal social values and customs mean that if an employee fails to honour the intercession of esteemed members of their tribe or even those of other tribes, they will lose 'face' (Al-Ramahi, 2008; Brandstaetter et al., 2016). This, as Lackner (2016) stated, makes it:

[V]ery costly for someone to refuse to serve as a *wasta*. An individual's reputation in his tribe or solidarity network will indeed rapidly be known outside of it, and a high-ranked person refusing to perform his duties for the group will see his reputation shrink rapidly. (ibid., p.45).

Therefore, it is expected that *wasta* shapes organisational practices such as promotions (Tlass & Kauser, 2011); performance appraisals (Harbi, Thursfield, & Bright, 2017); expatriations and training (Aldossari & Robertson, 2016); legal practices and dispute resolution (Al-Ramahi, 2008) as well as facilitating business deals (Weir et al., 2016). This intermeshing of the cultural relations that underpin *wasta* with the conduct of formal work in bureaucratic organisations indicates how the pre-bureaucratic remains widespread and resilient throughout the Middle East.

Guanxi

Guanxi is a cultural practice common in Chinese speaking countries (e.g., China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore) and seems to subvert the formal bureaucratic rationality in ways that sustain forms of the pre-bureaucratic. The word 'guanxi' means 'relationship', and it is used to indicate relations of reciprocity and obligations to those involved in that relationship (Hwang, 1987; Yang, 1994). Like *wasta*, *guanxi* is

predicated on social bonds and connections among different people who act within established collectivistic cultural relations (Chen & Chen, 2004). But, unlike *wasta*, relations of reciprocity and obligations are less reliant on extended tribal bonds where typical populations of tribes in the Middle East might reach hundreds of thousands of individuals (Maisel, 2014). Instead, in Chinese cultures, familial bonds are less expansive and such relations of obligation and reciprocity are typically created with non-relative others through ritualised practices such as gift exchanges and banquets:

Guanxixue—the “art of *guanxi*”—involves the exchange of gifts, favors, and banquets; the cultivation of personal relationships and networks of mutual dependence; and the creation of obligation and indebtedness. What informs these practices and their native descriptions is the primacy and binding power of personal relationships. (Ledeneva, 2008, p. 120).

These exchanges of gifts are not made purely based on economic terms rather they are “ritualised, codified, and predictable” (ibid., p.128).

Although *guanxi* often involves the exchange of gifts, these gifts are viewed as investments in the relationship. The emphasis in China is on the relationship being built [...]. They are not fee-for-service bribes, as they often are in other countries. (Xin & Pearce, 1996, p. 1646).

Even though the relationship built (the *guanxi*) might not be based on familial bonds, it can still be strong and long-lived as it is maintained through institutionalised behaviours (e.g., banqueting or gift exchanges) and norms of reciprocity (see Gouldner, 1960).

This reciprocity is not one of universalistic exchange between autonomous actors but one of socially situated obligations. [...] obligations of reciprocity are heavily shaped by the hierarchically structured network of *guanxi* in which one is involved, by the long time period over which these relations are expected to last, and by the public nature of the obligations incurred in continuing exchanges. (Hwang, 1987, p.968).

Typically, individuals carry these reciprocal obligations enshrined in *guanxi* into their economic activities and work practices within formal organisations. Several studies show how *guanxi* is instrumental in how organisations function in China and similar neighbouring countries. *Guanxi* has been shown to shape the process of tendering and contracting (Xin & Pearce, 1996); Human Resource Management (HRM) (Chen, Chen, & Xin, 2004); firms' profitability and competitiveness (Park & Luo, 2001); supervisor-subordinate work relations (Farh, Tsui, Xin, & Cheng, 1998; Liu & Liu, 2018); supplier search and choice practices (Millington, Eberhardt, & Wilkinson, 2006). In all these settings, *guanxi* colours decision making, allocation of resources, and dispensing of services in a pre-bureaucratic fashion characterised by different forms of favouritism that benefit those that engage in *guanxi*. Next, I will discuss another similar cultural practice from the Brazilian context.

Jeitinho

Jeitinho is a cultural practice that pervades Brazilian organisational lives. Similar to *guanxi* and *wasta*, *jeitinho* 'refers to the importance of personal relationships (e.g., family, friends, neighbors, classmates) as reflected in the Brazilian maxim "for friends, everything; for enemies, the law"' (Chen et al., 2017, p. 65). Others describe it as a form of "creative ingenuity in rapidly achieving short-term solutions to problems. This may include ways of circumventing bureaucratic rules or

of avoiding potential difficulties with superiors in strongly hierarchical contexts.” (Smith et al., 2012, p. 336). Jeitinho, therefore, is seen to resemble pre-bureaucratic practices that help individuals to bypass bureaucratic rules and regulations. Rosenn (1971) referred to it as a form of an ‘institutional bypass’ that while might entail clear rule-breaking such as in *guanxi* and *wasta*; it is mostly nonetheless, enacted through manipulating rules in favour of someone else in ways that preserve a “façade of legitimacy” (ibid., p.548). An example of such an exercise of jeitinho is illustrated in the following quote from Rosenn (1971) where one individual was engaged in jeitinho during a case of migration to Brazil:

During his visa appointment with the Brazilian consul in Paris, the would-be immigrant was asked his profession. He replied that he had recently graduated from medical school. The consul responded, “Then in place of doctor, let’s put down agronomist. In that way I can issue you a visa immediately. You know how these things are? Professional quotas, confidential instructions from the department of immigration. Nonsense! . . . In any event, this way will make it perfectly legal. (ibid., p. 514).

In this regard, the processing of the visa for this immigrant appears legal when looking at the record, but in reality, creative manipulation of rules was involved in helping this individual gain entry to the country. Jeitinho thus seems to subvert the bureaucratic formalism and legal rationality, but in ways that are more subtle than in the cases of *wasta* or *guanxi*. But like *wasta* and *guanxi*, local cultural relations remain central to how jeitinho is exercised.

These cultural relations are characterised by what Duarte (2006) called ‘*simpatia*’ or emotions of sympathy toward others. Typically, jeitinho;

[R]equires certain ‘techniques’ to foster *simpatia* (e.g. a smile and a gentle, pleading tone of voice); it can be used between strangers, but it works more effectively between people who know each other; and it is perceived by Brazilians as an important element of their cultural identity. (ibid., p.511).

This dominance of emotions over what should be a formalised, and depersonalised bureaucratic encounter indicates the pre-bureaucratic characteristics of the cultural practice of *jeitinho*. Empirical studies on how *jeitinho* imbues organisational practices are very limited with few notable exceptions such as Duarte (2006), who revealed how *jeitinho* was crucial to the everyday operations of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) in Brazil. Duarte highlighted the positive elements of *jeitinho* in helping NGOs to fulfil some of their social change objectives under severe economic and bureaucratic constraints.

In conclusion, it is prudent to highlight that pre-bureaucratic practices such as *wasta*, *guanxi*, or *jeitinho* exist widely in other contexts where they are embedded in and enacted through local cultural relations. Additional examples of these include ‘*blat*’ in Russia and ‘*jaan-pehchaan*’ in India (see Puffer, McCarthy, Jaeger, & Dunlap, 2013; Smith et al., 2012). What these practices share is that they represent culturally shaped patterns of pre-bureaucratic practices that subvert what otherwise might be rationalised bureaucratic organisations. The fact that these practices are widespread in contexts such as China, India, Brazil, Russia and Middle Eastern countries indicate their importance to our understanding of how organisations operate. Yet, these practices have not received attention in the debate on bureaucracy versus post-bureaucracy. This thesis is positioned to address this shortcoming and advance the debate through considering the role of the cultural practice of *wasta*. Next, I will review another expression of the pre-bureaucratic, namely, the literature on street-

level bureaucracy, which focuses on the bureaucratic discretion through which such cultural practices are enacted in formal organisations.

2.2.3 Street-level bureaucracy as an expression of the pre-bureaucratic

The street-level bureaucracy literature developed around a central notion in Weber's work, namely, the irrational, or in other words the not legally rational, exercises of discretion that epitomise pre-bureaucratic ideal types and how they can be curtailed and bureaucratised (Brodkin, 2012; Lipsky, 2010). For Weber, bureaucracy in the guise of formal rules and a structure of control is supposed to curtail individual discretion that deviates from the logic of formal rationality hence overcoming the pre-bureaucratic. Nonetheless, as the street-level bureaucracy literature shows, exercises of discretion remain; especially in the context of public service delivery, despite bureaucratisation (Brodkin, 2007; Evans, 2015; Evans & Harris, 2004).

The notion of street-level bureaucracy was first introduced by Lipsky (1969) in his study of the behaviour of policemen in the United States. Street-level bureaucratic organisations according to Lipsky are bureaucratic organisations that deliver public services to citizens. Examples of such organisations “are the schools, police and welfare departments, lower courts, legal services offices, and other agencies whose workers interact with and have wide discretion over the dispensation of benefits or the allocation of public sanctions.” (Lipsky, 2010, p. xi). Street-level bureaucratic organisations are thus at the frontline of the public bureaucracy where most government-public interactions take place (Prottas, 1979; Weatherley, 1979). Along those lines, street-level bureaucrats are the “people who represent an organization via face-to-face encounter with its clients.” (Prottas, 1979, p. 2). Typical examples of street-level bureaucrats are

front-line staff in public organisations, case officers, police officers, teachers, nursing homes workers, and other workers whose work entails direct interaction with the public (Lipsky, 2010).

In this respect, the ‘street-level’ is a context of social interactions and practices; a unique one according to Lipsky because it is where formal policies clash with complex street-level realities (Hupe et al., 2015; Weatherley, 1979). It is in this context that street-level bureaucrats find the space to exercise discretion, improvise and devise alternative rules as they process clients’ cases and interact with them (see also Bartels, 2013; Evans, 2015; Fineman, 1998; Radoynovska, 2018). In this regard, “the street-level perspective recognizes that front-line workers retain extensive discretion in the sense of the freedom to make decision in a work role, despite manager’s attempts to curtail their freedom” (Evans, 2015, p. 3). Such discretion, as Lipsky (1983; 2010) argued seems to be an inevitable aspect of street-level work:

[T]he essence of street-level bureaucracies is that they require people to make decisions about other people. Street-level bureaucrats have discretion because the nature of service provision calls for human judgment that cannot be programmed and for which machines cannot substitute. (Lipsky, 2010, p. 161).

Such inescapable exercises of discretion at the street-level became a conduit for the persistence of the pre-bureaucratic. Lipsky, for instance, viewed street-level discretion as constitutive of a “corrupted world of service” (2010, p. xv) where formal policy is routinely side-lined in a context where the practices and decisions of street bureaucrats “become, or add up to, agency policy,” and that their actions effectively “become” the public policies they carry out” (Lipsky, 2010, p. 221). Street-level bureaucrats, in other words, “function as policy co-makers” (Hupe et al., 2015, p. 16),

elusive of traditional bureaucratic control and accountability mechanisms. Lipsky's assertion is similar to Strauss's finding on the pre-bureaucratic, reviewed earlier, that showed how workers negotiate and fashion new rules and arrangements in practice.

One distinctively pre-bureaucratic element that emerges through exercises of discretion at the street-level is bias and favouritism in the delivery of public services (Maynard-Moody & Musheno, 2000; Radoynovska, 2018). Through his extensive observations of street-level bureaucrats, Lipsky contended that "the work of street-level bureaucrats could hardly be farther from the bureaucratic ideal of impersonal detachment in decision making" (2010, p.9). This is because street-level bureaucrats use discretion to develop personal routines and practices, which while, on the one hand, help them to deal with complexity in their jobs, are, on the other hand, not free from "personal biases, including the prejudices that blatantly and subtly permeate society" (Lipsky, 2010, p.85). Street-level work, according to Lipsky, thus becomes a context where:

[D]ifferentiating among clients may take place because of workers' preferences for some clients over others. They may prefer some clients over others, despite official norms to the contrary [...] workers [...] may favor clients with similar ethnic backgrounds, as when racial or ethnic favoritism prevails in discriminatory decision making. (2010, p.108).

Empirical illustrations of such favouritism are many in the literature on street-level bureaucracy. For example, Wenger and Wilkins (2009) illustrated how that female applicants were subject to discrimination by street-level bureaucrats in the Unemployment Insurance claims process in the US showing how "women were perceived as less deserving of benefits" (ibid., p.216). Radoynovska's (2018) also

discussed how street-level bureaucrats exercises of discretion constitute “micro-practices that (re)produce inequitable resource allocation” (ibid., p. 1). She studied the work of street-level bureaucrats at a French social service organisation where she found that staff exercised discretion in deciding for whom should the formal rules regarding the provision of social services be bent and for whom they should be enforced. She found that rules are routinely bent in a systemic manner resulting in what she called ‘rules of exceptionalism’ (ibid., p.3). Fineman (1998) also examined the work of street-level bureaucrats as environmental regulations inspectors in the UK. He found that “[f]ormal rules and roles are likely to be more plastic than they appear” (ibid, p.954) and that the inspectors as street-level bureaucrats fashioned their own informal rules underpinned by subjective feelings and emotions in their attempts to ensure environmental protection. He argued that “[w]hat an inspector feels about an operator and the operator about him/her (e.g. anger, rage, embarrassment, fear, pride, admiration, shame), is intrinsic to rule making and the control process.” (ibid., p.970).

These are few illustrative examples from the literature on street-level bureaucracy that illustrate how street-level bureaucratic work is a distinctive expression of practices characterised as ‘pre-bureaucratic’ in Weber’s (1978) work. Indeed, as Fineman had argued “street-level bureaucracy is a far cry from the Weberian image of monolithic rules and standardized procedures.” (Fineman, 1999, p. 969). The general assertion in this literature is that street-level “discretion may be inevitable” (Hupe & Hill, 2007, p. 281), and it remains elusive of traditional bureaucratic control structures thus sustaining street-level bureaucracy as an expression of the pre-bureaucratic.

It is worth mentioning at this juncture that not all writers on the topic of street-level bureaucracy seem to be keen on finding ways to curtail and control discretion or

adopt a negative stance toward it. Tummers and Bekkers (2014) for instance argued that “it is important to note that when drafting policy programme it can be beneficial to give the implementing street-level bureaucrats some (perceived) freedom to adjust the policy programme in order to be effective and legitimate” (2014, p.541). Another interesting line of thought is provided by the works of Maynard-Moody and Musheno (2000, 2015; 2003), which paints a more positive image of street-level bureaucrats. Maynard-Moody and Musheno, reporting on street-level organisations in the US, provided a different picture of street-level work as imbued with positive emotions that at times provided a desirable break from the rational bureaucratic formality. Such a view is illustrated through the metaphor of ‘State Agent or Citizen Agent’ (2000, p.329). They posited that some street-level bureaucrats made sense of their role as agents for the citizens instead of agents of the state hence exercising discretion in the pursuit of ensuring equity for each citizen even if that meant deviating from formal rules (see also Tummers & Rocco, 2015). Nonetheless, the overall focus in the literature remains concerned with finding ways to curtail discretion, or in other words, eliminate the pre-bureaucratic in favour of ensuring formalisation, efficiency and adequate fulfilment of the function of public bureaucratic organisations in modern societies (Brodkin, 2012).

At this juncture, it is important to highlight that the street-level bureaucracy literature, while succinctly reveals the persistence of the pre-bureaucratic, remains limited by the fact that it is confined to Western developed cultural contexts. Street-level bureaucratic work is understudied in non-Western contexts. In Middle Eastern contexts, unique practices such as *wasta* and the use of Tracers are, in theory, predicated on street-level bureaucrats’ exercises of discretion; nonetheless, these dynamics have not been studied empirically before from a street-level bureaucracy perspective. Moreover, street-level bureaucracy has not been studied in relation to post-bureaucracy

either in Western or non-Western contexts. This thesis aims to fill these gaps in knowledge.

To recapitulate, thus far I have reviewed the work of Weber on the shift from the pre-bureaucratic to rationalisation and bureaucracy. Then, I reviewed the literature that indicates the continuing relevance of the pre-bureaucratic from ethnographic studies conducted in Western contexts (e.g., Gouldner, 1954; Strauss, 1978), cultural practices in non-Western contexts (e.g., *wasta*, *guanxi*, *jeitinho*) to the literature on street-level bureaucracy as an expression of the pre-bureaucratic. In the next section, I will review the literature on the shift from bureaucracy to post-bureaucracy. While there are different definitions and forms of post-bureaucracy, specific attention will be given to those relevant to the public sector such as New Public Management and eGovernment on which the thesis focuses. This literature will be reviewed as an instance of the broader debate on bureaucracy versus post-bureaucracy in the field of organisation studies. References to and juxtapositions with the elements of pre-bureaucracy and bureaucracy from which the post-bureaucratic departs will be drawn on to further crystallise the focus of the thesis.

2.3 The Post-bureaucratic age: Deterministic prescriptions and hybrid outcomes

Every age develops an organizational form peculiar to it. The prevailing form, known by sociologists as bureaucracy, is out of joint with contemporary realities [...] It was an organization ideally suited to the values and demands of the Victorian era. And just as bureaucracy emerged as a creative response to a radically new age, so today new organizational shapes are surfacing before our eyes. (Bennis, 1967, pp. 19–20).

In this section, I will review the different arguments proclaiming the shift to post-bureaucracy. As early as the 1960s, writers such as Bennis (1965, 1966, 1967) announced “the coming death of bureaucracy” (1967) and began discussing new forms of work “beyond bureaucracy” (1965) that, it was believed, are triggered by technological advances and the intensification of competition (see also Thompson, 1965). The bureaucracy Weber discussed, as Bennis (1967) argued, was being outdated by the “evolution of a new “post-bureaucratic” managerial system” (Miewald, 1970, p. 65). The thrust of Bennis’s arguments, as well as those of most protagonists of post-bureaucracy, is that we are entering a post-industrial epoch characterised by rapid competition and advances in Information Technology that require greater collaboration and innovation, which are hampered by the institution of bureaucracy with its emphasis on proceduralism, rule following, and departmentalism (Heckscher, 1994, 2015; Heydebrand, 1989; Miewald, 1970). Several commentators have followed this epochalist logic such as Osborne and Gaebler (1992) and Castells (1997, 2011).

There is a proliferation of ideas regarding what exactly constitutes the ‘post-bureaucratic’ type. At this stage, it seems that “new organizational forms are many but united by one thing—they are all conceived in opposition to the classic model of bureaucracy. For this reason, they are sometimes termed post-bureaucratic” (Clegg, 2011, p.218). Nonetheless, Heckscher (1994; 2015) attempted to theorise an ideal type of post-bureaucracy based on a study of the reforms that fall under its rubric. He summarised these elements saying:

There are at least three major images of what the future organization might look like: 1) Maximal decentralization, with high individual autonomy and a stronger role for market mechanisms. 2) Cooperative mutualism, with local production

and exchange; 3) Collaborative networks, with flexible teams in complex relations of alliance and partnership. (Heckscher, 2015, p. 245).

Clegg (2011) adds the vital role of information technology in enabling and fostering cross-functional collaboration, decentralisation, and enhancing efficiency (see also Fountain, 2001; Heydebrand, 1989; McSweeney, 2017; Nohria & Berkley, 1994).

Cross-functional collaboration, innovation, decentralisation, efficiency, and market mechanism, as typical elements of the post-bureaucratic, are all strongly present in the claims regarding public sector reforms under the rubric of New Public Management (NPM) (see Dunleavy & Hood, 1994) from which emerged the notion of the ‘electronic government’ (Gore, 1997; Silcock, 2001). Each, NPM and eGovernment, will be explained in what follows.

2.3.1 The New Public Management (NPM) reforms: The agenda

“Because of the particularly intense condemnation of public sector management as ‘bureaucratic’, many NPM supporters, implementers, and commentators label every organizational change in the public sector as ‘post-bureaucratic’.” (McSweeney, 2017, p. 7).

The late 1980s and 1990s, witnessed a time of transformations in the organising of work in both private and public sectors (Hood, 1995b). Transformations and innovations such as Business Process Reengineering (BPR) (Hammer & Champy, 1993) and Total Quality Management (TQM) (Deming, 1986) promised efficiency and cost-effectiveness in a time of increased competition (Knights & McCabe, 2003; McCabe & Wilkinson, 1998). Influential protagonists of post-bureaucratic reforms such as Osborne and Gaebler (1992), gained worldwide popularity and their ideas of how

governments should be transformed received attention inside world-leading governments (see du Gay, 2003). Indeed, not long after Osborne and Gaebler published their book “Reinventing Government”, the US government introduced its national strategy of public sector transformation in 1993. Similarly, other world-leading governments such as the UK, Australia and New Zealand also embarked on reform programs that became known as the ‘New Public Management (NPM)’ reforms (Hood, 1991) from which the notion of eGovernment emerged (Bannister & Connolly, 2012; Bannister & Grönlund, 2017; Bekkers & Homburg, 2007; Henman, 2010).

NPM reforms are understood as “a loose collection of policy and management initiatives designed to increase efficiency, accountability, and performance in bureaucratic states largely through greater use of markets and market-based management systems” (Fountain, 2001, p. 19). A typical NPM mode of organising is introduced in Osborne and Gaebler’s (1992) description of what ‘entrepreneurial’ governments ought to do. Such governments thus:

[P]romote competition between service providers. They empower citizens by pushing control out of the bureaucracy, into the community. They measure the performance of their agencies, focusing not on inputs but on outcomes. They are driven by their goals— their missions—not by their rules and regulations. They redefine their clients as customers and offer them choices—between schools, between training programs, between housing options. They prevent problems before they emerge, rather than simply offering services afterward. They put their energies into earning money, not simply spending it. They decentralize authority, embracing participatory management. They prefer market mechanisms to bureaucratic mechanisms. And they focus not simply on

providing public services but on catalysing all sectors—public, private and voluntary—into action to solve their community’s problems. (1992, pp. 19–20 original emphasis).

These prescriptions constitute a departure from typical bureaucratic norms that shaped public service organisations; hence goals and missions are given precedence over rules and citizens are redefined as customers (du Gay, 2004; du Gay & Salaman, 1992). Along the lines of Osborne and Gaebler’s prescriptions, the delivery of public services such as health care, education, and social work was reconfigured into more or less internal markets in order to “replace monopolistic state providers with competitive independent ones” (Le Grand, 1991, p. 43). This is justified on the basis of enhancing government-public interactions by giving more freedom to citizens in choosing among different public service providers, who, presumably, will be pressured into efficiency through competing with other providers (Aucoin, 1990; Claver, Llopis, Gasco, Molina, & Conca, 1999; Hood, 1995a; Peters & Pierre, 1998).

The underlying assumption in such reforms is that the pushing out of government services into the marketplace, will not only enhance customer satisfaction and provide more alternatives, but will also relieve government budgets, by limiting and shaping its role into a regulator of these markets (Dunleavy & Hood, 1994; Hood, 1995b). Moreover, governments can also generate more revenue through privatising government organisations, thus transforming them into *profit centres* instead of *cost-centres* (Osborne & Gaebler, 1992). This is evident in market mechanisms such as Private Finance Initiatives (PFIs) or Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) where private companies are granted permissions to set-up, operate, and profit from public projects whose ownership remains in the hands of governments (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2011).

These market mechanisms are a central feature of how ‘eGovernment’ projects were funded and implemented (Dunleavy et al., 2006).

2.3.2 The eGovernment as a post-bureaucratic form

Along with the primacy given to market-based mechanism, information technology was also heralded as a major force in post-bureaucratic organising; especially in the public sector (Clegg, 2011; Harris, 2006; McSweeney, 2017). The concept of eGovernment emerged in the early 1990s, a time that witnessed a proliferation of computers and information systems into the realm of work (Kraemer & King, 1986, 2006; Prasad, 1993; Woolgar & Grint, 1991). It was a time when “the discourse about computerization advanced in many professional magazines and the mass media is saturated with talk about revolution” (Kling, 1991, p. 363). Such sentiment can be detected in how eGovernment was defined in government plans; especially the US government’s 1993 reforms.

In those plans, eGovernment is defined as the utilisation of technology to ‘transform how citizens interact with government ...[and]...to provide better access to government services ...[through] ... putting people “online, not in line”’ (‘Access America: Electronic Government’, 2001, para. 1). Underpinning such transformation, according to the then US vice president Al Gore, is an:

[I]dea of reengineering through technology... [where]... Information technology (IT) was and is the great enabler for reinvention. It allows us to rethink, in fundamental ways, how people work and how we serve customers...[eGovernment]...paint[s] a picture of the kind of government we should have as we begin the next century. It will be a government where all Americans have the opportunity to get services electronically and where, aided

by technology, the productivity of government operations will be soaring. (Gore, 1997, sec. Introduction).

Today, information technology can create the government of the future, the electronic government. [The] [e]lectronic government overcomes the barriers of time and distance to perform the business of government and give people public information and services when and where they want them. It can swiftly transfer funds, answer questions, collect and validate data, and keep information flowing smoothly within and outside government. (National Partnership for Reinventing Government, 1993, sec. Executive Summary).

With this centralisation of IT in creating *the government of the future* and the evident private sector logic, several “leading-edge countries” (Dunleavy et al., 2006, p.468) embarked on eGovernment transformations in the late 1990s and early 2000s. In the UK for instance, Silcock (2001) in preaching eGovernment painted such a picture that:

For the first time since the creation of the modern welfare state, there is now a real opportunity to ‘reinvent’ government. With the help of the big IT vendors, governments are realising that by applying the same principles and technologies that are fuelling the e-business revolution, they can achieve a similar transformation. The result: the emergence of e-Government. (2001, p. 88).

Government bureaucratic organisations thus were poised to be reinvented through technology leading to a better, efficient, responsive post-bureaucratic organisations (Bloomfield & Hayes, 2009; Dunleavy et al., 2006; Fountain, 2001; Henman, 2010; Homburg, 2008; Meijer, 2008; Plesner et al., 2018). Typical bureaucratic modes of work were subjected to reengineering and digitisation to realise post-bureaucratic forms of work that foster greater collaboration, innovation, and

efficiency (Bélanger & Carter, 2012; Clegg, 2011; Harris, 2006; Pors, 2015). Building on the NPM narrative, this logic stemmed mainly from private sector practices. Indeed, “[l]ike many managerial concepts and practices in public administration (TQM, strategic management, participative management, etc.), the idea of eGovernment followed private-sector adoption of so-called e-business and e-commerce” (Moon, 2002, p. 425).

A review of the literature shows that there are three distinctive hallmarks of eGovernment as a post-bureaucratic form. The first is the mass-digitisation of work processes and service delivery (Dunleavy et al., 2006). The second is the ‘joining-up’ of hitherto separate and disconnected departments and organisations (see 6, 2004; Carey & Crammond, 2015; Cordella & Iannacci, 2010; Pollitt, 2003). The third, an outcome of digitisation and joining-up, is a reconfiguration of public services delivery along the lines of seamless ‘one-stop shops’ (see Askim, Fimreite, Moseley, & Pedersen, 2011; Bloomfield & Hayes, 2009; Introna et al., 2009). All these aspects stem from a distinctive ‘citizen-centric’ logic that underpinned eGovernment projects.

Digitisation: From paper-based to electronic-based operations

A central pillar in eGovernment reforms, as US vice president Al Gore’s (1997) report indicated, is reengineering and digitising service delivery procedures using ICTs. Such re-engineering is underpinned by the assumption that digitising government operations —moving from paper-based to electronic-based procedures— and introducing electronic services will result in significant productivity and cost-reduction gains (Bekkers & Homburg, 2007; Bélanger & Carter, 2012; Plesner et al., 2018). The general assumption is that this can be achieved through what Dunleavy et al., (2006) called “radical disintermediation”.

Radical disintermediation denotes the potential for Web-based processes [...] to allow citizens, businesses, and other civil society actors to connect directly to state systems, without passing through the previously universal gatekeepers in the form of civil service or agency personnel. (2006, p.486).

It is prudent at this juncture to highlight that such gatekeepers are indeed the street-level bureaucrats that Lipsky (2010) discussed. In this vein, eGovernment reforms have the potential to disintermediate street-level bureaucrats and significantly curtail the pre-bureaucratic street-level issues stemming from their exercises of discretion (Reddick, 2005).

An implication of digitisation and ‘disintermediation’ is a reliance on the citizen in handling and managing their access and usage of electronic services. Dunleavy et al., (2006) call this “isocratic management”, which they define as “a shift from agency-centered to citizen-centered (or business-centered or stakeholder centered) processes, where citizens or businesses substantially run their interactions with government” (Dunleavy et al., 2006, p. 487). This theme builds on a similar argument in eCommerce deployment in the private sector in the 1990s, where eCommerce was heralded as bringing about the demise of costly middlemen such as wholesale and physical retail sellers (Gellman, 1996; Sen & King, 2003; Wigand & Benjamin, 1995). In this regard, digitisation is not only seen to reduce paperwork, and pre-bureaucratic practices such as favouritism, but also reducing hierarchy and enhancing decentralisation through rendering front-line staff redundant and distributing their power to individual citizens as they can process their own cases digitally. This is one illustration of the post-bureaucratic character of eGovernment.

‘Joined-up government.’

‘Joined-up government’ (JUG) is a distinctive feature of eGovernment reforms; it refers to the organisational joining-up of policy formulation, implementation, and public service delivery through the utilisation of ICTs (6, 2004; Carey & Crammond, 2015; O’Flynn, Buick, Blackman, & Halligan, 2011; Pollitt, 2003). Joining-up is described as post-bureaucratic because it constitutes an attempt to eliminate through technology the adverse effects of bureaucratic departmentalism and officialdom and enhance cross-functional collaboration (Bannister, 2005; Bloomfield & Hayes, 2009; Heckscher, 2015). Departmentalism, specifically in the British context where ‘Joining-up’ reforms were first introduced, was considered an impediment to collaboration and efficient and responsive policy formulations and implementation in the public sector (Davies, 2009; Downe & Martin, 2006):

With the launch of electronic government (e-government), departmentalism became associated with the notion of ‘information silos’ ... [which are] ... places where information was seen to be inert, thereby creating inefficiency and contributing to the lack of citizen focus in public services. For advocates of e-government the belief was that, instead of a maze of inaccessible institutions and services, technology would bring transparency and accessibility. (Bloomfield & Hayes, 2009, p.462).

‘Joining-up’ thus is best viewed as a process of reconfiguring public administration beyond the bureaucratic logic and toward a vision of an ‘electronic government’ that is citizen-centric, joined-up, streamlined, and post-bureaucratic (Silcock, 2001). A product of such joining-up projects is the emergence of the ‘one-stop’ shop concept in the provision of public services (Bloomfield & Hayes, 2009).

Government ‘One-stop shops.’

The citizen-centric logic underpinning Joining-up and digitisation manifests most clearly in the emergence of new forms of service delivery channels; namely, ‘one-stop’ shops (Askim et al., 2011; Hayes, Introna, & Petrakaki, 2014; Lambrou, 2003; Ongaro, 2004; Wills & Halligan, 2008; Wimmer, 2002). One-stop shops aggregate government services in one place in the quest of delivering “seamless rather than fragmented access to a set of related services” (Pollitt, 2003, p. 35). One-stop shops can be both physical (see Hayes, Introna, & Petrakaki, 2014) as well as digital in the form of online portals (see Wimmer, 2002); advanced ICTs and joining-up reforms enable both forms of one-stop shops.

One-stop shops can be seen as engendering post-bureaucratic modes of work in that they are enacted through distinctively private sector rationalities such as customer-centricity and an entrepreneurial logic instead of, for instance, the typical bureaucratic forms of work that give precedence to rules and proceduralism (Bloomfield & Hayes, 2009). Such one-stop shops are funded and operated to a large extent by the private sector through Private-Public Partnerships (PPPs) (Duneleavy et al., 2006). The concept of one-stop shops was first implemented in the 1990s and it is derived from the practices of eCommerce retailers as evident in US eGovernment reforms (see Clinton, 1999).

- In conclusion, eGovernment involves much more than installing advanced ICTs (Bannister & Connolly, 2012; Fountain, 2001). While technology is a central aspect of such initiatives, there are, nevertheless, distinct changes in patterns of work and modes of organising (Barley & Kunda, 2001). Digitisation, joining-up and one-stop shops, when contrasted with the traditional bureaucratic models of public service, seem indeed to engender intentions to move beyond traditional bureaucratic work (McSweeney, 2017). In this regard, the changes that come

with eGovernment are guided by the same post-bureaucratic logic that writers such as Heckscher (1994; 2015) indicated. While, eGovernment reforms take bureaucracy as their anti-thesis, pre-bureaucratic practices are rarely discussed in this literature. Of course, an exception is the debate on eGovernment and street-level bureaucracy, where digitisation is thought of as a central means through which irrational exercises of discretion can be curtailed; even this point is highly contested as we shall see in the next sections. Figure 2.2 below highlights the contrasts between the pre-bureaucratic, bureaucratic and post-bureaucratic modes of organising and work practices discussed thus far. In the following section, I will review empirical studies on the outcomes of eGovernment reforms.

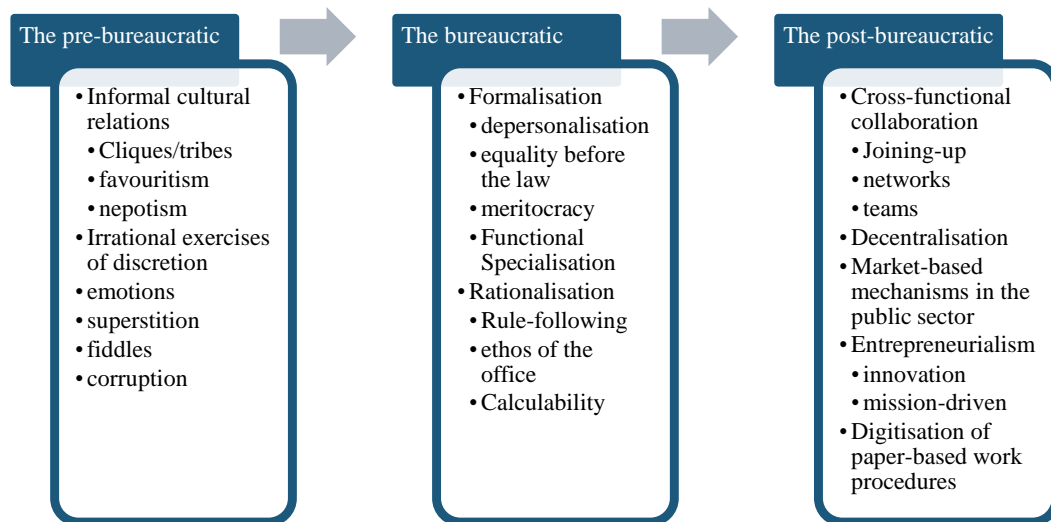


Figure 2: Pre-bureaucratic, bureaucratic, and post-bureaucratic practices and rationalities.

2.3.3 Outcomes of New Public Management and eGovernment reforms

In this section, I will review empirical studies on the outcomes of post-bureaucratic reforms; specifically, NPM and eGovernment. I will use the penultimate section of this chapter for critical reflections on the broader debate on bureaucracy versus post-bureaucracy. The narrative around post-bureaucratic transformations; especially of writers such as Bennis (1965), Osborne and Gaebler (1993) Gore (1997) or even Silcock (2001), is distinctively epochalist and to a large extent deterministic (du Gay, 2003). It is epochalist in the sense that it assumes discontinuities between the bureaucratic and the post-bureaucratic not to mention the pre-bureaucratic, which is not discussed. Such an epochalist narrative is evident in the prescriptions and assumptions of such writers regarding the demise of bureaucracy and the rise of post-bureaucratic forms such as eGovernment. It must be acknowledged, however, that “the consumption of management knowledge is a precarious affair. Gurus are unable to control how their texts are used and managers are unable to control how employees will respond to them” (McCabe, 2011, p. 196). Indeed, the outcomes of the applications of such ideas have been incongruent with those proclaimed. This is evident in the public administration literature on the outcomes of NPM reforms (Hoggett, 1996; Hood, 2000; Hood & Peters, 2004; Hood & Scott, 1996; Pollitt, 1995) as well as the post-bureaucracy (see Courpasson & Reed, 2004; Josserand et al., 2006; McSweeney, 2006), and eGovernment literatures (Bloomfield & Hayes, 2009; Harris, 2006, 2011; Henman, 2010; Introna et al., 2009; Meijer, 2008, 2008; Plesner et al., 2018).

For instance, the introduction of market structures and competition dynamics has not been as effective as the protagonists predicted (Hood, 2000). Internal markets and competition mechanisms when introduced in the UK under the NPM umbrella led

to several issues, the most common of which was an increase in costs. For instance, Dunleavy et al., (2006) drawing on the implementation of these market mechanisms in the UK health care sector, found that the “logistical and cognitive requirements of pricing 15,000 different hospital procedures proved to have stimulated a considerable growth of back-office administrators to the detriment of frontline staff numbers and patient treatment” (Dunleavy et al., 2006, p.472). These increased costs defeated the purpose of NPM reforms. Similarly, the adoption of Private Finance Initiatives (PFIs) did not yield expected cost reductions, and this led the UK government to eliminate for instance PFIs relating to IT infrastructure projects (see Bridgman & Willmott, 2006; Hood, 2000).

The implementation of ‘decentralisation’ and disaggregation of public service organisations in the quest of efficiency and cost-effectiveness was likewise problematic (Hood & Scott, 1996). New Zealand is a case-in-point of the problematic nature of disaggregation reforms; “New Zealand’s pioneering NPM structural changes have left a country of 3.5 million people with over three hundred separate central agencies and forty tiny ministries, in addition to local and health service authority” (Dunleavy et al., 2006, p.471). Such decentralisation in New Zealand led not to greater entrepreneurialism and innovation as Osborne and Gaebler had posited, it, instead, led to soaring costs and significant economic crises in that country.

Additionally, a considerable body of empirical evidence indicates that the utopia of market organising and the demise of bureaucracy have been greatly exaggerated (Adcroft & Willis, 2005; Boin, James, & Lodge, 2006; Christensen, 2012; Christensen & Lægreid, 2010; du Gay, 2005; Graeme, 2005; Hoggett, 1996; Lynn Jr., 1998; Pollitt, 2006; Reed, 2005). Hoggett (1996) for instance, found that instituting post-bureaucratic

reforms such as competition, contracting out, and outcome-driven performance measurement have in many ways led to:

[C]reating new layers of bureaucracy engaged in contract specification and monitoring, quality control, inspection, audit and review and diverting the energies of professional staff away from service and programme delivery into a regime of form-filling, report writing and procedure- following which is arguably even more extensive than that which existed during the former bureaucratic era. (1996, p.28).

Several other empirical evidences support the assertions that “market mechanisms have not worked: they have not provided greater public choice in the main and they have increased bureaucracy” (Farrell & Morris, 2003, pp. 149–150).

In the case of eGovernment, “[t]he result of digitalization has not really been the development of postbureaucratic organizations that was widely imagined in the new organizational forms literature.” (Clegg, 2011, p. 217). Indeed, qualitative empirical studies sensitised to the fallacies of technological determinism seem to support this view. Introna, Hayes, and Petrakaki (2009) drawing on evidence from the Greek case of eGovernment reforms stated that “e-government based modernization projects are more likely to reproduce, in more complex ways, the long established public sector practices it sought to change” (2009, p.11). Along similar lines, Holden, Norris, and Fletcher’s (2003) empirical evidence on eGovernment in the U.S. also seem to show that “regardless of the hype surrounding it, e-government at the grass roots in the United States is not a panacea” (2003, p.341). Similarly, Kraemer and King’s (1986, 2006) longitudinal empirical studies on digitisation in the US public sector suggest that “[t]he reform hypothesis is fundamentally misguided because it assumes that organizational

elites want their organizations to change and that they are willing to use IT to accomplish such change” (Kraemer & King, 2006, p.4). They argued that digitisation projects are embarked upon for political reasons such as enhancing an agency’s image for instance instead of organisational reasons (see also Kling, 1991). Similarly, Norris and Reddick (2013) drawing on extensive quantitative empirical assessments of US local eGovernment programs, argued that “[t]here is little or no evidence from these data that e-government has transformed information and service delivery, has transformed the governments themselves, or has changed relationships between the governments and the governed” (2013, p.174).

Additionally, literature relating to specific eGovernment initiatives such as ‘Joining-up’ and ‘one-stop’ shops paints a similar picture. Such studies reveal that the technological capabilities of joining-up have been over-emphasised at the expense of organisational and social dynamics (Bannister, 2005; Bloomfield & Hayes, 2009; Cole & Fenwick, 2003; Hazlett & Hill, 2003). Bannister (2005), among others, looking beyond the technical capabilities of ICTs for ‘joining-up’, argued that ‘joining-up’ and attempts to eliminate departmentalism and silos led to turf wars and power conflicts that defeated the purpose of such reforms (see also Cole & Fenwick, 2003; Davies, 2009). Additionally, Bloomfield and Hayes (2009) in their study of one-stop shops in six local governments in the UK found that one-stop shops were enacted under a front-back end configuration that in many ways helped sustain the old status quo in the back-end. They concluded that front-ends or “virtual (electronically mediated) forms of organisation rely upon the non-virtual, they tend to ‘supplement’ rather than ‘substitute’ existing organisational practices” (2009, p.482).

Along similar lines, Fountain (2001) for instance, drawing on evidence from the US eGovernment reforms, posited that “individuals in institutions tend to enact new information systems to reproduce existing rules, routines, norms, and power relations” (2001, p.89). Fountain’s assertion is shared by a wide range of studies on eGovernment reforms that seem to adopt an institutionalist perspective (Cordella & Iannacci, 2010; Hassan & Gil-Garcia, 2008; Lips, 2007, 2012).

2.3.4 Street-level bureaucracy and eGovernment

The eGovernment reforms were presented as addressing the organisational issues identified in the street-level bureaucracy literature such as exercises of discretion by bureaucrats in the context of service delivery (Buffat, 2015). The argument in this literature is that if street-level work can be digitised through eGovernment reforms then street-level bureaucrats’ discretion will be curtailed and their role even disintermediated (Busch & Henriksen, 2018). The few studies on this topic seem to be bifurcated between a thesis of elimination or curtailment of street-level bureaucracy as a result of eGovernment (see Bovens & Zouridis, 2002; Jansson & Erlingsson, 2014; Reddick, 2005; Snellen, 2002) and a thesis of reproduction of street-level practices through eGovernment (Hansen, Lundberg, & Syltevik, 2018; Jorna & Wagenaar, 2007; Schuppan, 2015). For instance, Bovens and Zouridis (2002) are one of the earliest writers who argued for the demise of street-level discretion as a result of the advent of eGovernment. They examined the introduction of ICTs in two cases of street-level work, namely the digitisation of the recording and contestation processes relating to traffic violations as well as the handling of students’ loans applications in the Dutch public sector. On this they commented “[w]indow clerks are being replaced by Web sites, and advanced information and expert systems are taking over the role of case managers and adjudicating officers” (Bovens & Zouridis, 2002, p.175).

Similarly, Snellen (2002), as well as Reddick (2005), argued that as a result of eGovernment reforms discretion is being curtailed at the street-level and relocated to the system-level. In other words, “discretion in the implementation of some public policy comes into play in the design of the software programs that automates the decision-making process. Therefore, any remaining discretion has shifted to the back room of information systems departments” (Reddick, 2005, p.40).

Nonetheless, these claims are counterbalanced by other studies of different cases of digitisation in a street-level context. For example, Schuppan (2015) studied the work of street-level bureaucrats in an ICT-enabled one-stop government shop introduced as part of eGovernment reforms in Germany. While the high level of digitisation and standardisation in this one-stop shop should have curtailed street-level bureaucrats’ discretion significantly, in reality, nonetheless, everyday work was much more complex and varied. The information systems introduced into the work of street-level bureaucrats simply created more space for discretion. This is because “[d]ifficult inquiries from citizens are clearly less standardised because they cannot be easily answered with the help of the knowledge management system” (ibid., p.257). Based on these findings, Schuppan followed other writers such as Jorna and Wagenaar (2007) to argue that:

ICT expands the scope of action of street-level bureaucrats – or, in other words, extends their discretion, their function as policymakers and their particular craftsmanship in fulfilling their tasks – due to the uncertainties emerging in the new interaction mode with citizens. (2015, p.260).

The contradiction in this debate that Schuppan’s (2015) work identified is exacerbated by the severe lack of especially ethnographic studies on eGovernment

enactment at the street-level (Buffat, 2015; Busch & Henriksen, 2018). Indeed, “e-government has remained largely un-researched from a street-level perspective [...] i.e., from a perspective focused on the impacts and uses of these important changes at the frontline level” (Buffat, 2015, p.150). This thesis, being focused on the enactment of eGovernment at the street-level, is well positioned to address this gap in knowledge and contribute meaningfully to this debate.

2.3.5 Post-bureaucratic hybridity

These findings on the outcomes of eGovernment and NPM, as expressions of post-bureaucratic reforms, share much in common with another set of empirical studies in the organisation studies literature on the shift from bureaucracy to post-bureaucracy. In this section, I will critically reflect on this literature and identify how it has neglected the pre-bureaucratic. Several special issues in academic journals¹ have been dedicated to this topic thus helping accumulate a significant number of studies. The generally accepted assumption in this literature seems to coalesce around the notion that “bureaucracy, far from being superseded, is becoming embroiled in complex processes of hybridization” (Clegg, 2011, p.202). Hybridity has become the dominant metaphor in explaining the outcomes of post-bureaucratic reforms; especially in the organisation studies literature (Clegg & Courpasson, 2004; Clegg, 2011; Hodgson, 2004; Sturdy, Wright, & Wylie, 2016). Hybridity signifies in basic terms “the persistence of

¹ Some of these issues include:

Special issue: Bureaucracy in the age of enterprise in *Organization*, Volume 11, Issue 1 (2004)

Special issue: Organizations in the age of post-bureaucracy in *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, Volume 19, Issue 1 (2006)

Special issue: Managing, managerial control and managerial identity in the post-bureaucratic world *Journal of Management Development*, Volume 29, Issue 2 (2010)

bureaucracy amid post-bureaucracy” (Bloomfield & Hayes, 2009, p. 461). Given this, the dominant definition of hybridity is one primarily confined to theorising the melding of bureaucratic structural properties and practices with post-bureaucratic ones (Christensen & Lægheid, 2010; Clegg & Courpasson, 2004; Denis, Ferlie, & Van Gestel, 2015).

The theorisation of hybridity in this literature is underpinned by different perspectives. For example, some writers adopt either functionalist or critical perspectives. Functionalist writers focused on the implications of hybrid configurations on the different functions of organisations in their environment and the extent to which resulting hybrid forms are functional (positive) or dysfunctional (negative) (Christensen & Lægheid, 2010; Denis et al., 2015; Fossetøl, Breit, Andreassen, & Klemsdal, 2015; Seibel, 2015; Skelcher & Smith, 2015). Writers such as Clegg and Courpasson (2006) as well as Bloomfield and Hayes (2009) drew on the political dimensions of hybridity such as the emergence of hybrid forms of control through post-bureaucratic reforms (see also Hodgson & Briand, 2013; Maravelias, 2003; Stokes & Clegg, 2002). Waring (2015) adopted a cultural studies lens and defined hybridity from that perspective. Waring studied the privatisation of a health care organisation in the UK that included a shift from bureaucratic to a post-bureaucratic mode of work. He framed this shift in terms of “cultural dislocation, adaptation, and hybridity” (2015, p. 345) drawing on Bhabha’s (1994) notion of a liminal or ‘in-betweenness’ space where hybridisation takes place.

Nonetheless, all these different strands of studies on post-bureaucracy that adopt a hybridity lens, seem to overlook the pre-bureaucratic. I will illustrate how the pre-bureaucratic was forgotten in some of the central studies on this topic. For example,

Barker (1993) studied a managerial change of work practices from a typical bureaucratic logic to a post-bureaucratic mode of work in the guise of self-managed teams. His focus was on the modalities of control in the post-bureaucratic system, which was supposed to reduce direct supervision and typical bureaucratic control mechanisms. He found that the new post-bureaucratic self-managed teams approach did “not free workers from Weber’s iron cage of rational rules, as the culturalist and practitioner-oriented writers on contemporary organizations often argue. Instead, an ironic paradox occurs: The iron cage becomes stronger” (Barker, 1993, p. 435). Ironically, the typical bureaucratic supervisor was simply replaced by several teammates who normatively disciplined each other. Barker’s work is interesting as it reveals the resilience of bureaucratic modes of work, but at the same time, it overlooked the pre-bureaucratic evident in the notion of teams. For example, Barker recognised that self-managed teams depart from the bureaucratic logic of departmentalism in that they cross departmental boundaries to enhance collaboration. He neglects, however, that teams also can be seen to hark back to the pre-bureaucratic in that they engender a familial or clan-like relations. The underpinning logic of teamwork is to engineer a culture of a family or a clan to foster collaboration, innovation and creativity (Ouchi, 1980). Such logic is reminiscent of pre-bureaucratic work relations and contradicts the formalisation that underpins the bureaucratic rationality. In this way, the concertive control that develops normatively between teammates, can also be seen as pre-bureaucratic. The pre-bureaucratic, nevertheless, remains undertheorized and neglected in Barker’s account of teamwork.

Additionally, studies on project-based work as a post-bureaucratic form juxtapose bureaucracy with post-bureaucracy overlooking pre-bureaucracy. For example, Hodgson (2004), in his study of project-based work at Buzzbank

(pseudonym), asked the question “How far can the rhetoric of post-bureaucracy be reconciled with the bureaucratic requirements of project-based work?” (2004, p. 82). He argued that, project-based work, even though portrayed as post-bureaucratic, is “an essentially *bureaucratic* system of control, based on the principles of visibility, predictability and accountability, and operationalized through the adherence to formalized procedure and constant written reporting mechanisms.” (ibid., p.88; original emphasis). He argued that the introduction of project-based work at Buzzbank involved a “deliberate and strategic *rebureaucratization*, rather than *debureaucratization*” (2004, p.97; original emphasis). But what Hodgson overlooked was the pre-bureaucratic evident at Buzzbank that the management sought to formalise and bureaucratise through introducing project-based work. The pre-bureaucratic in Hodgson’s study is evident before and after the introduction of project-based work. First, the work environment that Hodgson described seemed to contain features of the pre-bureaucratic. Hence employees before the introduction of project-based work and its formalising regime felt that they were “working in a small-village atmosphere and saying ‘You don’t need discipline...you don’t need all this discipline and bureaucracy.’” (ibid., p. 90). This attitude that Hodgson’s participants expressed toward bureaucracy and discipline is a clear expression of the pre-bureaucratic. After the introduction of project-based work, Hodgson described how employees resisted the increased bureaucratisation through humour:

Humour was commonplace in the everyday banter both within teams and between teams in the IT division at Buzzbank, and the increasing levels of bureaucratization was the butt of most of the humour, particularly at the lower levels of the hierarchy. [...] Across the project teams, the weight of bureaucratic rules and regulations were the butt of many jokes. (ibid., p.95).

This mocking of bureaucracy and formalisation that Hodgson reported indicates another expression of the pre-bureaucratic at Buzzbank after the introduction of project-based work. The pre-bureaucratic, however, was overlooked in Hodgson's account, which was mainly concerned with illustrating the bureaucratic character of project-based work despite the post-bureaucratic rhetoric accompanying it.

Lastly, du Gay (2003) in his article titled 'The tyranny of the Epochal' reflected on NPM guided post-bureaucratic reforms introduced into the public sector. In his critique, du Gay argued that the managerial literature that propagates post-bureaucracy is characterised by a discourse of epochalism. He argued that such managerial discourse is characterised by a "logic of dramatic dichotomization" (2003, p.663), where the "key dichotomy is between the ossified 'old', which is in need of urgent 're-invention', and the 'visionary' new, whose demands must be heeded or disaster will result" (ibid., p.667). The old in this narrative being 'bureaucracy' and the new being the different emerging post-bureaucratic forms.

Du Gay's critique of dichotomisation is expressed through arguing for the persistence of bureaucracy despite post-bureaucracy, but it does not move beyond the two ends of this dichotomy to show the continuing relevance of a third element, namely the pre-bureaucratic. Such critique, thus, falls short of freeing the debate from the traps of such dichotomisation. This dichotomisation endures therefore, even in the critical literature. This thesis aims to advance the debate by moving beyond a narrow focus on bureaucracy versus post-bureaucracy to bring back the forgotten 'pre-bureaucratic' and examine the ways in which it might still be relevant and its implications for this debate.

2.4 Conclusion

To summarise, this chapter began by reflecting on the work of Weber on the shift from pre-bureaucratic to bureaucratic practices. The chapter then moved to illustrate how the pre-bureaucratic endures drawing on classic ethnographies such as Gouldner (1954) and Strauss et al., (1963). Furthermore, the continuing relevance of the pre-bureaucratic was highlighted in the contemporary literature on how cultural practices such as *wasta*, *guanxi*, and *jeitinho* shape organisational practices. Additionally, the ‘street-level bureaucracy’ literature has been identified as an expression of the pre-bureaucratic especially relevant to the focus of the thesis. The pre-bureaucratic is primarily defined as predicated on exercises of discretion underpinned by subjective rationalities other than the formal bureaucratic one.

The chapter then reviewed the literature on the shift from bureaucracy to post-bureaucracy. Attention was paid to New Public Management and eGovernment as forms of post-bureaucracy relevant to the focus of the thesis. Distinctions between these forms and the bureaucratic type were highlighted to clarify their distinctive post-bureaucratic characteristics. The literature on the outcomes of such reforms was reviewed. The organisation studies literature on post-bureaucracy as a hybrid form was also considered. This showed that the literature has not considered the pre-bureaucratic thus far because it is pre-occupied with the dichotomy of bureaucracy versus post-bureaucracy.

The aim of this thesis thus is to bring the pre-bureaucratic back into the debate on bureaucracy versus post-bureaucracy. Theoretically, this will be done through drawing on theoretical insights from three key writers, whose works have been reviewed in this chapter; Weber (1978); Gouldner (1954); and Strauss (1978). Weber’s work is

seminal in that it provides a clear juxtaposition of pre-bureaucracy versus bureaucracy. Gounder's (1954) work helps to elucidate and categorise pre-bureaucratic patterns of everyday work through the notion of the 'indulgency pattern' and 'mock bureaucracy' that illustrate the melding of the pre-bureaucratic and the bureaucratic. Strauss's (1978) notion of the negotiated order helps to elucidate how the pre-bureaucratic is enacted in practice and maintained despite the bureaucratic. These three works thus complement and reinforce each other in the task to recover the pre-bureaucratic.

These theoretical influences are coupled with a focus on the street-level and by attending to the local patterns of interactions and practices and how post-bureaucracy is enacted at this level. For example, the cultural practice of 'wasta' and Tracers (discussed in chapter four) are enacted at the street-level and can be theoretically grounded in the street-level bureaucracy literature. Wasta is predicated on exercises of street-level discretion, and Tracers are an additional and unofficial tier of street-level bureaucracy that has not been explored thus far. The thesis is, therefore, also positioned to contribute meaningfully to the street-level bureaucracy literature and specifically the debate on street-level bureaucracy and eGovernment. Furthermore, post-bureaucracy has not been studied from a street-level bureaucracy vantage point; doing so helps to advance both debates in novel ways as well as bridge the gap between these hitherto separate debates. In the next chapter, I will discuss the methodological approach adopted in this thesis and its contributions to the literature on methodology.

3 Research Methodology

In this chapter I will introduce the methodological approach adopted in this thesis. An interpretive ethnographic approach (Van Maanen, 2011a; Watson, 1994b, 2012) was adopted at the beginning of the research process, and a distinctively street-level bureaucratic organisation undergoing eGovernment reform was chosen as an empirical site. This is in line with the focus of the thesis on the enactment of post-bureaucratic eGov at the street-level in the Saudi Arabian cultural context. The chapter will also extend a contribution to the literature on methodology drawing on a discussion of the role of the cultural practice of *wasta* during access negotiations and data collection.

The discussion will proceed as follows. The first section will highlight the ontological and epistemological assumptions underpinning the research process. The second section will discuss ethnography as a research approach and its value for this thesis. The third section will describe the empirical sites, the sampling procedures, access negotiations and discuss the methodological contributions of the thesis. The fourth section will explain the data collection methods and data analysis procedures.

3.1 Researching social life in organisations: Ontological and epistemological assumptions

In this section, I will explain the interpretive ontological and epistemological assumptions espoused in this thesis. A discussion of the interpretive paradigm must be situated within the broader debate in the philosophy of science on how to research social life and what constitutes knowledge. Since this debate is multifaceted and too broad to

be reviewed in this section and for the sake of brevity, I will limit the discussion to highlighting the crux of the debate regarding the distinction between positivism (or what others might broadly call objectivism) and non-positivistic philosophies; specifically, interpretivism and its attention to subjective realities.

At the ontological level, positivism posits that a single reality exists independently of the sociality of humans; hence, researching social life means accessing and researching a reality that exists out there that can be observed, quantified, measured, and reported upon objectively as it is (see Bernard, 2017; Caldwell, 2015). Positivism advances a natural science approach to the study of the social. In other words, positivistic research “regard[s] the social world as being similar to the natural world. Social reality is viewed as external to the individual, as tangible and measurable, and imposing itself on individuals and organizations in deterministic or mechanical ways.” (Dunbar, 1983, p. 130).

In view of this, “[d]ata are consequently something that *exists, is (already) there*, and the task of the researcher thus becomes to gather and systematize them.”(Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2009, p. 17 original emphasis). A deductive logic of reasoning is typically adopted where hypotheses are developed and “must be subjected to empirical scrutiny” (Bell, Bryman, & Harley, 2018, p. 20). Positivistic research, while can be qualitative, is typically quantitative in terms of research methods (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, & Jackson, 2012). Social realities are reduced to measurable variables in mathematical terms (Bernard, 2017; Creswell, 2013). This process of mathematical representation helps a positivistic researcher to manipulate such variables and the relations between them in ways that measure and predict the workings of such complex realities in a quest for certainty and exact science (Blalock, 1969; Wetcher-Hendricks, 2011). The

representations extended in positivistic research are taken to be an accurate and value-free representation of the observed reality (Hibbert, Sillince, Diefenbach, & Cunliffe, 2014).

Nevertheless, social realities and meanings are complex, constructed, varied, and made sense of through interpretation and sense-making; this includes not only everyday life (Berger & Luckmann, 1967; Cunliffe, 2003b; Cunliffe & Locke, 2016) but also scientific research (see Latour & Woolgar, 1979). As social beings, humans—including scientists—must engage in a sense-making process of the world around them to navigate their way through it (Weick, 1995, 2012). Understandings and meanings about the social reality develop when “actors, in particular places, at particular times, fashion meaning out of events and phenomena through [a] prolonged, complex process of social interactions involving history, language, and action.” (Schwandt, 1998, pp. 221–222).

Such social interactions and the meanings that emerge through them evolve through different social processes in a dialectical manner; this argument is put forth by Berger and Luckmann (1967). Berger and Luckmann argued that the “reality of everyday life is shared with others” (1967, p.43) and emerges through a process of socialisation, which they define as “the comprehensive and consistent induction of an individual into the objective world of a society or a sector of it” (ibid., p.150). This ongoing process of socialisation is enacted through social interactions and the established social institutions that individuals enact, sustain and even alter through their social interactions and practices (see Hughes, 1942). This process is described by Berger and Luckmann (1967):

[S]ociety is understood in terms of an ongoing dialectical process composed of the three moments of externalization, objectivation and internalization. As far as the societal phenomenon is concerned, these moments are not to be thought of as occurring in a temporal sequence. Rather society and each part of it are simultaneously characterized by these three moments (Berger and Luckmann, 1967, p.149).

As they are involved in this process of socialisation, individuals are actively interpreting, making sense, and developing meanings of what they observe and interact with. Berger and Luckmann call this process ‘internalisation’ as it refers to how individuals internalise the emerging meanings of the social realities around them. In the course of socialisation, the process of internalisation is coupled with a process of externalisation where an individual “projects his own meanings into reality” (ibid., p.122) and acts upon them. This projection of meaning is enacted collectively in interactions with others who are also actively internalising and externalising meanings. Additionally, humans actively inscribe the meanings they develop into the objects and artefacts they create as well as use such objects in ways that express their meanings, emotions, and intentions; this process is referred to as objectivation (see also Winner, 1980). To use Berger and Luckmann’s words: “The reality of everyday life is not only filled with objectivations; it is only possible because of them. I am constantly surrounded by objects that ‘proclaim’ the subjective intentions of my fellowmen” (1967, p.50).

This process of socialisation is thus a central means through which humans live together, collaborate, create social collectives and navigate their ways through the world (Fine, 2003; Watson, 1994a). As they are continuously engaged in this process, humans

begin to repeat patterns of interactions, behaviours, and practices deemed meaningful to them. Such behaviours, practices and the meanings that underpin them become gradually taken for granted characterising what Berger and Luckmann call an 'institution'. At the core of everyday social reality is thus an interpretive process of collective sense-making and meaning development enacted through social interactions and practices that institutionalise those meanings and shared understandings (see also Hosking & McNamee, 2006). When coupled with a reflexive stance, meanings are prone to changes instigating different patterns of interactions and practices (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009). Therefore, it is vital to attend to meanings and the social interactions through which they develop when studying social reality. This is the underlying assumption of interpretivist research, which underpinned the design of this inquiry.

To return to positivism; if we follow an interpretive line of thought then the claim to value-free research espoused by positivists needs to be reconsidered. For instance, it could be argued that positivistic researchers themselves are socialised into the theories and values of positivism, where positivism itself can be seen as a value system (Cunliffe, 2011). These values come to colour the ways in which positivistic researchers approach researching social life (Cunliffe, 2003b, 2008). Indeed, while claimed to be value-free, positivistic research can be seen to be inherently value-laden; for example, the artefacts through which researchers construct their data, such as questionnaires, are inescapably inscribed with the world views of their designers and this in turn influences and shapes the facts produced through these artefacts (see Law, 2004). Albeit however, the role of a researcher and how his/her values influence the

outcome of their research are rarely discussed in the tradition of positivistic methodology².

A distinctive feature of an interpretive approach to researching social reality is the stress upon reflexivity (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000; Hardy, Phillips, & Clegg, 2001; Humphreys, 2005). Reflexivity refers to “an awareness that the researcher and the object of study affect each other mutually and continually in the research process” (Haynes, 2012, p. 73). Indeed, researchers are not different than research participants in terms of their need to actively interpret and make sense of the world they are in. Moreover, researchers, when they enter the lives of participants, become actively involved in this interpretive process (Cannella, 2015; Cunliffe, 2008). The positivistic claims to neutrality become impossible to uphold in such situations and instead, researchers need to develop a heightened sensitivity to their role through a “*methodological self-consciousness*, namely a researcher’s consciousness of her or his own assumptions and prejudices” (Hibbert et al., 2014, p. 283 original emphasis). Researchers then must carry such a reflexive stance with them through the different stages of research; from paying attention to how they formulate their research problems to how they act and interact with others during the fieldwork and transform the understanding they developed with participants into written narratives (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000; Cunliffe, 2003b).

² Post-positivism, while still retaining positivism’s ontological understanding of reality as objective, can be seen to depart from positivism in that it acknowledges the fact that researchers influence how reality is rendered; hence, post-positivists call for greater awareness of the role of the researcher; this nonetheless, is put forth in the quest of reaching a more objectivists rendering of reality (see Phillips, 1990).

Additionally, a reflexive stance is fundamental to conducting ethical research (Ryen, 2016). The conception of ethics in social science research is largely influenced by positivistic assumptions and what is termed the bio-medical model (Dyer & Demeritt, 2009). The bio-medical model of ethical research is shaped by the philosophies of natural sciences and aims to ensure the safety of both researchers and participants through predicting and accounting for ethical concerns in advance (see Bosk & De Vries, 2004). Nonetheless everyday life remains inherently complex and beyond the capacity of positivistic models to predict it and control it (Perez, 2019). In this regard, reflexivity becomes an important approach to conducting ethical research (Cunliffe, 2016; Riessman, 2005). A reflexive stance acknowledges that conducting ethical research requires adopting a situated, responsive, and culturally sensitive understanding of what is ethical and unethical (Owens, 2003; Perez, 2019; Ryen, 2007; Taylor, 2011). The value of such a reflexive stance to ethics will be demonstrated in this chapter through a discussion of the role of the cultural practice of *wasta* during the fieldwork and the situated ethical concerns that arose and how they were addressed.

To summarise, in this section, I have explained the philosophical assumptions espoused during the process of producing this research. I demonstrated how the thesis is underpinned by an interpretive approach that directs attention the social interactions and practices through which shared meanings are developed and how such meanings further guide social actions and interactions. I also highlighted the importance of reflexivity during the process of research.

3.2 Ethnography: ‘Writing culture’³

In this section, I will introduce ethnography as the methodological approach adopted for this inquiry. The Greek origins of the term ‘ethnography’ “refer to particular kind of writing: A written account (*graphein*) of a people (*ethnos*)” (Yanow, Ybema, & Hulst, 2012, p. 331). Ethnography then is a practice of writing about people their cultural relations, interpretations, social interactions and practices (Fine, 2003; Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007; Van Maanen, 1988). Therefore, in harmony with the notion that meanings are developed socially, delineated in the previous section:

[E]thnographers are concerned with sociality—with how people live their lives and make meanings together—they are interested in interactions (e.g., meetings, formal, and informal conversations), written texts (policies, vision statements, media statements, emails, work manuals), talk (stories, narratives, metaphors, gossip, jokes), actions (routines, work practices), symbols (de´cor, dress, logos), and language (jargon, common phrases and words, technical language) of organizational members. (Cunliffe, 2010, p. 230).

The product of ethnography is a “thick description” (Geertz, 1973, p. 10). A thick description is a carefully crafted (Watson, 1994b), organised, detailed, narrative through which glimpses of social reality can be appreciated, and understandings of everyday work can be developed (see Bechky, 2006). Methodologically, writing an ethnography requires an immersive engagement in the cultures and practices ethnographers write about (Fetterman, 2010; Van Maanen, 1979, 1988, 2006; Watson, 1994b, 1994a, 2011). Such deep immersion requires a greater sociality and

³ (Clifford & Marcus, 1986)

understanding of the cultural relations of the host communities; after all, “doing ethnography is establishing rapport” (Geertz, 1973, p.6).

Such deep immersion and rapport building gives ethnographers “access to the informal dimensions of organizational life, including the friendship groups, ad hoc task forces, and sideline conversations in which people more openly discuss their goals and concerns” (Haedicke & Hallett, 2016, p. 14). An ethnographic approach, in other words, helps to reveal the “underlife of an institution” (Goffman, 1961, p. 157). It helps to explore and write about the “interpretive meanings workers attach to work...[and]...how people work and are affected by work” (Hallett et al., 2009, p. 6). It is in this perspective that an ethnographic approach helps to reveal what may be obscured by positivistic approaches that might distance the researcher farther from the researched (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2000; Ybema, Yanow, Wels, & Kamsteeg, 2009).

In line with the focus of the thesis, an interpretive ethnographic approach hence, helps to bring to the fore the pre-bureaucratic in the guise of cultural relations, social interactions and local practices in the course of everyday work (Hallett et al., 2009). In this regard, ethnographic accounts greatly enhance understanding of how organisations work from the inside (Watson, 1994a, 2011). Consider this reflection from Watson (2011):

I remember, as a student, reading *Boys in White* (Becker et al., 1961) and thinking how enormously helpful this reading would have been had I chosen to study in a medical school. [...] Perhaps more to the point here, is to say that the way that I behaved when seeking and entering a managerial job after leaving university was closely informed by Dalton’s (1959) study of managerial ‘realities’, and it was directly and invaluable informed by my reading of another

‘classic’: Gouldner’s (1954) *Patterns of Industrial Bureaucracy*. It would have taken me a lot longer to learn the ropes of factory life and management had I not learned from Gouldner about the importance of ‘indulgency patterns’ in worker–supervisor relationships. (Watson, 2011, pp.207-208).

Classic ethnographies such as Gouldner’s (1954), Dalton’s (1959), and even Strauss et al., (1963) that Watson (2011) described above are seminal indeed because, as highlighted in the previous chapter, they brought to the fore the cultural relations, practices and everyday lives in organisations (see also Fine & Hallett, 2014; Hallett, 2010; McCabe, 2002; Van Maanen, 2017; Watson, 1994a). They revealed how the ‘pre-bureaucratic’ imbued the bureaucratic. Similar, to some extent, to these ethnographies, the concern driving the ethnographic approach adopted in this thesis is understanding how everyday work becomes “constructed through a social, rather than entirely policy driven, process” (Fine, 1984, p. 243).

The assertion that everyday work is enacted through social interactions, shared meanings, and local practices more so than formal structures (i.e., “policy driven”) is the hallmark of the organisational ethnographies of Strauss (1978) as well as Gouldner (1954). It also echoes Weber’s assertions regarding the relationship between the pre-bureaucratic and the bureaucratic discussed in the previous chapter. As alluded to by Watson (2011) earlier, Gouldner’s notion of the ‘indulgency pattern’ is based on deep immersion in the world of the participants and careful representations of such world. Similarly, Strauss and his colleagues developed the notion of the negotiated order through ethnographic observations of everyday social interactions and practices of hospital staff. In these classic ethnographies, organisations are studied as arenas of social interactions, cultural relations, negotiations and locally enacted practices

(Bechky, 2011; Watson, 2015). In this regard, the thesis's theoretical influences stemming from Weber (1978), Gouldner (1954), and Strauss (1978) are favourably interlinked with ethnography demonstrating how "theory and method are linked" (Haedicke & Hallett, 2016, p. 100). Next, I will describe the empirical sites of this inquiry, access negotiations, and the methodological contributions of the thesis.

3.3 Empirical sites

The research focus on the enactment of eGov at the street-level informed the choice of empirical sites. These sites had to be distinctly street-level bureaucratic organisations embroiled in eGovernment reforms where I could observe the daily interactions and practices of street-level bureaucrats. One public street-level bureaucracy in addition to nine Tracers offices are the sites of this ethnography. In this section, I will describe these empirical sites, the rationale for choosing them and the access negotiations. All names of cities, districts, people and organisations are anonymised to protect the identities of informants as well as meet conditions of anonymity set by some of these organisations.

3.3.1 The Department of Citizens' Affairs (DCA)

The Department of Citizens' Affairs [a pseudonym] is the focal site of this ethnography; it is a major street-level bureaucratic organisation employing about 10,000 employees spread over a country-wide branch network and a headquarter office in the capital city Riyadh in charge of the overall executive duties of the organisation. The DCA's public services are offered through 13 district-level branches strategically located in highly populated metropolitan areas. Each branch functions with a significant level of autonomy and in close partnership with the local government of the district in which it is located.

The specific branch where I conducted the fieldwork is a large branch employing about 400 employees and serving a population of approximately 505,000⁴. The branch is situated in a spacious three-story building located in D-Central city [pseudonym], the capital of D-central district. There are 14 functional departments such as Communications, Monitoring and Control, Archive, Employee Affairs, Legal Affairs, Public Relations, Operations, and Security. Two of these 14 are front-line departments through which the DCA services are delivered to the public. Each of these departments is headed by a team of two-four supervisors that work in shifts along with a team of deputy supervisors as well. The supervisors report to the office of the director of operations who reports to the head of the branch. Additionally, teams of about ten male front-line employees in each department work in two shifts a day serving citizens. Given the high volume of work, citizens' cases are only accepted during the formal shift which coincides with the formal business hours of the service centre from 8:00-14:30.

Each of these two departments has specialised units that are organised around processing specific types of cases. It is typical that during peak times employees from other departments are called in to assume front-line roles processing cases as well. The number of front-line employees thus changes depending on the volume of work. Additionally, a smaller team of front-line workers along with a supervisor are always kept on duty even during holidays to handle urgent requests from citizens and residents. These two departments are each located in two sizable service halls.

Additionally, there are extensions of these two front-line departments that are staffed only by female front-line workers and cater only for female citizens and

⁴ The source of this statistic had to be withheld to meet anonymity standards

residents visiting the DCA. Given the local cultural norms, organisations delivering services to the public such as the DCA typically set up sections of front-line departments staffed only by female workers and dedicated to serving only female clients. Female front-line workers in the female section process the same types of cases that their male counterparts process and report to the same supervisors. Cases that female members of staff cannot process are sent through an employee courier within the DCA to the relevant department. It is typical that workers at the female section communicate regularly with the supervisor of their department as well as other departments in person or through the phone. When female workers need a service from other departments within the DCA such as payroll or employees' affairs, then they visit those internal departments personally or communicate with them over the phone.

The female section is hosted within the same building as that of the male; however, a separate entrance is provided for female clients. While the male front-line departments work in two shifts and process a large number of cases, the female section works only during the main formal shift (08:00-14:30) and cases that are left unprocessed at the end of the formal shift are transferred to the main departments staffed by only male workers for processing. Given the local cultural norms, access to the female section was not possible. It is also not possible for a male researcher to interview and observe female workers as this is against the local cultural norms. This issue could have been mitigated by the help of a female co-researcher; however, given the limited feasibility of a PhD project, it was not feasible to use a female co-researcher or a research assistant.

The DCA's core work activity is to issue different public documents that are required by all individuals in the country including citizens and non-citizen residents of

all ages; therefore, all 33,413,660 [Saudi population as of 2018; source: Stats.gov.sa] residents require the DCA's services on a regular basis either to issue, replace or renew their documents. These documents are designed for different social groups; for example, citizens receive a different type of document than legal residents, children under the age of 18 also receive different types of documents than adults. Overall, there are seven different types of public documents issued by the DCA and a host of services that revolve around each of these seven types of documents such as issuance, renewal, replacements, and payment of fees. These documents are issued in paper form and are renewed on a regular basis. It is typical that front-line departments become overcrowded at peak times causing delays and leading to complaints by citizens. The DCA, therefore, is seen as one of the busiest government offices despite the routinised document ordering process. The DCA hence became the key target of eGovernment reforms and one of the first organisations to implement eGovernment projects mainly because of the high demand for its services and the relative ease of digitising and streamlining its core document ordering procedures as I will discuss in chapter five.

All these elements made the DCA, which conforms to a classic bureaucratic model, an ideal empirical site for this ethnographic project. The choice of this specific branch of the DCA arose due to the possibilities of gaining access as I will discuss in the section on access negotiations. While there were several other branches of the DCA where this project could have taken place, most branches nonetheless tend to be similar in size, serve similar numbers of citizens, follow an identical organisational structure and formal procedures. Additionally, the fact that this chosen branch is located in a relatively populous metropolitan part of the country meant that greater exposure to the wide range of social relations and cultural norms that are prevalent in the country was possible.

3.3.2 Tracer offices

Tracer offices are, typically, located in marketplaces near branches of the public bureaucracy such as the DCA. In choosing Tracer offices, I focused first on the highly profitable and reputable offices that processed cases from the DCA in D-central city. I assessed these elements qualitatively based on input from interviews with citizens, as well as, assessments of the volume of foot traffic for each office, the number of its staff, its location and the number of services it offered. I resorted to such forms of assessment due to the absence of available quantitative data on these elements.

I identified and approached 15 offices at different times during the fieldwork and access was gained to only nine. These nine offices differed in size, the number of employees and their locations (see table 1). Three of them were located in busy commercial areas and seemed to cater to a wide range of clients including Saudi citizens as well as foreign residents. Another three offices were located in an area densely populated by expatriate workers from countries such as India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Philippines, as well as Egypt and Sudan; these offices seemed to cater mostly for such populations. The remaining three offices were located in a semi-rural area called D-Rural (pseudonym) 55 miles away from the heavily populated D-central city. Offices in D-rural seemed to be frequented by senior citizens as well as technologically disadvantaged citizens and residents who are less able to read, write or use technology effectively. These offices also offered to process cases from branches of the public bureaucracy located in D-central including the DCA for their clients.

All Tracer offices employed only male workers. All offices catered for both male and female clients. Unlike the DCA's service centre, Tracer offices did not provide

sections that catered only to female clients; therefore, both male and female clients used the same facilities.

Tracer office name [pseudonyms]	Number of staff members	Location
Q1 office	3	D-central
N1 office	7	D-Rural
L1 office	4	D-Rural
A1 office	2	D-Rural
A3 office	4	D-central
R3 office	5	D-central
AK3 office	4	D-central
S3 office	3	D-central
Z3 Office	2	D-central

Table 1: Tracer offices that participated in the study.

3.4 Access negotiations and ethical implications: A case of the pre-bureaucratic

In this section, I will reflect on my experience navigating the complexity of access negotiations in the Saudi Arabian cultural context. My aim in this discussion is to provide a contribution to the literature on methodology by highlighting the central role of the cultural practice of *wasta* during the fieldwork, the ethical implications that accompany it, and how to address them. This discussion contributes to the literature on methodology by showing how local cultural relations can facilitate or impede access if not understood and handled carefully. This discussion is helpful to future researchers conducting qualitative fieldwork not only in Saudi Arabia but also in other Middle Eastern countries that share similar cultural norms. Additionally, this discussion has

broader resonance for other non-Western cultural contexts such as China, Africa and South America where practices like *wasta* exist.

Wasta and cultural relations were inescapable not only in the practices of organisations I wanted to study but also during the fieldwork. In view of this, access negotiations with both the DCA and Tracer offices came mainly to be shaped by the local cultural relations in this context; specifically, the practice of '*wasta*'. Interestingly, while the research study was focused on the practice of *wasta* in street-level organisations, I found myself having to engage in *wasta* first-hand to gain access to empirical sites, especially Tracer offices, in order to study it. This experience greatly enhanced my exposure and understanding of the different dimensions of this practice. In what follows, I will first discuss my experience of gaining access to the DCA and then the Tracer offices, then I will reflect on the contributions of this discussion to the literature on qualitative research methods.

3.4.1 Access negotiations with the DCA

Access negotiations with the DCA took place in two interrelated ways both informally and formally. The formal request for access was predicated mainly on an informal request through a personal contact who employed *wasta* to introduce me to a key person in the DCA. This took place during the first year of the PhD. I first approached my contact inside the DCA who then accompanied me personally and used *wasta* to introduce me to senior staff members at the DCA giving me the opportunity to explain my research and the access I needed. These introductions greatly helped me establish rapport. They helped me to establish my identity as a researcher and gain trust. I was invited to submit an official request for access after two meetings with some of the DCA's senior staff members—the first meeting took place in the first year of this

PhD project when I initiated contact and the other in the second year before I began the fieldwork. I prepared a cover letter in Arabic clearly stating the objectives of my research project and the type of access I required and attached copies of participant information sheets, informed consent forms, and a tentative list of themes that I wanted to probe during interviews. I then submitted these along with the cover letter to the DCA's director office.

Two weeks after the submission of the request, an official letter of approval was issued with a statement that my fieldwork should not cause significant disruptions to employees' official duties; this request seems to be triggered by the fear that I might distract employees from the high volume of work at the DCA's branches. I was then assigned an official guardian who during the first couple of days seemed largely to channel my access away from the busiest departments at the DCA presumably on the grounds of this condition. Nonetheless, the *wasta* relations I had already developed during the informal aspect of the negotiations proved helpful. I resorted to my first contact who then gradually assumed the guardian role and began introducing me to his colleagues. These introductions greatly helped in establishing trust and close relations with those staff members.

After a week at the DCA, I became acquainted with a significant number of staff members. I began moving around the department freely and occasionally running into junior as well as senior staff members in corridors and chatting with them occasionally regarding this research. Also, I began meeting other staff members at supervisors' offices and service halls as well as at communal areas and was introduced to them by the supervisors whom I was accompanying. At this stage, I felt comfortable interacting with other employees who seemed to accept my presence; the role of my initial personal

contact became secondary. On one occasion, I was in the company of one supervisor, and there was one senior staff member who came into the supervisor's office, I indicated to the supervisor whether I should introduce myself; he replied there is no need as '*nothing stays a secret around here*'. At this stage, I felt that I had become accepted in the setting and that my identity as a researcher was known to most employees. This relatively smooth entry into the field was aided, to some extent, by a combination of formal access granted in addition to the informal *wasta* relations. The *wasta* relations manifest in the personal introductions to other staff by insiders. These introductions positioned me favourably in the field helping me establish trust and enhancing the quality of the fieldwork.

This experience illustrates one vital dimension of access negotiations in this context, namely, the intricate interplay between the informal (the pre-bureaucratic) and the formal (the bureaucratic). Research methodology literature highlights different strategies to gaining access to formal organisations. These include, for example, identifying key contacts in the organisation and writing formal emails or attending industry or government conferences to establish formal contact with key individuals (Bryman, 2012; Feldman, Bell, & Berger, 2004). Others also suggest using PhD supervisors help and connections to gain access and capitalising on formal institutional support from the university (Myers, 2013). Moreover, the bureaucratic process is usually given prominence in discussions of research access (Feldman et al., 2004; Hayes, 2005; Monahan & Fisher, 2015). Monahan and Fisher (2015), for instance, highlighted that accessing formal organisations typically requires following prescribed bureaucratic patterns of communications such as going through a Public Relations departments or specialised review committees established to study research access requests (Grant, 2017; Hayes, 2005; Hayes & Devaney, 2004). This might be attributed

to the fact that in Western contexts, bureaucratisation is much stronger and the process of gaining access to do research is well-known and quite formalised (see Munro, 2008). Nonetheless, such strategies are largely shaped by experiences of researchers in the west and stem from Western cultural contexts (Cunliffe & Karunanayake, 2013). Moreover, such strategies tend to stress formal processes more than informal relations.

In the case of the DCA in this context, the process of qualitative research was alien and there were no formal and clear communication channels for such requests as may be found in Western organisations. Because this is typically the case in non-Western contexts, Morse (2019), argued, drawing on her fieldwork experience in Sub-Saharan Africa, that gaining access then becomes subject to the discretion of the senior official and requires greater informal relations. For this reason, informal relations in the guise of engaging in *wasta* and resorting to *pre-bureaucratic* practices, becomes paramount to establish trust, rapport, and facilitate the formal, or in other words, the bureaucratic aspect of the process. Establishing trust through informal relations, therefore, must precede any formal requests in the journey of gaining access to formal organisations in this context as evident in the case of gaining access to the DCA.

Wasta has not been discussed before in the literature on methodology as a culturally shaped form of informal relations and an expression of the pre-bureaucratic during access negotiations. While some methodology books and academic articles on access highlight the importance of informal relations (Grant, 2017; Feldman et al., 2004), how such informal relations are enacted in different cultural contexts with different customs, values, and practices is rarely discussed. There are, nonetheless, a few exceptions where researchers have shared their experiences of conducting fieldwork in non-Western cultural contexts. Bondy (2013) for example highlights the

significance of such cultural relations during fieldwork in the context of Japan. Owens (2003) discusses access negotiations and cultural relations in Zanzibar. Tittensor (2016) describes his experience gaining access in the Turkish cultural context. Ali (2015) describes her experience navigating cultural relations to gain access to female participants in a small mountain community in Pakistan. Petkov and Kaoullas (2016) focus on access negotiations and cultural relations in Bulgaria and Cyprus. Cunliff and Karunanayake (2013) discuss fieldwork and cultural relations among tea plantation workers in Sri Lanka.

All these studies are important as they reveal that what is vaguely described as the ‘informal’ in methodology literature refers to complex cultural relations and practices unique to different contexts. Considering that there are not any studies within this literature that discuss the cultural practice of *wasta* during the fieldwork, this chapter is positioned to address this gap in the literature. Next, I provide a more detailed discussion of the role of *wasta* in gaining access to Tracer offices, which were more secretive and protective than the DCA. This discussion can be seen to contribute to the literature on methodology by illustrating how the ‘informal’ in the course of the fieldwork is enacted through the cultural practice of *wasta* in this context.

3.4.2 Access negotiations with Tracer offices

Gaining access to Tracer offices was far more challenging than the DCA. It was challenging mainly for two reasons. The first relates to a logistical aspect because these offices were situated in different locations and because access had to be granted by office owners many of whom came to their offices sporadically. The second reason is due to the lack of trust and the feeling among Tracer office owners and managers that I might be spying on them. This sentiment might have been exacerbated by the

ethnographic approach adopted in this project as most participants did not seem to consider observations and interviews as legitimate research practices. Indeed, many did not seem to recognise observations as a proper form of research and exclaimed as to why I am not using questionnaires. In this regard, many of the office owners I interacted with were quite suspicious of the prospect of a stranger observing their everyday work. Following local cultural norms that discourage disappointing others, not a single Tracer office owner explicitly rejected my proposal to conduct fieldwork at their offices. I, nevertheless, recognised their continuing avoidance of my calls and hesitation to grant access as a sign that they are not interested in participating.

Access negotiations with all the 15 Tracer offices took place through different stages and at different times. The first stage was during the first year of this PhD project; at this stage, I approached six offices personally without employing *wasta*. Most offices were receptive and welcoming; however, when it came to the fieldwork stage only two offices granted access; the rest either ignored my calls or gave excuses, from which I surmised rejection, such as that they are too busy for instance.

These cases of implicit rejection were vital learning experiences. For example, in the first year, I approached one office called RS [pseudonym], which employed about eight employees and was one of the most reputable offices in D-central city; the office manager was quite cooperative and promised to participate in the study. When I visited the office in the second year to begin the fieldwork, the office manager indicated that he must get the office owner's approval before I can proceed and that I should visit him later when he has a decision and he gave me his business card. I tried calling the office manager a few days later without success. I revisited the office manager, and I felt after a brief discussion that he seemed no longer interested in participating in the research.

Meanwhile, he asked me whether it was easy to gain access to other offices. I replied indicating that it was not easy. At this moment, he replied that this might be because they think that I am a 'spy' working for the government (for similar experience see Owens, 2003). Reflecting on this experience, I realised the significance of *wasta* relations in this context. The fact that I was visiting these offices without a personal introduction by someone they trusted who can employ *wasta* was indeed a cause of suspicion for them. This suspicion is warranted since it is typical that some of these Tracer offices might be engaged in some forms of unsanctioned activities. This situation provides a clear contrast with how methodology books stress formal procedures and bureaucratic processes in explaining access strategies. This also provides insights into the relevance of pre-bureaucratic practices; especially during access negotiations.

At this stage, I began to use *wasta* by actively searching for personal contacts who could, in turn, also employ *wasta* and vouch for me and introduce me to Tracer office owners they knew to gain access. I found two connections that can introduce me to three Tracer offices. One contact, who knew the owners of two Tracer offices and had *wasta* with them, asked me to accompany him to visit these offices so that he could introduce me personally to the office owners. In the typical enactment of *wasta*, it is expected that the person interceding, and the person being interceded for, formally visit the third party. This is done to demonstrate respect as well as instigate relations of reciprocity (Cunningham & Sarayrah, 1993). In the Middle Eastern cultural context, a visit by an acquaintance to a person's home or office is considered a gesture of honouring that person who then reciprocates this gesture by accepting the interceding person's request (Al-Ramahi, 2008; Lackner, 2016).

Together with my contact we visited two offices, in one office we met the owner who granted me immediate access and introduced me to all office staff. For the second office, we met the office manager who also promised access, and at a later stage I revisited this office and met the office owner who also affirmed the access permission. The second contact also introduced me personally to the owner of one office who also granted access unhesitatingly. These intercessions greatly helped in establishing trust and facilitated the process of fieldwork by adding credibility to my promise of anonymity and research ethics.

In addition to these occasions, there was also another occasion where I was engaged in *wasta* unintentionally. This incident took place during the second year at one office which I approached personally without employing *wasta* to request access. I met the office manager who initially seemed suspicious of my identity as a researcher. However, shortly into our discussion a male Saudi client aged between 50-60 years old entered the office and was invited by the office manager to sit opposite me at one end of the office manager's desk. As I tried to conclude my discussion with the office manager, the client jumped in the discussion and asked me whether I am a student. I replied, and then he explained that he too had completed a qualitative PhD at a UK university in the 1990s and seemed to sympathise with my struggles in gaining access. This client recognised the institution I was associated with in the UK and hence readily accepted my identity as a PhD student. After a short discussion about the topic of my research, this client, drawing on his favourable position in relation to the office manager, vouched for me in front of the office manager and explained to him more about his struggles for access when he was completing his PhD.

The intercession of this client greatly helped establish trust between the office manager and I; especially since the office manager was not familiar with UK universities and what comprises a qualitative research project. Following this discussion an appointment a week later was set up for me to revisit the office to begin the fieldwork. This incident shows an unintentional situated exercise of *wasta* where trust was established through an intercession from a third party trusted by the office manager.

Given my limited capacity to employ more *wasta*, access to the remaining three offices was gained during the fieldwork through personal visits to these offices where I sought to clearly express to office managers and owners the confidentiality terms and my identity as a PhD student. Nonetheless, the lack of *wasta* negatively affected the quality of access I was granted; this was the case in all the offices where I was not able to employ *wasta* with them. In these offices I was mostly able to conduct interviews and the numbers of hours I was able to spend observing and shadowing employees was considerably less at these offices than the offices where I employed *wasta*. I was able to gain in-depth, high quality, and prolonged access only to the offices where I employed *wasta*. This shows how *wasta* greatly enhanced the quality of access I was able to gain.

These illustrations of the enactment of *wasta* during the fieldwork help to reveal how informal relations highlighted in methodology books should be understood as enacted through situated and nuanced cultural relations and practices. Additionally, this discussion of the enactment of *wasta* shows the significance of pre-bureaucratic practices even during the access negotiations and the conduct of the fieldwork. Such cultural relations and pre-bureaucratic practices also bring with them situated ethical

concerns that require greater reflexivity during the fieldwork, a topic to which the discussion now turns.

3.4.3 Ethical implications

I should stress that the influence of *wasta* does not stop at the approval of access requests. Instead, it carries on throughout the fieldwork with distinct ethical implications that must be accounted for and addressed. For example, during the fieldwork at these offices or even at the DCA, the fact that someone had interceded on my behalf meant that I must conduct myself in ways that not only bring no harm in a universal ethical sense, but also in a situated cultural sense. In other words, being interceded for by someone meant that I had to conduct myself in accordance to the local cultural norms and in ways that do not, for instance, dishonour the word of the person who interceded for me as this would be harmful to the reputation of that person. This meant that I had to be culturally sensitive in my conduct and interactions with others in order not to cause any form of discomfort, embarrassment, or inconvenience to participants who might, for example, blame the person who interceded for me for any shortcomings on my behalf.

It is vital also to stress that inconvenience or discomfort are locally defined and culturally constituted. So, as a researcher, I had to understand what a source of discomfort might be in each situation taking into consideration the local cultural context. Engaging in *wasta* during the fieldwork, therefore, is intermeshed in complex ways with local cultural relations requiring greater reflexivity and a situated approach to research ethics (Cunliffe & Karunanayake, 2013; Perez, 2019). These issues have been neglected in the mostly Western oriented methodology texts that researchers use. Classic texts such as Bryman (2012), Bell et al., (2018), or Silverman (2016), while

instrumental, nonetheless, do not provide enough insights on such cultural relations and situated ethical issues and how to navigate through them in a culturally sensitive and ethical manner. Hence, it might become difficult for qualitative researchers unfamiliar with the local culture to navigate their way ethically through fieldwork. It can also be difficult for researchers native to the local cultural context. While such researchers might be familiar with the cultural practice of *wasta*; they, nonetheless, might not be able to anticipate the situated ethical concerns that arise from employing *wasta*. It also can be difficult for them to defamiliarize themselves and critically reflect on the practice of *wasta* and its ethical implications. This discussion can, therefore, help future researchers in this regard whether they are familiar or unfamiliar with the practice of *wasta*.

Given this backdrop, there are specific ethical concerns that might arise with the exercise of *wasta*; particularly, with regards to informed consent. These concerns are on two levels, first, on the level of the host who is granting access, such as Tracer office owners. Intercessions by someone respected by those office owners can, at times, impinge on the office owners' ability to give their informed consent because they might, for instance, be embarrassed not to turn down the person interceding on my behalf. While this might not always be the case; it is, nonetheless, likely. I attempted to address this issue in two ways; first, by committing not to begin the fieldwork on the same day of the intercession; this is to neutralise the influence of the intercessor on the informed consent of participants. Second, by privately assuring participants that they have the complete liberty to decide whether or not to participate and if they choose to do so then that information will not be shared in any shape or form with the person who interceded or any other parties.

The second level where such ethical concerns might arise is at the level of individual employees at these Tracer offices. For example, when a Tracer office owner agreed to participate following an intercession, he usually would introduce me to the office staff and ask them to cooperate with me. These introductions interfere with the informed consent of individual employees as contact was initiated by their employer. Such concern applies equally at the DCA and Tracer offices. At the DCA, introductions by supervisors might indeed affect subordinates informed consent. The effects of superiors' introductions on subordinates informed consent was addressed by making sure to interview employees individually and privately and assuring them that no information would be shared with their employers or their supervisors if they choose not to participate.

When I did this with participants, I found that I had to explain in more detail that I am doing so because of an ethical commitment to informed consent and to make sure that they are not pressured to participate in any way, and that this is an important part of the research process. This is because the process of securing informed consent seemed to raise suspicion among some participants in this context. Given that participants were not familiar with qualitative research, they tended to become wary and suspicious when I assured them confidentiality and gave them the choice not to participate in private. This suspicion arose because of a perception of fear that I am speaking of confidentiality and informed consent because I am expecting some harm thus, I am engaging in this process as a precaution and to legally protect myself and my institution. Therefore, some participants might decide not to participate simply because of the fear triggered by the formal process of securing informed consent. Nonetheless, employing *wasta*; especially, given the ethical commitments inherent in it, and carefully explaining the rationale behind this process greatly helped participants to overcome the

suspicious that this formalistic process instigated. I found that these suspicions usually faded away once I began data collection or conducted the interview and they saw that my questions and the topics I am exploring are not threatening and that my concern was to make sure that they exercised their right to informed consent in deciding to participate.

In view of this, I found that this process of securing informed consent adds formality to what is an informal social bond developed through *wasta*. For participants, the trust and the obligation to no harm that comes through *wasta* is more meaningful and binding than this formal process. Therefore, when explaining the importance of informed consent and the formalised process associated with it, I found that it is important to find balance between fulfilling this ethical obligation in a formal and bureaucratic way through, for instance, signing consent forms, and maintaining the trust and the social bond developed through employing *wasta*. It is important during this process that researchers indicate to the participants their continuing commitment to the more binding ethical code of *wasta*—not only the formal ethical code— in not causing any harm to them. Researchers can do so by expressing to participants that they are keen not to dishonour themselves and their intercessors by causing any form of harm or discomfort to their participants. This is because participants might not trust the formal institutional code of ethics enshrined in the process of formally securing informed consent, but they trust the ethical commitment of the researcher expressed through employing *wasta*. Hence, skilfully navigating through this interplay between the informal (pre-bureaucratic) and the formal (bureaucratic) is necessary in this context and it requires greater cultural awareness and social acumen on behalf of the researcher.

In conclusion, *wasta* relations are a vital, and an inescapable element of especially qualitative fieldwork in a Middle Eastern context as well as other non-Western contexts where similar practices exist. While *wasta* greatly facilitates and enhances the quality of access and hence data collection; it comes nonetheless with unique ethical implications and complex field relations. Knowledge of these issues remains limited due to the lack of accounts on the role of *wasta* in fieldwork in a Middle Eastern context. In this vein, this discussion can be seen to advance knowledge of qualitative research methods and to help future researchers conducting qualitative and especially ethnographic fieldwork not only in Saudi Arabia but also in Middle Eastern and other countries with similar cultural relations.

3.4.4 Contributions to the literature on qualitative methodology

The contributions to the literature on methodology stemming from this discussion manifests in five ways. First, this discussion of how I engaged in ‘*wasta*’ during the fieldwork provides an empirical illustration of what is typically, and quite vaguely, described as ‘informal’ relations in the literature on methodology (Brewer, 2000; Bryman, 2012; Easterby-Smith et al., 2012; Marshall & Rossman, 2014; Myers, 2013). The references to the ‘informal’ in methodology books does not provide enough explanation and guidance to researchers so as to allow them to engage in, distinguish between, and navigate such informal relations. Typically, authors of methodology books, while they acknowledge the importance of informal relations, they nonetheless, provide generic prescriptions and strategies to gaining access that provide little insights into handling complex, local cultural relations; especially in non-Western contexts. One central lesson derived from this thesis is that informal approaches to gaining access are enacted within local cultural relations. While, many studies have shown how different

cultural relations in different contexts shape how researchers gain access as discussed earlier, none has discussed the cultural practice of *wasta*.

This leads to the second contribution, which is highlighting the centrality of *wasta* relations in facilitating trust and gaining in-depth access to research sites in the Middle East; especially, where there is a high degree of suspicion among participants such as in the case of Tracer offices. The significance of *wasta* relations is apparent in the trust established through the process of intercession. This trust stems from the ethical commitment not to cause harm inherent in the practice of *wasta* itself as I discussed earlier.

Wasta relations in the Middle Eastern context as highlighted earlier stem from the local tribal culture, therefore, it is prudent that researchers understand such cultural relations and how to operate within them ethically and successfully. Given that, the third methodological contribution of this thesis stems from highlighting some practical steps to engaging in *wasta*. The account given above on how I engaged in *wasta* can be seen to help in this regard for researchers whether they are alien or native to this context. For example, making sure to adhere to cultural relations and practices such as wearing the local form of attire and accompanying intercessors personally, are vital elements in this respect.

The fourth contribution stems from sensitising future researchers to, at least, some of the ethical concerns inherent in the exercise of *wasta* and how to handle them. Such situated ethical concerns are rarely discussed at length in methodology texts. Additionally, the discussion on the ethical concerns arising through engagement in *wasta* demonstrates the importance of adopting a reflexive situated approach to ethics (Perez, 2019; Ryen, 2016). *Wasta* in this case affected how I behaved during the

fieldwork as it brought with it additional layers of responsibility. On one hand, there are ethical commitments inherent in the practice of *wasta* itself because *wasta* meant that I had to maintain the honour of the persons who interceded for me by not engaging in any behaviour that might reflect badly on them and jeopardise participants' trust in them. *Wasta* hence provides an example of a situated reflexive approach to ethics. On the other hand, *wasta* brought with it challenges to ensuring the informed consent of the participants who might participate because of such intercessions, which might interfere with the exercise of informed consent. These complex issues demonstrate the importance of reflexivity and understanding the, at times, intricate cultural relations at play during the fieldwork.

Lastly, this discussion can hopefully trigger a debate on this topic and bring to the attention of fellow researchers the importance of sharing their experiences in engaging in *wasta* during the fieldwork. Along those lines, this discussion on *wasta* could also trigger researchers to be reflexive and write about their experiences engaging with cultural practices such as *Guanxi* in China (Xin & Pearce, 1996) or *Jieto* in Brazil (Duarte, 2006) that are similar to *wasta* in their effects but differ in terms of the cultural relations that underpin them. The relevance of these contributions to the literature on methodology extend, therefore, beyond the context of the Middle East to other cultural contexts. Overall, this discussion of the role of *wasta* during the fieldwork builds on a central theme of the thesis in demonstrating the importance of the *pre-bureaucratic* in the process of gaining access. The discussion will now turn to the data collection and analysis.

3.5 Data collection and analysis

Data collection methods comprised of observations through shadowing staff members at the DCA and Tracer offices, semi-structured interviews and publicly available documents. Overall, I conducted 32 interviews and 50 hours of observations over three stages; the first stage lasted 26 days from 21 December 2016 until 15 January 2017; the second stage lasted approximately 90 days from 28 March to 26 June 2017; the third stage lasted 21 days and took place from 1-21 of September 2017 (see table 2). The following is a discussion of each of the methods adopted.

3.5.1 Ethnographic shadowing

Shadowing is an approach to data collection that “involves a researcher closely following a member of an organization over an extended period of time” (McDonald, 2005, p. 456). Shadowing thus enables the researcher to ‘view events and activities in “real time” and gain a sense of what does happen at work, rather than what should happen at work’ (Gill, 2011, p. 116). Shadowing is central in an ethnographic approach because it “has the ability to capture the brief, fragmented, varied, verbal and interrupted nature of organizational life” (McDonald, 2005, p.458). Shadowing as a data collection method thus has the potential to yield rich data on the everyday enactments of eGovernment at the street-level in this context.

While used extensively in this project, shadowing was not initially planned as a central method in this project; it emerged at the beginning of the fieldwork for practical reasons. At the DCA one of the challenges I faced at the beginning of the fieldwork was the high volume of work at its front-line departments in addition to a large number of citizens with whom front-line employees, as well as supervisors, had to interact and serve. Supervisors’ offices, as well as service halls, were rarely empty of

citizens requesting services. In my first day, considering the volume of work and the high number of citizens, the first supervisor I approached recommended, that I sit next to him and observe and that I ask him questions during whatever spare time he had. Slowly, I found myself shadowing him and recording my observations in field notes and asking questions as we went along. Given the volume of work at this street-level organisation and the condition of my access that I should not cause disruptions to the flow of work; shadowing hence became the most viable and indeed valuable approach to data collection at the DCA (see Czarniawska, 2014). Shadowing became particularly instrumental because it allowed me to observe everyday organisational “life as it happened” (Silverman, 2006, p. 204). Throughout the fieldwork I found myself resorting to shadowing in most of the departments at the DCA. In those shadowing sessions I typically visited the DCA in the morning and stayed until 2:30 p.m. when the formal business hours of the branch’s service centre ended.

In my field notes, I dedicated a section to reflections and further questions that kept arising from the observations I recorded. These questions along with the broad questions I began the fieldwork with guided the short and sporadic question-answer interactions with supervisors during the spare time when their offices became temporarily empty of citizens and other front-line employees. I recorded these questions and answers in field notes and did not consider these as separate interviews due to their sporadic nature. Overall, I shadowed four different supervisors, one deputy supervisor, and three different front-line employees each specialising in processing different types of cases.

Appreciating the value of shadowing I began to adopt this approach in the fieldwork at Tracer offices as well. At Tracer offices the volume of work was much

lower than at the DCA, and that allowed greater time for discussions with participants during shadowing sessions. During the days I was at the DCA, I typically visited Tracer offices during their evening business hours from 4:30-10:00 p.m., on other occasions I visited them during their morning business hours from 8:00-12:30 p.m. One office had an empty desk next to the office manager, and I was invited to use that desk; at other offices, I usually sat on a chair next to either a front-line employee, an office manager or an office owner. During these shadowing sessions, I was given chances to ask questions that arose during my observations, and I would record their answers in my field notes. Overall, I shadowed two front-line employees at two different Tracer offices, one office manager, and two Tracer office owners who also worked as back-end Tracers. I was able to conduct shadowing sessions only at Tracer offices where I employed *wasta*. Observations through shadowing sessions at the DCA and Tracer offices were all recorded in 18 field notes with a total word count of 55,079.

3.5.2 Interviews

In this project I also used semi-structured interviews (Rubin & Rubin, 2011). Semi-structured interviews are valuable ways to “understand themes of the lived everyday world from the subject’s own perspective” (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2008, p. 27). I developed questions around broad themes based on a review of the literature and analysis of government plans. These themes were greatly enhanced by observations and interactions from shadowing sessions. After all, interviews should help “explain and put into a larger context what the ethnographer sees and experiences” (Fetterman, 2010, p. 40). While these themes and questions were used, the semi-structured approach adopted also allowed space for new themes and questions to emerge during the interviews.

Given the, at times, overwhelmingly high amount of street-level work at the DCA, conducting semi-structured interviews became challenging, especially with front-line employees and supervisors; this might have negatively affected the number of interviews I was able to conduct. Nonetheless, over the whole period of the fieldwork, I was able to arrange and conduct three semi-structured interviews with two front-line supervisors and seven interviews with six different front-line employees. Additionally, I conducted three semi-structured interviews with three senior directors at the DCA. I was also able to conduct three interviews with senior eGovernment strategists. Only one front-line employee at the DCA agreed to have the interview voice recorded; the rest preferred that I record their answers in writing. Interviews lasted from approximately 20 minutes with some participants and up to 80 minutes for others; the majority of interviews lasted about one hour. All three interviews with eGovernment strategists were voice recorded; one interview last about 110 minutes and the other two last about 50 minutes each.

At Tracer offices I conducted nine interviews, five of which were with office managers, the remaining four interviews were equally divided between office front-line staff members and office owners, who all also worked as back-end Tracers at the same time. Office front-line staff members were difficult to interview mainly because office managers preferred that front-line staff members did not leave their posts. Office managers in these cases curtailed to some extent access to office front-line staff members. Nonetheless, this issue was remedied, first through extensive shadowing of some Tracer offices' front-line staff members. Second, the fact that most office managers I interviewed had extensive work experience in various roles in their offices enabled them to bring perspectives from other roles into the interview discussion. Only four out of the nine interviews were voice recorded as per participants' preferences. The

remaining five interviews were recorded in writing. Interviews lasted from 40 minutes being the shortest up to 110 minutes for the longest interview among this group.

The remaining seven interviews were conducted mostly with citizens and expatriate workers who use Tracer offices as well as the DCA's services. In the sampling of citizens and expatriate workers, I sought to select participants from diverse backgrounds as much as possible. Overall, two expatriate workers from Sudan and Pakistan, respectively, were interviewed along with five Saudi citizens. Three, of the five citizens, were small business owners, one of whom had worked at a Tracer office previously. The remaining two were working professionals. Interviews lasted from 30 minutes to 105 minutes. Only four interviewees of this participant group consented to the use of voice recorder; the remaining three interviews were recorded in writing.

The sensitivity to the use of a voice recorder was indeed a salient issue when it came to interviews. It can be attributed to a lack of trust. While voice recording is a way to preserve some of the context of the interview; participants preferences not to use one had to be respected. To remedy this issue, I tried to record responses as accurately as possible with the cooperation of participants who facilitated the process by trying to speak slowly and allowing me time to write down their responses.

All interviews were recorded and transcribed in Arabic, the spoken language in Saudi Arabia. Maintaining data in its original language helps to preserve its integrity; especially since translation is a situated and subjective process that might indeed change from one translator to another (Temple, 2005). Given this, I strove to translate as accurately as possible into English only the parts I used in the thesis; being a native of the context of the study and acquiring an appreciation of the different layers of meaning

as I carried out the fieldwork, positioned me favourably for this task. The total word count of all transcribed and typed interviews is 103,486.

Stage	Duration	No. days
Stage 1	21 December 2016 until 15 January 2017	26 days
Stage 2	28 March 2017 until 26 June 2017	90 days
Stage 3	01 September 2017 until 21 September 2017	21 days
	Total	137 days

Table 2: Stages of data collection.

Participant group	Sub-groups (by occupation, category)	Number of participants	Number of interviews
Government employees	Front-line staff	6	7
	Supervisors	2	3
	Directors	3	3
	Senior eGov strategists	3	3
Tracer offices	Office staff	2	2
	Office managers	5	5
	Office owners	2	2
Members of the public	Citizens	5	5
	Expatriate workers	2	2
	Total	30	32

Table 3: Break down of interviews by participant groups.

3.5.3 Documents

Documents help to “build a richer picture than can be obtained by interviews and fieldwork alone.” (Myers, 2013, p. 151). I collected and analysed 20 publicly available documents from government websites relevant to the topic of eGovernment reforms in the Saudi public sector. Senior planners interviewed strongly recommended I refer to many of these 20 documents; especially documents numbered 5 and 6 in the table below. These documents included eGovernment reform plans, annual progress reports, specific project guidelines, evaluation metrics, and a collection of relevant government resolutions. I analysed these documents through carefully reading them and annotating them with the aim of understanding the intentions of the eGovernment reform, how it was planned, its specific objectives, how it was enacted, and the different methodologies, procedures and approaches adopted in its implementation. Parts of chapter 4 and 5 are based on analysis of these documents. The following is a table that shows a detailed list of all documents collected and consulted.

	Document title	Date	Document type
1	The National ICT Plan	2003	Strategy plan
2	Digitisation resolution	2004	Government resolution (No.235)
3	Establishment of eGovernment committees in all public organisations	2005	Government resolution (No. mb/8189)
4	eGovernment implementation unified framework	2005	Strategy document
5	The eGovernment first Action plan	2006	Strategy plan
6	eGovernment implementation guidelines	2006	Government resolution (No.40)
7	Legislation to establish CIO positions in each public organisation	2007	Government resolution (No.240)
8	eGovernment regulations	2007	Government resolution (No. m/18)
9	Electronic services framework	2008	Strategy document
10	Business Process Redesign framework	2008	Strategy document

11	Annual eGovernment progress reports	2009-2014	Five annual reports
12	Instructions to speed up eGovernment reforms due to increasing crowdedness in public service centres	2009	Government resolution (No. mb/3870)
13	Reinforcing eGovernment reforms	2010	Government resolution (No.252)
14	Development of national housing and addressing Geographic Information Systems (GIS)	2012	Government resolution (No.205)
15	National Transformation Plan 2020	2016	Strategy Document

Table 4: List of documents collected.

3.5.4 Data Analysis

“[N]early as many analysis strategies exist as qualitative researchers” (Crabtree & Miller, 1992, p. 17; cited in Marshall & Rossman, 2014, p. 389).

In this section, I will discuss the approach I adopted to analyse the data. Data collection and data analysis were interlinked stages that evolved together throughout this process (Marshall & Rossman, 2014; Rubin & Rubin, 2011). An interpretive process informed the approach to data analysis in this project (Wolcott, 1994). This interpretive process comprised of a dialogue between the literature I was exposed to and the data as well as social interactions with the PhD supervisors and colleagues through meetings, departmental seminars and conferences. This interpretive process was facilitated by coding the data using a Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS) and writing analytical memos to distil analytical themes and relate them to the literature. This process was far from mechanistic and orderly, nonetheless, in what follows, I will try to order its different stages and relate them to data analysis approaches discussed in the literature in the hope of clarifying how the theoretical insights and contributions of the thesis were reached.

My initial research interests were in studying the enactment of eGovernment in the Saudi Arabian context. This interest led me during the first year of the PhD to engage with debates on bureaucracy versus post-bureaucracy, as well as on eGovernment and street-level bureaucracy. Engagement with these debates helped add more clarity to the focus of the project, which, at the end of the first year, coalesced around studying the enactment of eGovernment at the street-level. While these debates were in the back of my mind when I began the fieldwork, they nonetheless, did not “take the form of prejudgments, forcing interpretations of the data into their mould, but are instead used as resources to make sense of the data” (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, p. 163). In this sense, my analysis of the data evolved as I collected it.

Two central techniques were fundamental in the data analysis process of this project; namely, writing and coding. I will begin by discussing writing as it came first in the process and lasted until the production of this thesis. Writing took the form of analytical memos. A Memo in the context of qualitative data analysis, can be broadly described as “diary-like tool, where ...[one]... can write thoughts relating to different aspects of a project” (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012, p. 181). Memo writing is a valuable mean through which “hunches and ideas about what the data mean” (Myers, 2013, p. 169) can be fleshed out, expanded upon and developed.

During the fieldwork, I used memos as a creative space to reflect and make sense of the emerging data. This process was based on choosing a segment of the data and analysing it through writing in a style akin to ‘free-writing’ with the intention of producing as many ideas as possible (Schiellerup, 2008; Wolcott, 2001). My experience with this approach confirms Marshall and Rossman’s assertion that “[w]riting [...] helps identify gaps and questions in the data. It forces the analyst to stay thoughtfully

immersed in his study.” (2014, pp.399-400). As the data analysis process evolved my writing became more focused on the themes that were emerging. The themes began to coalesce around the interplay between the pre-bureaucratic, the bureaucratic and the post-bureaucratic. These themes emerged through close engagement with the literature on bureaucracy versus post-bureaucracy; especially the work of Weber (1978) from which the notion of pre-bureaucracy stood out as neglected in this debate.

As the relationship between these three constructs became clearer, I became more concerned with conceptualising how the pre-bureaucratic was enacted in practice despite formal rules. This issue was particularly relevant to data on how official employees side-stepped formal rules and enacted different informal arrangements such as routinely making exceptions for senior citizens who could not use technology and engaging in favouritism through the practice of ‘wasta’ (as we shall see in chapter five). Through reading the literature on organisational ethnography and workplace cultures I was exposed to the work of the Chicago School sociologist Anselm Strauss. I found Strauss’s notion of the negotiated order a valuable way to interpret these informal arrangements. I also came across the work of Gouldner (1954) and his notions of the ‘indulgency pattern’ and ‘mock bureaucracy’ and found them valuable in making sense of the pre-bureaucratic and how it is enacted despite the bureaucratic. Following this, I incorporated Strauss’s (1978) and Gouldner’s (1954) concepts into the framework that was emerging on the interplay between the pre-bureaucratic, bureaucratic, and post-bureaucratic (those ideas are discussed at length in chapter seven).

In conjunction with this interpretive process of moving back and forth between the data, and the literature, I also used a Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software called Nvivo (QSR international). I began using Nvivo more extensively after

the end of the fieldwork. It is expected that different researchers might use Nvivo differently; I used Nvivo as a tool to help organise and code the large amount of data.

My approach to coding comprised of several levels and rounds of coding that reflected the developments emerging through the process of writing analytical memos and moving back and forth between the literature and the data (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). In the beginning, I coded in a descriptive manner based on my interpretations of what the data was referring to or describing. These descriptive codes became the basis for broader analytical themes. These analytical themes were also expanded upon through writing in analytical memos in order to crystallise these themes and how they are related to each other. Then, I began to group different descriptive codes under second order analytical codes, which reflect the emerging analytical themes (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991). These analytical themes served as a basis for theorising and developing third order codes or what Easterby-Smith et al. call “theoretical codes” (2012, p. 168). These theoretical codes are more grounded in the debates in the literature. Saldana (2015) describes this staged process as the three iterative cycles of coding; moving from description, to analysis to interpretation and theorisation (see also Gioia, Corley, & Hamilton, 2013).

Table 5 provides an illustration of how these codes emerged. The analytical process evident in table 5 is an inductive one that shows how codes evolved from the data (Gioia et al., 2013). It is important to stress that while the table reflects a linearity in the patterns of codes, the process of coding was far from linear. As stressed earlier, these codes evolved in conjunction with a wider inherently complex interpretive process that defies orderliness and linearity (Wolcott, 1994).

Illustrative quotes	First order Code (Descriptive)	Second order code (Analytical)	Third order code (Theoretical)
"we have transformed to eGovernment, everything is electronic and is done through the electronic system, and if the person does not know how to use the system, he just goes to a tracer office, and they help him"	Tracers provide access to eGov	Tracers are facilitating the enactment of eGovernment	The pre-bureaucratic endures despite eGovernment
"We have a dedicated database for our clients; we have information there like clients' mobile phone numbers, usernames, passwords all that is there in the database for our regular clients."	Tracers store clients' usernames and passwords to facilitate accessing eGov services		
"the employee tells them to go to a Tracer office who can help with setting up their e-government accounts and processing their cases for them."	Officials refer citizens to Tracers to access eGov		
"This system made our work a lot easier [...]. But of course, a lot of citizens' resist [...] so they come to us and they plead and beg and try to find wasta to get their documents directly from us"	Citizens engage in wasta to avoid eGov	Wasta enduring despite eGovernment	
"sometimes an elderly person comes to you and says that he does not know how to use this system and so on, for such people we sometimes bypass policy and help them. But at the end of the day, this is still wrong, and it remains against regulations"	Supervisors make exceptions side-stepping eGov		
"they had to enforce this because people as usual resisted using the online system first [...] But after we enforced it and made it compulsory people started using it"	Supervisors enforce eGov adoption	Bureaucratic practices are maintained through eGovernment	eGovernment is a hybrid of the bureaucratic and the post-bureaucratic
"Mohammad: what is the procedure you follow in such cases [eGov system referrals]? Participant: first of all, they have to go back to the old way as if there is no e-government."	eGov system refers cases to the bureaucratic channel		
"there are cases that have to be done manually for security reasons"	Paper-based work is maintained for security reasons		
"it [eGov] made a huge difference. There are fewer people now coming to us."	Crowdedness decreased in service centre	eGovernment ameliorating bureaucracy	
"It also had positive effects on citizens and employees' morale. Now they are more relaxed, and they are more open and willing to help."	Employee morale is better after eGov		
"This [eGov] system made our work a lot easier [...] it also reduced paperwork we used to ask for and increased our productivity; cases are processed faster now than before"	eGov improved productivity		

Table 5: Illustration of relevant codes.

3.6 Summary

This chapter has introduced the methodological approach adopted in this thesis. A qualitative interpretive ethnographic approach was adopted to collect, analyse and write about the cultural relations, social interactions, practices and everyday life through which eGovernment is enacted at the street-level. I also discussed and justified the choices of empirical sites and the sampling of participants as well as the data collection methods. Shadowing was highlighted as a central method that allowed for observing and recording “naturally occurring data” (Silverman, 2006, p.202) in the form of everyday social interactions between street-level bureaucrats and citizens. The approach to data analysis was also discussed highlighting the broader analytical themes of the thesis and how they emerged.

Additionally, I have provided a contribution to the literature on methodology by highlighting the role of the cultural practice of ‘wasta’ during the fieldwork and its implications. The role of wasta, and similar cultural practices in other contexts, are rarely discussed from a research methodology perspective despite its salience especially for qualitative researchers conducting fieldwork in the Middle East and beyond. The “confessional tale” (Van Maanen, 2011b, p. 73) presented in this chapter based on my experience of engaging in wasta during the fieldwork can be seen to help future researchers in terms of how to deal with wasta and similar cultural practices in other countries during ethnographic fieldwork in a culturally and ethically sensitive manner. Additionally, the insights developed from this discussion on ‘wasta’ add an important layer of meaning to the term ‘informal relations’ which are described vaguely in the methodology literature or from a cultural perspective specific to Western contexts. The argument derived from this discussion is that informal relations are enacted within local cultural relations that must be understood by qualitative researchers; especially

ethnographers before embarking on the fieldwork. The next chapter will discuss the Saudi Arabian cultural context and the background to this eGovernment reform in depth to help the reader appreciate and understand the findings of this thesis.

4 Post-bureaucracy in the Saudi context: A historical and cultural background

The objective of this chapter is to introduce the Saudi Arabian cultural and economic context. Elements of the local context such as cultural relations, the history of a country and its people, the unique economic conditions have a considerable bearing on the adoption and implementation of technology-enabled organisational transformation such as eGovernment (Castro & Ansari, 2017; Hayes & Westrup, 2012; Heeks, 2005). A discussion of context is vital in that it helps to render actions and behaviours understandable (Geertz, 1973). It also instils an appreciation of the complex cultural relations and how they might interrelate with the local enactment of such organisational transformations (Avgerou, 2001; Introna et al., 2009; McCabe, 2002). Without a description and a representation of such elements, the reader is left unequipped and ill-prepared to read and understand the findings described in the subsequent chapters.

The chapter is divided into two main sections. The first section aims to provide a reading of the cultural relations in Saudi Arabia shedding light specifically on the role of religion and Arabian tribal culture. The first section will also provide a historical background on the development of Saudi Arabia as a country highlighting key moments such as the discovery of oil and the building of a modern public sector. Specific attention is paid to the history of the public sector, its development, and its distinctive features

such as the role of Mu'aqibs (Tracers) as bureaucratic intermediaries in the delivery of public services.

The second section describes the introduction of post-bureaucratic reforms in the country. This section provides a reading of the history of these reforms and the social as well as the economic rationalities underpinning them. I begin by discussing the introduction of the 'information society' reforms through which the eGovernment reform project emerged. Then a detailed discussion of the eGovernment reform project, its objectives, plans, policies, and key resolutions. A description of the most recent wave of reforms under the 'National Transformation Program 2020' introduced in 2015 that reaffirmed the status of eGovernment is provided in a penultimate sub-section. Overall, the two main sections provide a background necessary to appreciate and interpret the empirical findings explored in the coming chapters.

4.1 The local culture and the history of modernisation

In this section of the chapter, I will begin by describing the Arabian tribal cultural relations, and the role of Islamic religious values in society, as a prelude to providing a historical background on the development of Saudi Arabia and its journey toward modernisation. I will pay attention to critical historical events such as the discovery of oil, the sedentarisation of nomadic tribes, and the building of a modern public bureaucracy. Then, I will explore the distinctive features of the public bureaucracy and how its operation might be shaped by these cultural relations and social/religious values paying attention to the spread of the cultural practice of *wasta* and its structural manifestation in the guise of street-level bureaucratic intermediaries called 'Mu'aqibs'. This discussion helps to set the stage for a detailed description of the history of post-bureaucratic reforms in the second section.

4.1.1 Religion and the Arab tribal culture

The Arabian Peninsula (modern day Saudi Arabia) is the cradle of the religion of Islam and Arabian tribes (Blunt, 1881; Blunt & Blunt, 1968; Musil, 1928); these two institutions are fundamental to the social relations that characterise this society. In the spirit of understanding the cultural context of this study, I will provide, in what follows, a general overview of these social relations. I will do this while unpacking how these social relations are shaped by the institutions of tribe and religion drawing linkages to the cultural practice of *wasta* (discussed in chapter two), which imbues organisational lives in this context.

Societies in the Middle East and, specifically, Saudi Arabia are organised around large tribes, populations of which could extend beyond hundreds of thousands of individuals spanning several countries (Sowayan, 2010). There are numerous definitions of the tribe in the anthropological literature. Some of those definitions highlight the role of biological characteristics in the formation and organisation of tribes such as common descent and assignment of roles based on biological markers such as age, sex, or lineage (Emanuel, 1977). Sowayan, a Saudi Arabian anthropologist, argued that the Arabian tribe is best understood as a social institution geared toward the objective of survival in a harsh desert environment (Sowayan, 2010). In what follows, I will use these definitions to describe the cultural relations of Arabian tribes and how are they intermeshed with the religious values of Islam.

Ibn Khaldūn (1332-1406), a prominent 14th century “Arab thinker whose views about Arab [...] culture have special currency in our times” (Rosen, 2005, p. 596), provided an insightful sociological analysis of Arabian tribes. His prolegomena, titled ‘*Almuqaddima*’ remains a seminal reference for anyone wanting to understand the Arab

tribal culture and how it is suffused by as well as, at times, exist in tension with the Islamic values (Algumzi, 2017). Ibn Khaldūn argued that Arabian tribes are characterised by a strong ‘Asabiya’, which can be translated as ‘group-feeling’. This group-feeling among the tribe is derived from perceived common lineage signified through sharing a common last name (Ibn Khaldūn, 1958; Ritter, 1948). Such group-feeling manifests in how people tend to favour their kin (i.e., those who share the same last name) over others. According to Ibn Khaldūn, the stronger the group-feeling in a tribe, the stronger and the more powerful that tribe becomes as a social unit. A strong group-feeling was believed to breed stronger compassion and solidarity among members of the tribe.

Historically, in the harsh Arabian desert environment tribes fought amongst each other over scarce resources (Emanuel, 1977). Group-feeling in such a context became a means of survival (Hoyland, 2001; Sawayan, 2010). Individuals exhibit their tribal group-feeling through helping and standing by fellow members of their tribe. This manifests in protecting their wealth from raids in the older Bedouin society or even favouring them over others in the modern society (Al-Ramahi, 2008). If a person fails to maintain and exhibit his/her tribal group-feeling, he/she risks being stigmatised in their community (Barnett et al., 2013). Acquiring such stigma is detrimental to an individual in such context; it means loss of face and support from other members of the tribe (see Blunt & Blunt, 1968; Musil, 1928).

Before the emergence of Islam, which is the dominant religion in the Arab world, Arabian tribes took pride in their group-feeling and used it as a marker of their superiority over other tribes (Abu-Lughod, 1999; Ibn Khaldūn, 1958). Islamic teachings prohibited such forms of ‘pride’ in group-feeling that result in injustice and inequity

among Muslims (Algumzi, 2017). At the same time, Islamic values, as per the teachings of the Quran and the Hadith (prophetic traditions) stress solidarity for kith and kin as a righteous deed that is rewarded in the life after death (At-Twajiri & Al-Muhaiza, 1996). Group-feeling thus is tolerated in the religion as long as it does not result in injustice and harm being afflicted upon others. In this perspective, religion becomes a governance system that helps to govern how tribal group-feeling should be desirably enacted in this context.

This governance of group-feeling through religion is not always enforced as it is influenced by an individual's inclinations to adopt such religious values as well as the religiosity of key individuals such as tribal chiefs who exercise strong influence over the tribe. This was especially the case before the advent of modern states when the tribe was the main social collective a person belonged to and organised him/herself within (Emanuel, 1977). Many members of tribes maintained their group-feeling in ways that brought harm or disadvantages to others (i.e., through inequitable treatments or raiding and stealing other tribe's possessions). This went against the values of the Islamic religion, reflecting a tension between the institution of the tribe and that of religion and the relative strength of each of these social institutions (Ibn Khaldūn, 1958).

With the advent of modern states, the institution of the tribe weakened; especially in relation to other social institutions such as the religion and the state (Sowyan, 2010). The tribe became not the only social collective a person belongs to as people join modern institutions such as schools, universities and work within different forms of work organisations (Khoury & Kostiner, 1991). Nonetheless, Arabian Tribes, while not pastoral and as closely connected as they used to be before the advent of modern states and formal organisations, still exist today throughout the Middle East.

They adapted and maintained their group-feeling (Cole, 2003). For instance, nowadays throughout the Middle East, some tribes have their satellite TV channels, websites, and social media outlets (Maisel, 2014). They use these modern channels to maintain their heritage, share the stories of their past, connect with their present and maintain their ‘group-feeling’. They use these outlets to broadcast their social occasions and gatherings in which they recite poems and stories that keep their group-feeling alive (Maisel, 2013, 2015).

Additionally, the tribe’s role as a support safety net remains strong; albeit in different forms than the past. An example of this is how tribal chiefs set up funds to support the financial needs of members of the tribe. The wealthy members of the tribe contribute annually to such funds which are used to help members who are in need (e.g., indebted persons, persons involved in legal issues and so forth) (see Al-Ramahi, 2008; Sawayan, 2010). This is an example of the collective logic that underpins the institution of the tribe and its group-feeling. The use of these ‘modern’ channels to maintain what is a ‘pre-modern’ institution—the tribe—illustrates the resilience and the continuing relevance of the social values and relations that underpin the functioning of tribes in this context.

One current manifestation of the resilience of tribes, specifically tribal group-feeling, is the cultural practice of *wasta* in contemporary organisations in the Middle East. *Wasta*, as described in chapter two, is predicated on tribal collectivistic cultural relations and group-feelings. Individuals must honour the intercession of another esteemed person from their tribe (Lackner, 2016). Moreover, individuals must always maintain a favourable image of the tribe through their everyday conduct; especially since individuals’ last names in this context reflect their tribe’s name. These relations

are, at times, legitimised through drawing on the religious values and teachings that promote solidarity and cohesion among kith and kin (At-Twajri & Al-Muhaiza, 1996).

These relations and sentiments imbue organisational lives in this Middle Eastern context. It is expected that employees engage in *wasta* to help their kin or whom their kin intercede on their behalf (Lackner, 2016). Moreover, employees are expected to engage in *wasta* through respecting elderly citizens, or senior figures from other tribes as doing so is, first, religiously desirable; second, it reflects positively on their tribes and families. *Wasta*, in this sense, can be seen as a manifestation of how the tension between the institution of the tribe and that of the religion is handled in contemporary Middle Eastern societies. In other words, the stronger expressions of tribal group-feeling such as raids and acquisitions of other tribes' wealth have been counterbalanced by the strengthening of religious values that came with the modern state; hence, such acts have disappeared (Cole, 2003). Nonetheless, tribal group-feeling did not disappear and is now expressed through *wasta*, which is easier to legitimise religiously than raiding and stealing other tribes (Algumzi, 2017).

Understanding this milieu of religious and tribal values and relations is vital to understand the widespread and everyday enactments of the cultural practice of *wasta* in organisational settings, which I will explore in chapters five and six. Next, I will focus on the history of Saudi Arabia, which should be read in the light of the discussion of the religious and tribal relations in the Middle East that have been presented thus far.

4.1.2 Saudi Arabia's history of modernisation

The forming of the modern Saudi state began in 1902 and lasted until 1932 (Vassiliev, 2000). The tribes, before the establishment of Saudi Arabia, were embroiled in conflicts and wars triggered by competition over scarce resources such as water wells

and grazing lands rich in vegetation (Anthony, 2006). These conflicts went against the teachings of Islam, which promotes solidarity and brotherhood, not only among kith and kin but also among all Muslims. King Abdulaziz emerged during the early 1900s, not only as a political leader but also as a religious leader drawing on the teachings of Islam to unite the tribes and eliminate tribal conflicts (Bray & Darlow, 2012). King Abdulaziz led an army composed of members of most tribes in the Arabian Peninsula to conquer and acquire the different emirates and chieftains that existed independently (Long, 2005). In 1932 and after 30 formative years, all the tribes of Saudi Arabia united under the leadership of King Abdulaziz, setting the stage for the establishment of Saudi Arabia (Bowen, 2008). King Abdulaziz strengthened the social institution of the religion and its values to govern and act as a counterweight to the social institution of the tribe and weaken the un-Islamic manifestations of tribal group-feeling discussed earlier (e.g., tribal wars and conflicts). Nonetheless, tribal group-feeling is not entirely eliminated as Islam also calls for solidarity among kith and kin (Cooke, 2014).

The discovery of the oil and the modernisation journey

During the early years of the modern Saudi Arabian state, most tribal populations led a nomadic pastoral lifestyle roaming the vast deserts searching for sources of water and grazing grounds for their livestock. Tribal populations at that time visited the few cities such as Riyadh or Jeddah as well as Makkah and Madinah during annual pilgrimage seasons to trade, selling animals and handcrafts, and buying food, which they carried on camels' backs to their desert dwellings (Cole, 2003). Nonetheless, such a pre-modern lifestyle was on the verge of change as oil was being discovered in the country.

In 1938, shortly after the establishment of the kingdom, oil was found in commercial quantities in the Eastern parts of the country (Hertog, 2011). With the help

of the American Oil giant, Standard Oil of California, production began in the 1940s; however, it was not until the end of World War II that the scale of production rose to a significant level (Al-Farsy, 1980; Hertog, 2016; Wynbrandt, 2014). With the influx of oil revenues, the institution of the tribe seemed to be poised to change. Powered by unprecedented revenues, the Kingdom's leadership found it imperative to embark on a large-scale development project to bring its population from the difficulty of Bedouin/tribal desert life to the comfort of modernity (Jones, 2011; Vassiliev, 2013). The modernisation project included not only building schools and hospitals but also sending locals abroad for further education to developed countries (Bukhari & Denman, 2013). There were several significant obstacles to this modernisation; one of the obstacles is the fact that the majority of the inhabitants of the Kingdom at that time lead a nomadic pastoral lifestyle (Chai, 2006; Kay, 1978). The assertion then became that for this modernisation project to be successful, the Arabian tribes must abandon their nomadic lifestyle and adopt a sedentary one.

The Sedentarisation of the Bedouin tribal populations

A massive project of sedentarisation was launched in the 1960s, 70s, 80s, and 90s (Cobban, 2006). This sedentarisation project aimed to settle the Bedouin tribes in cities and villages so that education, health, and other public services could be made accessible (Al-Said, 2006; Katakura, 1977). This was a strategic objective, especially since it was vital that large pools of educated and trained Saudis are made available in order to carry out the development plans of the country (Al-Farsy, 1980, 1990). While most tribal populations have joined this sedentarisation project and settled down, they congregated in specific cities and villages. The result was the emergence of villages, large cities and metropolitan areas built and populated along tribal lines (see Maisel, 2015). It is common thus to find large cities (population ranges from 100,000-300,000)

inhabited only by a few tribes (Nahedh, 1989). Therefore, while the sedentarisation process was a success, the tribe was also maintained and strengthened through it, thus contributing to the endurance of the tribal culture in modern day Saudi Arabia as highlighted in the prelude on Arabian tribes⁵.

With the sedentarisation project succeeding, the government began, in the early 1970s, a series of five-year development plans that aimed to modernise the country and develop its economy and society (Al-Farsy, 1980). The plans focused on bringing modern services such as healthcare, education, and public services to its citizenry (Wynbrandt, 2014). Relevant to the focus of this thesis in the history of this modernisation project is the introduction of modern public bureaucracy and its impact on ‘pre-modern’ tribal cultural practices.

Breaking away from the tribal model

The 1960s and 70s marked the key formative years of the modern Saudi state and its institutions (Hertog, 2007). With oil revenues skyrocketing from \$1 billion in 1970 to the range of \$80 billion in 1980, the government had to develop a bureaucratic apparatus to manage the investment of oil revenues in the development of the country (Kostiner & Khoury, 1991). Additionally, the introduction of bureaucratisation was also fuelled by a desire to depart from ‘pre-modern’ tribal cultural practices, which were viewed as an impediment to modernisation (Hertog, 2016; Nimir & Palmer, 1982). King Faysal, who reigned from 1964-1975 was known as the moderniser of Saudi Arabia. His statement “Like it or not, we must join the modern world and find an

⁵ See Al-Ramahi (2008) for a similar case in Jordan

honourable place in it” (in Al-Farsy, 1980, p. 52) became a slogan that indicated how imperative this modernisation project was understood to be.

At a time when tribal populations were finding their way through the sedentarisation process, planners and technocrats declared that the ‘pre-modern’ tribal traditions and practices would have no place in the future. Al-Sadhan, a leading technocrat, expressed this view clearly in his call for modernisation stating that “[i]t was inevitable for the country to pursue a new course, to break away from the chains of the tribal models, or, at least, to interrupt its adherence to their models” (1980, p. 76). A modern rational bureaucracy hence was seen as a means of helping to “break away from the chains of the tribal models” and curtail pre-bureaucratic values and practices.

Fuelled by mounting oil revenues and zeal for modernisation, a team of Western educated technocrats “[d]rawing on advice provided by a United Nations expert in 1960...[and]... by a Ford Foundation team in 1963” (ibid., p. 43), kicked started this modernisation project (see also Hertog, 2007). Dr Al-Qusaybi, one of those western-educated technocrats who spearheaded this modernisation project, stated at that time:

I know many economists tell us we cannot compress the century-long process of development – industrialization, infrastructure creation and manpower training – into a few decades. But since no nation with our resources has ever tried to do so, no one really knows if it can be done. We shall try. (cited in Al-farsy, 1980, p.67).

With such assertions, the building of modern institutions in the kingdom, including a public bureaucracy, began to gain momentum.

This push for modernisation has not resulted in advent of ‘modernity’ as understood in the West in terms of constituting a demystification of all spheres of social and economic life, including religion, as described by Weber (1978). While projects of modernisation such as building a rational and efficient bureaucracy to carry out the task of development are clearly evident (Al-Hegelan & Palmer, 1985), religion and tribal social values, nonetheless, remain a prominent feature of not only social life, but also, specifically, organisational life throughout the Middle East as evident through the widespread of the practice of *wasta* (Alharbi, 2013; Nevo, 1998). In the next paragraph, I will explore this theme further by providing a historical background on the building of the bureaucracy. Then I will move on to examine the literature on the distinctive characteristics of the Saudi bureaucracy such as *wasta* and the use of bureaucratic intermediaries called ‘*Mu’aqibs*’. This should further the objective of understanding the Saudi context.

The building of a modern bureaucracy

With the increasing oil revenues, the country faced the imperative of expanding and rationalising its public administration to meet the demands of an enlarging economy (Hertog, 2007). During the 1960s and 70s, mostly American and European consultants from the World Bank, the Ford Foundation, as well as other international consulting bodies were hired to assist with designing and implementing the project of building and expanding the Saudi public bureaucracy (Al-Farsy, 1980; Kostiner, 1991).

During that time, the sedentarisation project of Bedouin tribal populations was ongoing and an increasing local workforce required jobs to generate an income. The public bureaucracy became the leading and most attractive employer; especially considering that the private sector was yet to grow and catch up to the wealth of the state (Al-Hegelan & Palmer, 1985; Hertog, 2010). According to Hertog (2007), this led

the consultants to adopt a strategy of segmenting the vital elements of the public bureaucracy such as the central bank and some key ministries and organisations from other parts of the public sector. These vital organisations hired the few qualified and mostly Western educated nationals as well as a significant number of professional expatriate workers.

The rest of the public sector was lenient in its hiring policies to accommodate the significant numbers of recently sedentarised and less skilled locals. The result was an over-staffed and lethargic public bureaucracy except for what Hertog called small “[i]slands of efficiency” (2007, p. 539) such as the central bank and a few vital departments. The interest of this thesis, nonetheless, is in street-level public organisations that directly touch the lives of the public (Lipsky, 1983). In what follows I will elaborate on the key distinctive features of the Saudi public bureaucracy; especially its street-level branches, identified in the literature on this topic.

There are mainly two distinctive features of the public bureaucracy in Saudi. The first is extreme centralisation that seems to lead to a lethargic and relatively unresponsive public bureaucracy. Second, the widespread use of the cultural practice of ‘wasta’, and related to it, the prevalence of a market of private intermediaries called ‘Mu’aqibs’—translated as Tracers. I will discuss each of these features respectively in what follows.

Extreme centralisation and a lethargic bureaucracy

One overarching characteristic of Saudi public bureaucracy is the issue of ‘extreme centralisation’ (Al-Hegelan & Palmer, 1985; Hertog, 2007). According to Al-Hegelan and Palmer (1985), the prevalence of centralisation in the Saudi public bureaucracy stemmed from bureaucrats’ behaviour. They commented:

[Considering] the unwillingness of Saudi officials to delegate authority and the unwillingness of subordinate officials to accept it. Authority for virtually all decisions, regardless of their import, remains concentrated at the upper echelons of the bureaucratic structure. This concentration of authority to the summit of the bureaucratic pyramid both abets and is reinforced by the predilection of most Saudi citizens to take their problems immediately to the most senior official involved, bypassing lower officials whom they perceived to be obstacles or buffers in the decision making process. (1985, p. 53).

Considering that centralisation causes bottlenecks thus slowing down the pace of work, this extreme centralisation seemed to result in a lethargic and inefficient public bureaucracy (Hertog, 2007). While Al-Hegelan and Palmer's (1985) contribution is valuable, they, unfortunately, did not critically analyse nor ground their findings in the local context. Two questions they did not address are why Saudi officials are reluctant to delegate? And why did citizens make a habit of taking their problems to senior officials? One explanation is that employees at the lower levels mostly came from the large pool of less trained locals who were lured into jobs in the public bureaucracy in its formative years in the 70s and 80s. Alternatively, another explanation is the ongoing influence of the local tribal culture. Nonetheless, the limited literature impedes any ability to extend this analysis further.

Wasta and The Mu'aqib (Tracer) as “wasta for hire.”

“Favouritism has been the bane of bureaucracies throughout the Arab world, destroying the public confidence in bureaucratic establishments and diverting the rational allocation of resources [...] its presence is as much a social as it is a bureaucratic problem” (Al-Hegelan & Palmer, 1985, p.65).

As discussed in chapter two, the cultural practice of *wasta* pervades the Saudi public bureaucracy. The collectivistic cultural relations enshrined in the institution of the tribe and extended family endured despite being threatened by the advent of modern institutions such as bureaucracy. Such collectivistic relations now suffuse everyday work in bureaucratic settings in the form of the practice of *wasta*. *Wasta* is no longer only a means to resolve conflicts and establish harmony among tribes; it is also a means through which the institution of the tribe is maintained along with and through the modern bureaucracy. Cultural relations that underpin *wasta* legitimate exercises of discretion that deviate from the formal bureaucratic rationality to pre-bureaucratic rationalities resulting in favouritism and nepotism imbuing organisational practices such as the delivery of public services (Barnett et al., 2013). The limited studies that explored *wasta* in the Saudi context have narrowly focused on how *wasta* shapes Human Resource (HR) practices of Saudi private-sector organisations (see Aldossari & Robertson, 2016; Harbi et al., 2017). *Wasta*, nonetheless, is more widespread; especially in public sector organisations.

A structural manifestation of *wasta* in the Middle East is the system of *Mu'aqibs*, which can best be seen as a '*wasta* for hire'. The scholarly literature on *Mu'aqibs* is almost non-existent; nonetheless, there is coverage of *Mu'aqibs* in secondary literature such as Newspaper articles. The practice of *Mu'aqibs* developed as a form of *monetised* mediation between members of the public and the public bureaucracy. The *Mu'aqib*, translated into English as the 'Tracer' (i.e., someone who traces or pushes paperwork from one office to another in the public bureaucracy), is a privately hired agent or intermediary that mediates access to the bureaucracy to solicit public services for fees on behalf of their clients. Clients who use Tracers range from all types of citizens, expatriate workers, and businesses—small and large (Hatrash, 2006). Branches of the

public bureaucracy, specifically street-level organisations such as the DCA, are the field of action of Mu'aqibs, henceforth called Tracers. Tracers typically develop valuable knowledge of the regulations of such street-level organisations as well as favourable relationships with official street-level bureaucrats; therefore, Tracers can easily engage in 'wasta' to expedite the processing of their clients' paperwork from such organisations. The profitability of Tracers hinges on knowing the public bureaucracy and its regulations and developing 'wasta' connections to solicit public services in a timely and efficient manner for their clients.

Tracers hence are sought after for two main reasons, first to act as 'wasta' for their clients and help them to expedite the processing of their cases. Second, to navigate, absorb, and deal with onerous bureaucratic officialdom and complex bureaucratic requirements on behalf of their clients. Therefore, to attract clients, Tracers frequently claim that they have strong connections (i.e., wasta) that help them get complicated as well as incomplete and unsanctioned cases processed. It is normal that sometimes when public servants retire, they start a Tracer business to capitalise on their networks inside the public bureaucracy as well as their knowledge of policies and procedures.

Typically, Tracers operate through Tracer businesses, which are officially registered private enterprises and are government regulated. Tracer businesses take the form of Tracer offices that resemble, for example, Real Estate agents' offices in the UK. Some offices specialise in processing specific cases from specific public organisations; while others are larger and can process cases from several if not all branches of the public bureaucracy. Tracer offices usually employ between 2-10 people.

A number of Tracers work as freelance Tracers offering their services to different officially registered Tracer offices. Tracer offices resort to freelance Tracers

to supplant their workforce when they experience high volumes of cases or when they have difficult cases that their employed Tracers are unable to process.

The organisation of work in Tracer offices is divided into a front-end and back-end. The front-end is typically staffed by expatriate workers from countries such as Egypt, Sudan, India or Pakistan. The front-end is responsible for receiving clients' cases, sorting them, filling forms and preparing case paperwork. The Back-end is staffed mostly by local Saudi citizens. Usually, the office owner works in the back-end. The locals in the back-end are responsible for getting the cases processed by the public bureaucracy. They are the ones that develop the relationships with public employees and engage in *wasta* to get the cases processed. While typically back-end Tracers have minimal formal education, they are known nonetheless for their interpersonal skills and 'wasta' connections. Chapter six will explore in depth the topic of work inside Tracer offices.

The Tracer market is substantial. Official statistics on the number of Tracer offices are difficult to find. Nevertheless, a newspaper report on the Tracer market cited that approximately 22,000 Tracer offices are operating in the Kingdom as per a government statistic dated in 2001 (see Rakan, 2015). It can be argued that this number will have increased significantly considering the massive economic growth the country witnessed in the last 18 years because of increased oil revenues. A visit to different marketplaces that neighbour government organisations where hundreds of Tracer offices operate validates this statistic and suggests that the actual number might be much higher than what is reported in this dated statistic.

The Tracer has been almost absent from the literature on the Saudi bureaucracy, except for passing mentions by Hertog (2010). Tracers in Hertog's view are widespread

brokers that mediate the interaction between the bureaucracy and members of the public. Hertog, who is a political economist, defined Tracers as “paper pushers around the bureaucracy [...] who have invested time in establishing networks in such government agencies that they use to expedite paperwork for less patient or well-connected customers” (2010, p. 10).

Hertog, also pointed out that Tracers are highly sought after by foreign companies to facilitate processing cases from the public bureaucracy for them. Many, if not all, companies have institutionalised official positions for Tracers within their formal structures. Indeed, advertisements for “Mu'aqqib” positions or more formally “government relations officer” pervade local job sites and newspapers. Hertog described how a foreign company he was associated with during his tenure in Saudi Arabia used Tracers saying “[l]arge private companies usually keep their own “government relations” staff, which specializes in getting access to government agencies, sometimes cooperating with and sometimes supplanting independent paper pushers.” (2010, p.12).

Actors similar to Tracers exist widely in contexts such as Latin America, Africa, and Asia. In Brazil, for instance, a large market exists for bureaucratic intermediaries called ‘dispatchers’ (Fredriksson, 2009). Dispatchers, like Tracers, can be seen as a structural manifestation of the cultural practice of ‘jeitinho’ discussed in chapter two. Dispatchers, or ‘despachante’ in Portuguese, are “a kind of spokesman who represents someone’s interests before the bureaucratic establishment [...] Brazilians prefer to hire the services of such an agent, rather than waste their time standing in lines to resolve their issues” (Amado & Vinagre Brasil, 1991, p. 55). While the cultural contexts of Latin America and the Middle East are different, the practices of Tracers and

dispatchers in relation to the legal-rational bureaucracy can be seen to engender a pattern of the pre-bureaucratic. The role of dispatchers is described in this context to indicate the broader relevance of the role of Tracers and wasta to other contexts.

In the end, practices such as wasta and the Tracer system and their endurance thus far in the Saudi context stand in contradiction to the objectives of bureaucratic reform policies to break away from the influence of the local culture. The ‘tribal model’ referred to earlier by Al-Sadhan (1980) seems to have melded into the fabric of especially street-level bureaucratic organisations in this context. Nonetheless, a wave of public sector reform projects influenced by the global trend of post-bureaucracy—specifically, a technology-enabled transformation project in the guise of eGovernment—have been introduced recently reigniting hopes of eliminating wasta and Tracers. The discussion now turns to explore these reform projects and their policies.

4.2 Post-bureaucratic reforms for a post-oil economy

The recent imperative for transformation in Saudi Arabia was legitimised by economic as well as social rationalities. The recent reforms, in addition to the desire to rationalise and modernise the public bureaucracy to break away from the influence of cultural practices such as wasta, were also underpinned by the desire to break away from the reliance on oil as the primary source of income for the country (Al-Filali & Gallarotti, 2012; Champion, 2003; Ramady, 2010). The fluctuations in oil prices and the rise of cleaner and more efficient sources of energy have rendered the Saudi economy, which relied on oil revenues, unsustainable on the long-term (Cordesman, 2003; Hertog, 2012). The country’s leadership has repeatedly stressed that the country

must embark on economic reforms to diversify its economy and divorce its reliance on oil if it is to survive in the 21st century (McDowall, 2015).

The solution, presented with input from international consulting bodies, was to build a knowledge-based society/economy and open the country for foreign investors, who might be attracted to the country's strategic location and expanding workforce to penetrate the Middle Eastern market (Ramady, 2010). In this pursuit, attracting foreign investments required that the country create a conducive environment that can attract such investors. Central to such a conducive environment is a streamlined, efficient, and customer-centric public bureaucracy (Ramady & Mansour, 2006). Arguably, a public bureaucracy riddled with favouritism in the guise of 'wasta' and relatively inaccessible without intermediaries in the guise of Tracers is the antithesis of an efficient public bureaucracy congruent with the future vision of the country.

In what follows, I will adopt a chronological approach in discussing the sequence of reform plans and policies that came to advance these objectives. I will begin first by discussing the 'information society' vision and policies from which the eGovernment reforms in the country emerged. Then, based on an analysis of strategy documents, I will provide a historical narrative of different legislations and resolutions that introduced and facilitated the implementation of eGovernment. The discussion will be concluded with describing the most recent wave of policies under the 'National Transformation Program 2020' that came to boost the earlier reforms.

4.2.1 The Vision Toward the Information Society (2005): The National Communication and Information Technology Plan (NCITP)

The eGovernment reforms in Saudi Arabia stemmed from a broader program of reforms along the lines of the 'information society' (Beniger, 2009; 1986; Castells,

1997, 2010). The case for transforming into an ‘information society’ was first introduced in a national plan published in 2005. The information society is defined in this plan as:

[A] society that relies on the power of information and knowledge more than relying on material conventional resources such as capital, land, size of population, physical resources... etc, for it is clear that ICT represents a major civilizational transformation for mankind, and the world is gradually shifting from the “industrial society” to the “information society” (Ministry of Communication and Information Technology, 2005, p. 31).

Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) hence were perceived to be the pillars of an information society and were ascribed with the power of making such transformation yield the benefits proclaimed (Goodwin & Spittle, 2002). This is evident in the assertions promulgated by planners of this transformation as the following excerpt indicates:

It is apparent from [the] current state of affairs that ICT effectively helped to increase GDP, productivity and efficiency of all sectors; reduced expenditure in middle and long terms, provided new major sources of income, reduced immigration to cities, created new job opportunities, reduced unemployment [...]. (Ministry of Communication and Information Technology, 2005, p. 3).

With such rationality the government invested heavily in ICTs to build a robust ICT-enabled infrastructure. It poured funding into technology research centres, funded local technology start-up companies, and provided tens of thousands of science and technology related studentships (Alani, 2014). At the same time, the country began

redrawing its policies and systems in its efforts of creating a conducive environment for foreign investments (Hertog, 2008).

Central to these efforts was the task of reforming the sprawling and mostly inefficient public bureaucracy (Al-Filali & Gallarotti, 2012; Ramady, 2010). Bureaucratic red-tape, onerous officialdom, and more importantly, widespread favouritism and rule-breaking enshrined in the practices of ‘wasta’ and the ‘Tracer system’ were and are perceived to impede the transformation to a knowledge-based economy as well as deter foreign investments (Al-Hegelan & Palmer, 1985; Cunningham et al., 1994; Ramady, 2010).

An eGovernment transformation hence became the primary solution to these issues. In this context, therefore, the “advantages of eGovernment, in addition to speeding up building the knowledge economy, include the elimination of wasta”⁶ (Al-Filali, 2006, p. 7). The dominant assertion is that “electronic services help to stop the spread of wasta because they allow for rules to be embedded in technology”⁷ (Alghamdi, 2011, para. 4). Additionally, “the introduction of eGovernment could eliminate the work of Tracers [...] and decrease face-to-face interactions between citizens and front-line employees; therefore, wasta and favouritism will begin to disappear”⁸ (quote from the eGov program director, cited in Al-Shehri, 2013, paras 5–7).

⁶ This quote has been translated from Arabic into English.

⁷ This quote has been translated from Arabic into English

⁸ This quote has been translated from Arabic into English

Technology thus seems to have ignited hopes in eliminating the thus far resilient cultural practices of ‘wasta’ and the Tracer system. Therefore, to realise these hopes and “raise their efficiency and effectiveness in a manner that copes with new requirements of information society [...] [government organisations must] be restructured in order to realise the potential benefits of ICTs.” (Ministry of Communication and Information Technology, 2005, p. 54)

In this spirit, the information society vision inspired a program for transforming the public sector, namely, a technology-driven eGovernment transformation. A transformation plan to reform the public sector was hence drawn out along the lines of eGovernment.

4.2.2 The National eGovernment Strategy and Action Plan (2006)

By the late 1990s, the idea of eGovernment was in fashion. The notion of eGovernment was at the centre of public sector reforms in countries such as the United States (Gore, 1997) and the United Kingdom (Silcock, 2001). International influential bodies such as the United Nations (UN) and the World Bank (WB) sponsored and promoted the concept of eGovernment worldwide (The World Bank, 2002; United Nations-Division for Public Economics and Public Administration, 2002). Inspired by the wide adoption of eGovernment and as part of aspirations to transform into an ‘information society’, Saudi Arabia launched, in 2005, a national strategy to transform its public sector along the lines of eGovernment titled “The First eGovernment Strategy and Action Plan”. The strategy was modelled over and benchmarked with earlier public sector reforms of world-leading countries and was based on the “World Bank’s strategic vision for e-government in the Kingdom” (E-government National program, 2006, p. 18).

The primary objective of the plan, identical with most eGovernment reforms around the world, was to digitise and streamline procedures, enhance efficiency, and institute a citizen-centric logic to improve responsiveness and accessibility of public services. The following quote from the plan highlights the objectives of this transformation:

[T]he goal of providing better government services to the user is achieved by putting the user at the centre of all services and thinking of government as a service provider for a customer. Thus, whereas in traditional governmental administration, everything is seen to revolve around the agency or government official administering the service, in e-government the relation is reversed, and everything revolves around the user of the government service in question (E-government National program, 2006, p. 22)

Hence, similar to most public sector reforms around the world at that time, this eGovernment reform project was driven by New Public Management (NPM) which valorises private sector logic of efficiency and customer-centricity (Dunleavy & Hood, 1994; Hood, 1995a).

It was considered vital, in order to achieve customer-centricity, that public services are delivered in a seamless and integrated fashion (Dunleavy et al., 2006). It was vital that bureaucratic departmentalism is eliminated and that services are offered through one-stop shops (Christensen & Laegreid, 2007). This could only be done through utilising Business Process Re-engineering (BPR) and Customer Relationship Management (CRM) methodologies to join-up the branches of the bureaucracy, streamline procedures and work processes, and enhance public service delivery (Bloomfield & Hayes, 2009).

The government issued a series of resolutions and legislations to realise these objectives and facilitate the implementation of eGovernment. Describing these resolutions is vital to understanding the history of eGovernment in the country, the path it followed and the specific obstacles it faced. A detailed discussion of the central resolutions and policies that accompanied eGovernment will be provided in what follows.

4.2.3 Resolutions and institutional building: Translating plans into action

In Saudi Arabia, the highest legislative body is the Council of Ministers, which is headed by His Majesty the King. All government bylaws and resolutions are issued by the Council of Ministers and are authorised by His Majesty the King or whom he appoints. The eGovernment reform program began with a royal decree in 2003 then 29 decrees and Council of Ministers' resolutions followed during the period from 2004-2016 that firmly laid down the foundations of eGovernment and aimed to eliminate the obstacles to its implementation. It is insufficient to discuss eGovernment reforms in Saudi Arabia without discussing these important government resolutions. From this series of resolutions, four vital ones merit a discussion. These, mentioned chronologically, are resolution No. 33181 dated (2003), resolution No. 40 dated (2006), resolution No. 3870/mb dated (2009), and resolution No. 205 dated (2013).

Resolution No. 33181 (2003): Planting the seeds of eGovernment

The journey of eGovernment reform in Saudi Arabia began with resolution No. 33181 (2003). This resolution tasked the Ministry of Information Technology and Communications to develop a comprehensive eGovernment reform plan. This resolution planted the seed of a new institution, namely the 'eGovernment program'. Following this resolution, the Ministry has tasked a small team of specialists aided by

private consultants to develop an eGovernment Action plan and a regulatory framework for implementing it. The team developed into 'the eGov program', an institution dedicated to the aim of implementing eGov. The plans they developed became enforceable in the guise of the most significant resolution in eGov reforms, namely resolution No. 40.

Resolution No. 40 (2006): Enforcing the eGovernment plans

Resolution No. 40 is considered by all the eGov planners interviewed to be the engine driving the implementation of eGov in Saudi. The resolution shaped the foundations of eGov, first, by legislating the establishment of the eGov program to lead the eGov reforms. Second, by enforcing the strategies and action plans the program had developed. The following are some of the key directives of the resolution:

- Each government organisation must minimise reliance on traditional means of work and utilise Information and Telecommunication Technologies in executing their operations as per the Action Plan developed by the eGov program.
- Each government organisation must form an internal eGov committee reporting to the head of the organisation. The task of the committee is to coordinate the implementation of eGov reforms within the organisation based on the plans and criteria developed by the eGov program.
- Each government organisation must redesign its work processes and administrative procedures to provide its services electronically based on the plans and methodologies developed by the eGov program.

- Each government organisation must measure on an annual basis its progress based on the indicators and methodologies developed by the eGov program.
- The eGov program shall prepare and submit an annual report of the performance of each government organisation to the head of the Council of Ministers, His Royal Highness the King.

This resolution thus made it explicit that all public sector organisations had to abandon traditional paper-based forms of work. In a clear directive, all government organisations had to adopt ICTs, digitise their procedures and offer services electronically based on the visions and plans developed by the eGov program.

Resolution No. 3870/mb dated (2009): Speeding up eGovernment reforms

After resolution No. 40, there were several follow up resolutions that came to ensure the progress of the implementation of eGov in the country; one such resolution is No. 3870/mb. This resolution indicated that public media reports showed that citizens might find it difficult to access the services they need when they need them because of over-crowdedness in service centres and lack of efficient organising. Therefore, acting on those reports, this resolution stressed upon all government organisations as well as the eGov program to expedite the implementation of resolution No. 40, discussed earlier, to digitise work procedures and address the issue of over-crowdedness at service centres as well as facilitate easy and equal access to public services for all citizens.

Resolution No. 202 dated (2012): Addressing mail delivery issues and public addressing system

This resolution came to address a fundamental issue facing the implementation of eGov, namely, the shortcomings of the mail system. Large numbers of properties in the Kingdom did not have addresses at that time, and large numbers of citizens and

businesses did not have mailboxes. To address this issue, the Council of Ministers issued this resolution as well as resolutions No. 252 and 329 dated (2013). All these resolutions decreed the development of a comprehensive national address system as well as a Geographic Information System (GIS) identifying all properties in the country. These resolutions thus came to overhaul the mail system so that it plays an active role in the eGov reforms in the Kingdom.

Out of these resolutions, in April 2018 a national GIS system was introduced by the mail authority that provides addresses for all properties in the country. Citizens were required to register to this system and receive an address virtually; while many citizens did, only a limited number of addresses have been assigned physically to properties. Large numbers of properties remain without addresses and are out of the coverage of the mail system at the time of writing this chapter. Nonetheless, these resolutions and the provision of addresses through the new GIS represent substantial efforts to reform and develop the mail system.

In addition to these resolutions, there were a significant number of bylaws and different legislations that came to facilitate the eGov transformations. Examples of these include the 'IT criminal law', 'e-Transactions law', 'Telecommunication act' among others. Such resolutions serve as a significant enabler of eGov in the country given their legitimate powers.

In the end, this description of these resolutions provided in this section adds important contextual and background information on the history of eGov in Saudi Arabia and its implementation. Such background information helps to appreciate and understand the local dynamics of the enactment of eGov that will be discussed in the

coming chapters. Next, I will continue to explore another vital aspect of the context of eGov in Saudi Arabia; namely the role of the eGov program.

The role of the eGov program

As discussed earlier, the eGov program is an institution set up for eGovernment reforms. The role of the eGov program vis-a-vis other public sector organisations is that of a central authority governing the planning and implementation of eGov. The program is tasked mainly to 1) develop the strategies of eGov reform for the public sector; 2) plan, execute, and coordinate the implementation; 3) measure and assess progress; 4) assess and approve applications for funding of eGov projects from other government organisations. The institution reports to the King through an annual eGov transformation progress report.

The eGov action plan developed by the program, as well as resolution 40, stated that the implementation of eGov should be focused on re-designing and digitising work procedures and 'joining-up' the different branches of the bureaucracy to reduce cost and enhance efficiency. The role of the program in this pursuit revolves around two central dimensions. The first dimension is focused on developing an adequate infrastructure to digitise and join-up the public sector. This included developing shared IT solutions and unified standards and frameworks to enable the integration of systems and sharing of data between the different branches. In this regard, the eGov program developed a secure network for the public sector and a central platform called the 'Government Service Bus', through which the different public sector organisations can exchange information and services. The eGov program also developed a shared citizen contact centre through which citizens can interact with different government organisations in a seamless one-stop fashion. Additionally, the program developed a set of applications

provided free of charge to all public organisations such as a Government Resource Planning (GRP) system for instance.

Additionally, the eGov program developed a central online ‘one-stop’ portal to serve as one point of access to all e-services provided by the government. At this stage, the portal only provides indexing of all e-services along with links to individual websites of each government organisation where such services can be accessed. Nonetheless, the intention is that in the next five to ten years citizens can access all e-services provided by the government through the eGov central portal.

The second dimension of the eGov program’s role revolved around designing the appropriate shared frameworks and unified standards to enable joining-up efforts. The program developed shared methodologies for redesigning the administrative processes and procedures at each branch and aligning its systems with the eGov plan. Additionally, to assist with redesigning procedures and digitising services at each public sector organisation, an implementation guide that stipulated how to choose services to be redesigned and how to conduct Business Process Re-engineering (BPR), was provided by the eGov program. The eGov program also provided consulting services at the request of any government organisation where eGov consultants from the program are seconded to specific government organisations to assist with the process of transformation.

The government provides the funding for individual projects at individual public sector organisations based on a satisfactory assessment by the eGov program of each project plan. The eGov program also developed assessment criteria, based on which they annually assess the progress of each organisation. The results of the annual assessment feed into an annual progress report submitted to His Majesty the King. The

eGov program annually recognises organisations that perform outstandingly at an annual eGov conference. The program also investigates organisations that perform poorly to identify the shortcomings and develop a plan to bring them back to a satisfactory level of progress.

By 2012-2013, the reform efforts were progressing slower than expected. Some of the targets the program set for itself remained unmet. The published annual reports by the eGov program attributed this to a lack of serious efforts by some government organisations (see also Al-Shehri, 2013). Given this, the journey to public sector reform was renewed in 2015 through the announcement of another wave of transformation initiatives under the title the 'National Transformation Program 2020'. This program will be discussed in the following penultimate section highlighting its key objectives and policies.

4.2.4 National Transformation Program 2020: Reaffirming eGov

The slow progress on earlier reform programs coupled with sharp declines in oil prices in 2013-2014 sparked another public reform program in Saudi Arabia (Bennet, 2016; The Economist, 2016). This program strove more aggressively than its predecessors to induce economic “liberalization, greater transparency and the reduction of red tape and bureaucracy” (Ramady, 2010, p. 273).

This transformation program is inspired, to some extent, by a report titled “Saudi Arabia beyond oil: The investment and productivity transformation” delivered by McKinsey & Company, a global management consultancy (Al-Kibsi et al., 2015). Triggered by declining oil prices, the government commissioned McKinsey & Company to assess and propose a strategy for reforming the economy. The report stressed based on an economic model developed by McKinsey & Company’s

consultants that if the country does not embark on a “productivity-led transformation” in the coming years, then “unemployment will rise rapidly, household income will fall, and the fiscal position of the national government will deteriorate sharply” (Al-Kibsi et al., 2015, p. vi).

The government then devised its reform plans (Kerr, Barber, & Khalaf, 2015). The plans stressed that substantial reforms of the economy and the public sector are needed. Such reforms aimed not only to induce structural changes in public sector organisations but also to instil a new mindset and attitude of professionalism and productivity within public organisations.

Practices such as ‘wasta’ and the ‘Tracer system’ remain to be viewed as problematic and poised to be curtailed through such reforms (Al-Dakheel, 2017; Thompson, 2017). The assumption is that disseminating a spirit of professionalism, enhancing performance monitoring and assessment, and digitising work activities will curtail if not eradicate such practices (Alghamdi, 2011; Al-Jassem, 2010; Al-Shehri, 2013). The assertion remains that “eGovernment offers the best hope in eliminating wasta because procedures can be executed electronically without human interference in a manner that ensures equality” (Alnimer, 2012, para. 4)⁹. Additionally, the new “National Transformation Program includes promising initiatives that will hopefully lead to the elimination of wasta” (Abudawood, 2018, para. 4)¹⁰.

Planners seem to realise the power of global rankings; especially in attracting foreign direct investments. Therefore, all the strategies, initiatives and deliverables were

⁹ This quote has been translated from Arabic into English.

¹⁰ This quote has been translated from Arabic into English

geared to boost the country's rankings on several global rankings published by international bodies such as the World Bank, The United Nations (UN) and the World Economic Forum (WEF). This is evident in the goals and targets of the transformation program; the following are some of these targets:

- 1- "To increase non-oil government revenue from SAR 163 billion to SAR 1 Trillion."
- 2- "To raise our ranking in the Government Effectiveness Index, from 80 to 20."
- 3- "To raise our ranking on the E-Government Survey Index from our current position of 36 to be among the top five nations."
- 4- "To rise from our current position of 25 to the top 10 countries on the Global Competitiveness Index."
- 5- "To increase foreign direct investment from 3.8% to the international level of 5.7% of GDP."
- 6- "To move from our current position as the 19th largest economy in the world into the top 15."

(Source: Vision2030.gov.sa/en/goals).

4.3 Summary

In conclusion, setting a target such as 'to be among the top five nations' in the UN's eGovernment survey necessitates importing management initiatives from countries at the top of such rankings such as the UK (No.1), Australia (No.2), and Korea (No.3). Given this, it is not a surprise to find striking similarities between this

transformation program and public sector reforms of countries such as the UK and Australia (du Gay, 2004; Hoggett, 1996; Stokes & Clegg, 2002). Such ‘world-leading’ countries thus define what eGovernment is (Ciborra, 2005). Their reform plans and initiatives are valuable guides and benchmarks for countries such as Saudi Arabia that aspire to join the top of the ranking tables. Indeed, management initiatives dubbed as ‘post-bureaucratic’ that aimed to depart from bureaucratic organising such as joining-up and ‘one-stop shops’ (6, 2004; Pollitt, 2003) spearheaded by the UK government and similar world-leading countries are to be found central in this transformation program.

Nonetheless, what makes this post-bureaucratic reform program unique is the local cultural context. As the first part of this chapter showed, the local Saudi context is characterised by cultural relations, religious values, and socioeconomic dynamics that constitute vital dimensions of this reform. Interesting manifestations of such cultural elements are practices such as *wasta* and the *Tracer* system. While bureaucratisation was not entirely effective in eliminating such practices, the notion of eGovernment and the utilisation of ICTs seem to have reignited hopes in departing from such pre-bureaucratic practices. The next chapter begins to explore this nexus by describing the enactment of eGovernment at the DCA.

5 The street-level enactment of eGovernment at the Department of Citizens' Affairs

The objective of this chapter, in response to the first research question, is to describe the enactment of eGovernment at the Department of Citizens' Affairs (DCA). The DCA is a typical street-level bureaucratic organisation that delivers public services and experiences high volumes of work. Therefore, the DCA was one of the first organisations that embarked on eGovernment reforms to address these issues. Studying the enactment of eGovernment at the DCA brings to the fore the interplay between eGovernment as a post-bureaucratic reform and the street-level bureaucratic conditions, which in this cultural context include the pre-bureaucratic practice of *wasta*.

The chapter is broken into two main sections. The first section provides a detailed description of how eGovernment was introduced into the DCA. In this section, I will pay attention to local policies and adjustments that shaped this enactment and the rationalities that underpinned them; this discussion helps in providing a better, localised understanding of how eGovernment was enacted. In the second section, I will begin by exploring the positive effects of this enactment on everyday work activities. Then, I will draw on vignettes that show the endurance of the pre-bureaucratic practice of *wasta* despite eGovernment. I will also use these vignettes to explore the different cultural dimensions of the practice of *wasta*. Following this, I will report on how *wasta* is

exercised through a local negotiated order (Strauss, 1978) in the form of a practice called the 'note system'. The chapter ends with reflections and concluding thoughts.

5.1 The implementation of eGovernment at the DCA

Building on the discussion from the previous chapter on eGovernment reform resolutions and implementation policies, this section will cover the enactment of eGov at the DCA. I will begin by focusing on the central service at the DCA, which is document ordering. I will attempt to juxtapose the older service model and the redesigned model in light of the eGovernment reforms. Then, I will explore the local enactment of the redesigned model at the DCA shedding light on how the pre-bureaucratic and the bureaucratic were maintained alongside the post-bureaucratic at the street-level through emergent policies and local adjustments.

The DCA was one of the most over-crowded public organisations because everyone in the country needed its services on a regular basis to issue, renew, or replace their documents. The reform efforts, therefore, focused mainly on redesigning and digitising the process of 'document ordering', the DCA's core service. This comes in response to resolution 3870/mb discussed earlier. Based on the 'implementation guide' developed by the 'eGov program', the DCA had to map its existing procedures and develop a redesign based on the following steps:

- 1- The services 'as-is': Identifying the issues, bottlenecks, and drawbacks of the current procedure.
- 2- Overview of the redesigned service: Indicating the remedies to the issues identified; developing and choosing a redesign scenario.

- 3- Economic justification of the redesign: Highlighting the anticipated impact on efficiency and cost reductions.
- 4- IT solution overview: Describing what IT applications and solutions required by the redesign.
- 5- Timeline of implementation. (source: e-Government Action plan, 2006).

5.1.1 Document ordering service at the DCA

According to the plans, most of the issues the DCA suffered from such as over-crowdedness relate to the high number of requests for documents submitted manually. Such requests include issuance, renewal, or replacement of such documents; all these requests can be classified under a form of service titled ‘document ordering’ (eGovernment Action plan, 2006). Following resolution 3870/mb (2009) that urged public organisations to reduce over-crowdedness and digitise service delivery on an urgent basis, the ‘document ordering’ service at the DCA became at the centre of the redesign efforts. In what follows, the old service model for this service, the ideal redesigned model and the enacted model will be described to trace how eGov was enacted at the DCA. I depicted the steps and activities of in each of these three models in figures three, four, and five, respectively.

The old paper-based service model

The old service model at the DCA relied heavily on paperwork and face-to-face interactions between citizens and front-line staff (see figure three below). Citizens wanting to issue, renew, or replace a lost document, for instance, must visit the DCA personally. Upon entry into the DCA’s service centre, there is a reception area where they can find forms for most of the DCA’s services. Citizens who did not come with

their forms already prepared must collect the appropriate form and fill it out in the reception area thus resulting in over-crowdedness especially during peak times. After they fill their forms, citizens must attach all the required supporting documents such as copies of their national IDs, personal photos, clearances indicating that there are no overdue government fines or fees left unpaid. Then citizens head to the cashier's office where usually they must queue in order to pay the fees for the service they are requesting and receive a proof of payment that they must include with the case paperwork.

As per the public bureaucracy's standard regulations, all these documents along with the application form must be bound together using a green-coloured file. Citizens then head to the appropriate service counter according to the type of request each has. At the service counter, citizens must queue with their green files in hand as they wait to see a front-line employee. When they reach the service counter, the front-line employee takes the green case file and then, provided that the citizen had fulfilled all the requirements, the employee directs the citizen to come either tomorrow or toward the end of the working day to pick up the new document from the 'document distribution counter'. The employee then processes the case in batches using his/her terminal, prints all new documents for each batch of cases and then hand them out to colleagues at the distribution counter. The front-line employee processing the cases must also send all case files they processed to the archive at the end of their shifts. It is typical that front-line staff do not process all cases received during their eight-hour shift; therefore, they transfer unprocessed cases to the night shift staff, where staff members then process them in order to distribute them the next day.

Processed documents are given to employees at the document distribution counter. At this counter, employees store citizens' documents alphabetically using a

filing locker preparing them to be handed out to citizens when they come to pick them up. When it is time to pick up their documents, citizens then queue in front of this counter until they reach the front-line employee who takes their names, locates their documents in the filing locker and then hand out the processed documents to the citizens.

This traditional paper-based model became inefficient with malpractices such as lost case files as well as illegal activities proliferating. Moreover, long queues would usually form in front of service counters resulting in over-crowdedness, citizens frequently jumping queues and security personnel needed to organise queues and maintain order in the service centre on a regular basis. Additionally, front-line employees had wide discretionary space in this model resulting, at times, in pre-bureaucratic unequal treatments in the guise of 'wasta'. 'Wasta' can be seen as a 'pre-bureaucratic' model where most of the steps in this paper-based model (e.g., queuing and preparing all required paperwork) can be sidestepped resulting in faster delivery of service, albeit to a privileged few who can engage in it. I will discuss wasta extensively in the second part of this chapter.

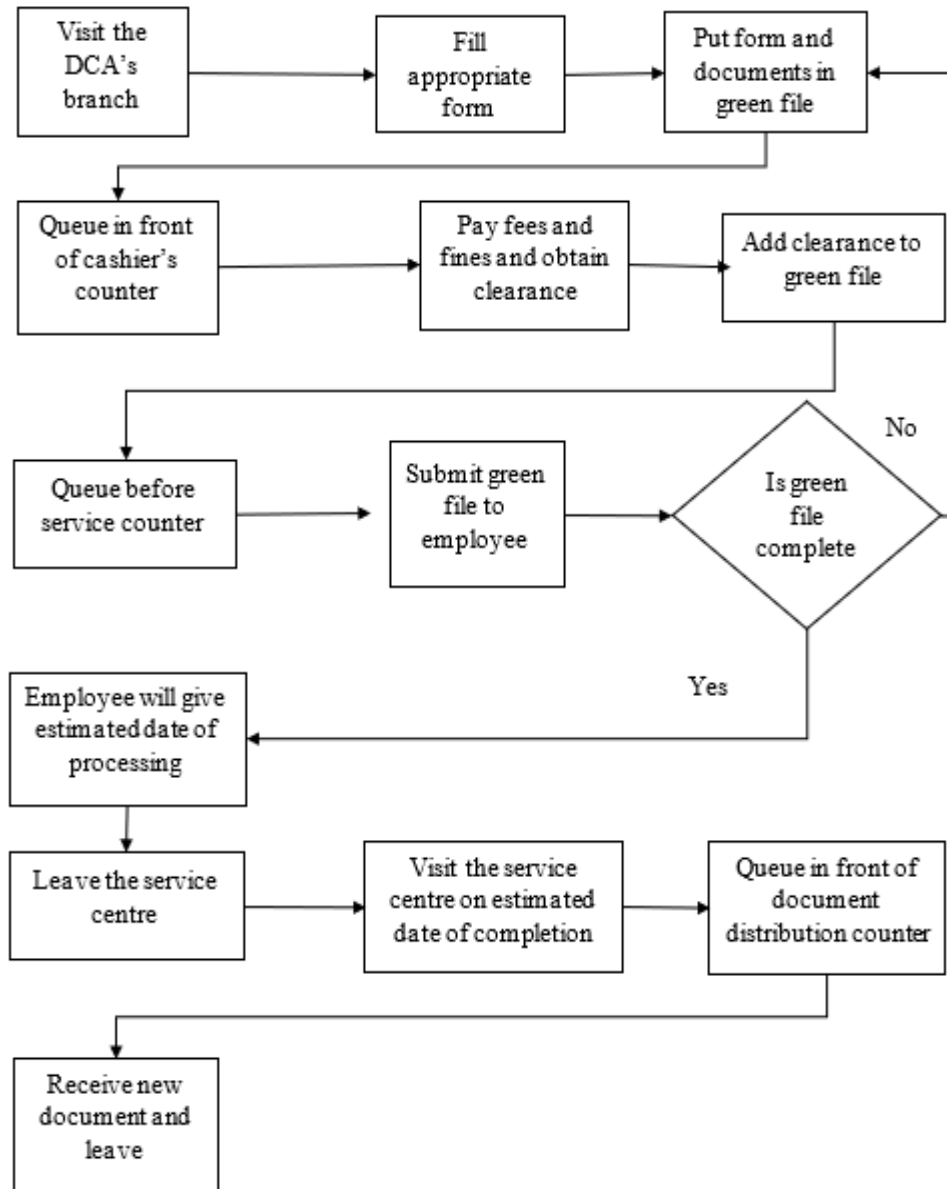


Figure 3: Old paper-based service model

The Redesigned electronic-based service model

The eGov planners sought to first, reduce the number of citizens visiting the DCA physically. Second, reduce the number of documents the DCA requires from citizens. Third, enhance the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of the work procedures (eGovernment Action plan, 2006). To achieve the first objective, the DCA was to begin offering services through an online portal where citizens can register and submit their request electronically. There are four different government departments including the

DCA that offer electronic services through this online portal. These four departments are grouped together because the services they offer are interrelated; hence they were joined up through this portal, which functions as an electronic one-stop shop to enhance efficiency and ease of access for citizens. This portal nonetheless is different from the main portal developed by the eGov program. At this stage, the main national portal (Saudi.gov.sa) only provides an index of the electronic services offered by the DCA and other branches of the bureaucracy. Users, however, can access both portals via a Single Sign-On (SSO). The intention, as eGov senior strategists described during interviews, is that in the next five to ten years, all e-services from all branches of the public bureaucracy, including the DCA, will be migrated to the national portal, which is designed to function as an online 'one-stop shop' for all services offered by the government. For the time being, the DCA's services are offered through its web portal along with the other four departments described earlier.

Citizens would access the DCA's portal electronically and register for an account. Then, they must submit their biometrics to activate their accounts by visiting a DCA service centre. Once the account is activated, citizens can submit a request to issue, renew, or replace a DCA document online.

The information system has been designed to retrieve all the required information to process a case from other branches of the public bureaucracy electronically; this comes to reduce the amount of paperwork the DCA requires from citizens. The information system accomplishes this with the help of a 'join-up' technological solution called the 'Government Service Bus (GSB)' developed by the eGov program. The GSB is an electronic channel that connects the databases of different government organisations and facilitates information requests and data

exchanges between them. Additionally, the information system retrieves fees payment information from the government's central revenue system to check whether the citizen has paid the fees for the service requested or not. In this redesigned service model, the citizen must pay the fees directly to the government central revenue system through electronic-banking channels; all manual payments at individual branches are hence to be discontinued.

The information system would process the request electronically and send a notification to a DCA service centre upon processing. Ideally, at the DCA, staff print the new document and mail it to the address of the citizen without the citizen visiting the DCA. Hence, large numbers of cases would be channelled through the online system thus massively reducing pressures on the DCA front-line. There would be less need for archives as well as front-line staff and, as a result, efficiency and cost-effectiveness would be significantly enhanced. Moreover, issues such as *wasta*, for instance, would, in theory, be eliminated as front-line employees become dis-intermediated by the information system. Figure four below illustrates a process map of the redesigned model. The enactment of this redesigned model, nonetheless, tells a different story as described in the next section.

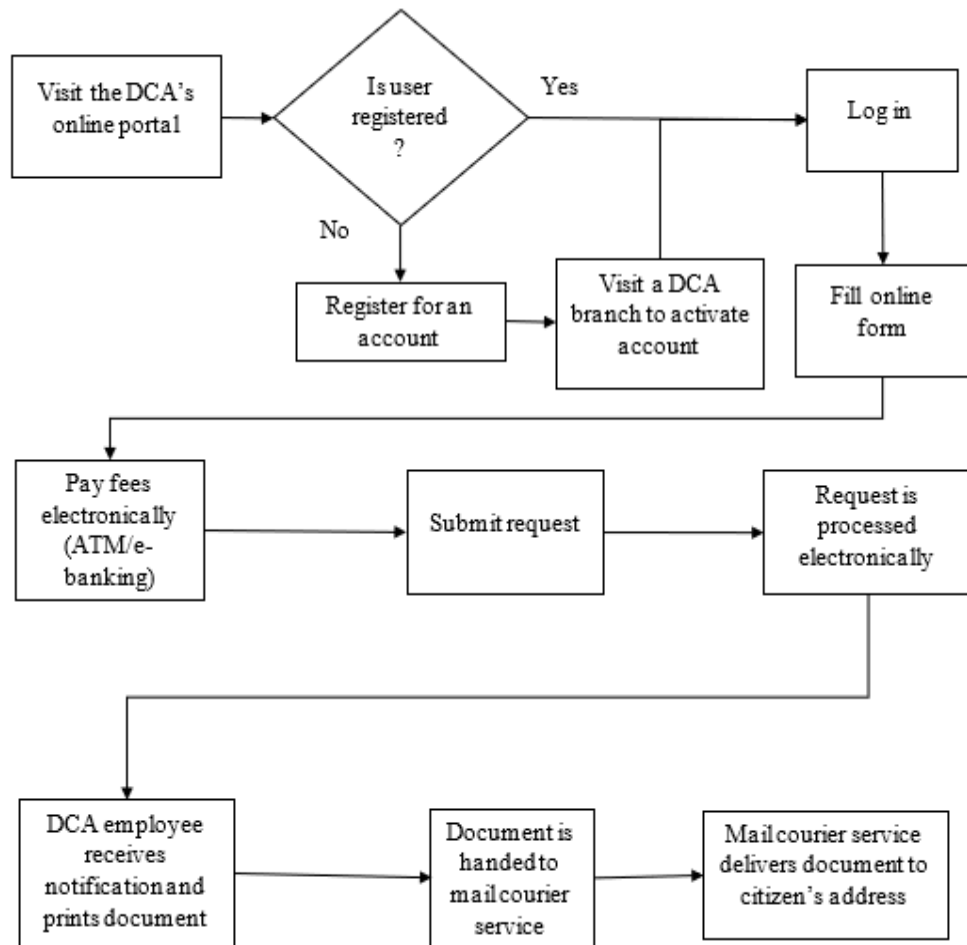


Figure 4 Redesigned electronic-based service model

5.1.2 The enactment of the redesigned model: Maintaining the paper-based model for security's sake

While the document ordering service had been indeed redesigned based on the eGovernment model illustrated above in figure four; there were, however, changes and adjustments that the DCA had instituted. First, the last step where documents were supposed to be posted through the mail was not fully implemented and in recourse to the older traditional model; citizens were asked to still visit the DCA after submitting their requests online to pick up their new documents. The reason behind this as a DCA senior bureaucrat indicated, is a dominance of security rationality at the DCA.

“I think that raising security concerns is paramount here and this might be an obstacle for this transformation. Some of those security concerns might be legitimate, or they might be not real; they are just resistance to change. I will give an example, in the process of renewing documents, for security concerns they used to ask that the citizen comes in person to hand in his old document and receive his new one even though the entire process can be done electronically. They say it is for security reasons to make sure that we get the old document [...] Only recently, they overcame this, they simply replaced the employee with a mail person who is authorised to deliver the new document [...] after they get the old document from the citizen.” (Interview, senior bureaucrat).

The DCA's pre-existing bureaucratic regulations stress that in order to receive a new document, citizens must turn in their expired documents or for cases of lost documents, they must provide evidence that they have advertised in a national newspaper that they lost a DCA document and waited at least 14 days after the publication of the advert. These regulations, as the excerpt above highlights, were a matter of security for the DCA staff as they feared that these documents might be used to develop new forged documents for instance. Therefore, it was paramount for them that the redesigned model accommodates these security concerns and pre-existing regulations, not the other way around. Additionally, the DCA, as well as many citizens, did not place confidence in the mail system given how notoriously unreliable it was at that stage. Therefore, the idea of mail delivery of documents was foregone as the excerpt above indicated. After they have submitted an online request, citizens thus had to visit the DCA physically to receive their new documents, and if they were requesting a renewal, then they must turn in their old document before they can receive the new one.

This adjustment in the redesign shows how the DCA planners used security concerns to maintain pre-existing regulations and enact the redesigned model in ways that seem to sustain an element of the older traditional model; namely visiting the DCA,

queuing in front of the document distribution counters and exchanging the old document for a new one.

This situation continued from 2013 until 2017, when, following significant reforms to the mail system, the DCA signed an agreement with the mail authority. The agreement, as the excerpt above indicated, stipulated that an official member of the mail authority would be authorised to receive citizens' old documents and any required paperwork before they hand them the new documents. As part of the agreement, the DCA introduced a new service through the online portal called 'document mail delivery'. In addition to submitting a request to renew a document and paying its fees, citizens must also submit a 'document mail delivery' request and pay mail delivery fees equivalent to £5-6. Once the two requests are submitted, the DCA staff receive a notification, print the documents, and hand them to mail authority staff members who come every day toward the end of each working day to deliver expired documents received from citizens and pick up new ones.

As the mail system remains under-developed, mail staff place the documents at a regional mail office instead of being delivered to the citizen's home address. The mail office then sends a text message to the citizens' mobile phone registered on the portal asking them to visit the mail office to pick up their documents. Citizens then make a journey to the mail office and usually queue before the front-line desk in order to receive their documents. Thus, the mail office seems to play a role identical to the DCA's 'document distribution counter' from the older traditional model, albeit, citizens must pay additional mail fees with each request. While there are obvious benefits of this enactment for the DCA—outsourcing the task of document distribution being one—for citizens, however, the case is different. Many citizens felt that enforcing mail delivery

fees, even though the mail office is not delivering to them is a waste of financial resources and hence, strove to avoid those fees by resorting to the pre-bureaucratic practice of 'wasta' as I will show in the second part of this chapter.

eGov system notes: A new breed of bureaucratic cases

"There are cases like eGovernment system notes; these are useless, people have to come to us if they get a note from the eGovernment system rejecting to serve them and we then process their cases." (Interview, front-line employee).

Another way the security rationality influenced the enactment of the redesigned service model at the DCA is through the formation of a new breed of bureaucratic cases called 'eGov system notes', which maintain the bureaucratic. There are situations defined by the DCA planners where cases will not be allowed to be processed electronically, and instead must be referred to the older paper-based model. These cases can be classified into two categories. First, cases of citizens who are wanted for legal purposes; second, cases of persons whose names are similar to legally wanted persons.

There is a wide range of situations that fall within the first category such as, for example, citizens or expatriate workers who have large amounts of unpaid traffic fines, who have been summoned to a court of law but failed to present themselves, or who are wanted for criminal offences to name but a few of these situations. Typically, such persons would be tagged in the public bureaucracy's databases, including the DCA's, as 'legally wanted' and the individual branch that tagged them would be identified in the system. When a person in such situations submits a request online, the system is designed not to process the case and would give a notification directing the citizen to visit one of the DCA's service centres.

Secondly, out of security concerns, the system is designed not to process cases of citizens or expatriates whose first and last names match those of a legally wanted person; as a front-line supervisor stressed: *“if there is 1% doubt then the eGovernment system will immediately refer the case to us”*. The note produced by the system is the same for both cases, and it simply directs the citizen to visit the DCA’s service centre without stating a reason. The followed procedure in such cases is:

“First of all, they have to go back to the old way as if there is no eGovernment. They have to bring their documents with them and a photocopy of the ID, and a printout of the note shown on the online system. Then they have to fill out a form and bring personal photographs just like the old system.” (Interview, front-line employee).

The older paper-based model was maintained to handle such cases; as the excerpt above shows, in cases of eGov notes, citizens must revert to the older model by using traditional paperwork. Additionally, for these cases, in a typical bureaucratic manner, the DCA has increased the amount of paperwork by requesting that citizens must print a screen-shot of the referral note produced by the system as evidence that the system has indeed rejected to process the case and referred it to the DCA’s service centre. Front-line staff would then assess the case to decide why the system has referred the case. For example, does the person have some form of a legal issue or is it merely similarity of names? In many situations, for instance, they would find through the information system that the citizen has overdue fines amounting to more than 1600 Saudi riyals (1600 is a legal threshold set in the system). Another similar situation is when the citizen has been summoned to a court of law but did not attend; in such cases, front-line staff refuse to serve the citizen, and they tell him/her of the reason to remedy the situation. If the citizen is wanted for a criminal offence, then police officers would be called to arrest him/her.

In cases of similarity of names, the front-line employee would see from the computer screen that the person's name matches that of a wanted criminal even though the two identities are different. The front-line employee would then manually validate the differences between the two identities to confirm that the person is not wanted, and then process the case. The information system could easily perform this task thus avoiding the process of referring the citizen to the paper-based model, nonetheless, as most participants indicated, referral of such cases is merely for an added layer of security and extra precautions.

These cases thus seem to sustain the pre-existing bureaucratic procedures and many of the issues that accompany it. For instance, front-line employees' can easily exercise discretion in such cases deviating from policy to extend favourable treatments. Additionally, paperwork remained prevalent and increased by an additional document, namely the eGov system note. All paperwork still must be stored physically in local archives after processing. See figure five below for a visual illustration of the enacted service model described thus far.

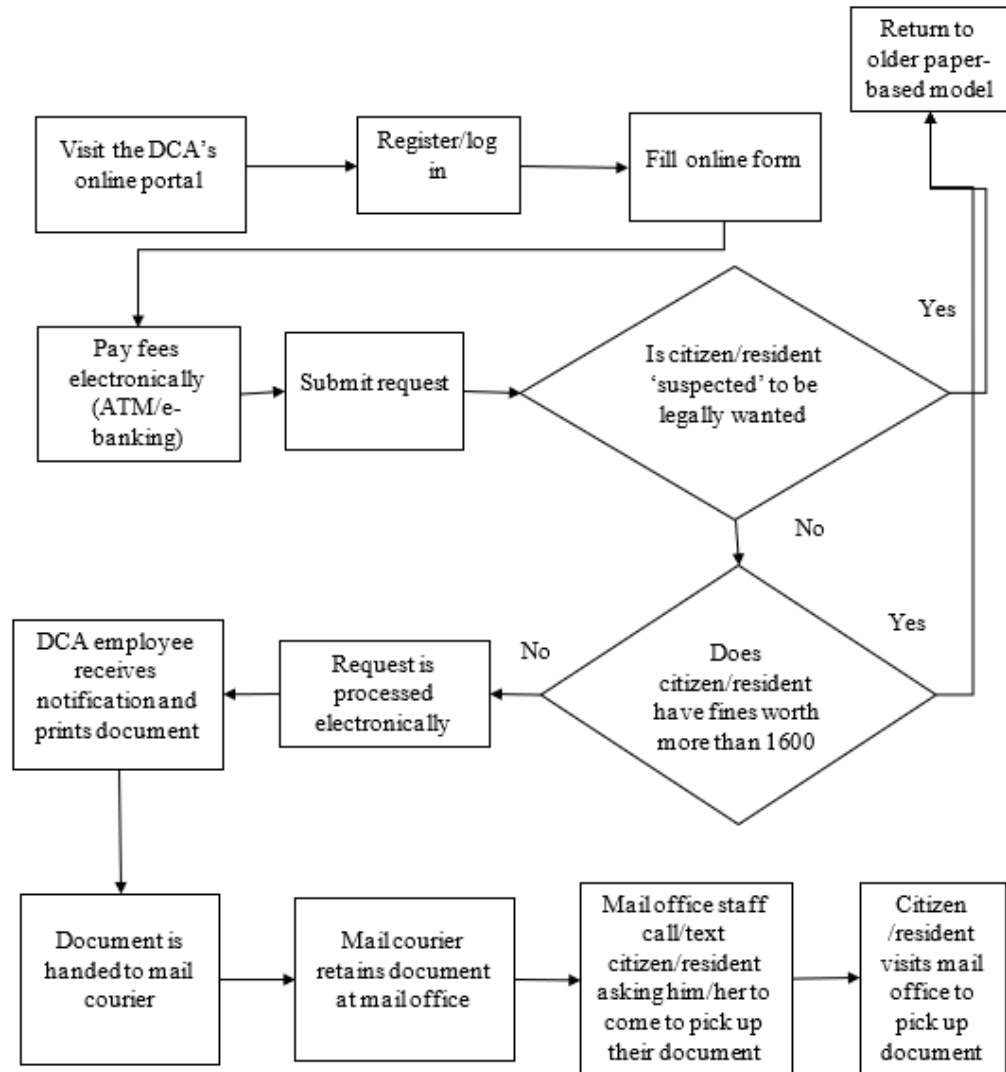


Figure 5: Enacted redesigned electronic-based model

The DCA service delivery policy: Segregation and maintenance of the old along with the new

Maintaining the older paper-based model for security concerns along with the redesigned eGov model at the DCA was enforced through a policy of segregating the two channels. To reap promised efficiency gains stemming from the redesigned model while maintaining the paper-based channel for cases of exceptions, the policy stated that cases that can be processed electronically are not allowed through the traditional

paper-based channel. The policy stated, in the words of a senior bureaucrat at the DCA, that:

“Bureaucratic channels are for exceptional cases only; cases that require an exception only. Also, you have to know that if a service is available through the electronic online system, then it is illegal for employees to offer it through the bureaucratic channel and employees who break this law will be held accountable except in cases that require an exception.” (Interview, senior bureaucrat).

The cases of exceptions, the director mentioned in the excerpt, include eGov notes cases as well as any other cases deemed exceptional as per the discretion of front-line supervisors and directors. In the case of eGov notes cases, front-line employees can process such cases only if citizens provide paper evidence in the form of a printed screenshot of the system note referring citizens to visit the DCA's service centres. For other cases of exceptions, front-line employees must have an 'exception note' written by a supervisor or director allowing them to make an exception. In both situations, front-line employees must keep such notes as paper evidence with the case files to legitimate deviation from policy.

It is evident that this policy, while on the one hand, seems to enforce eGov, on the other hand, however, it seems to maintain the pre-existing bureaucratic procedures as well as maintain street-level discretion and pre-bureaucratic practices such as *wasta* for instance. Given the two-sided aspect of this policy, the outcomes of the enactment of eGov at the DCA can best be described as hybrid. On the one hand, the DCA employees reported gains in efficiency and improvements in the work conditions, on the other hand, pre-bureaucratic '*wasta*', as well as bureaucratic paperwork, hierarchy and street-level discretion, remain as we shall see in what follows.

5.2 Hybrid outcomes of the street-level enactment of eGov

In this section, I will begin by juxtaposing the work conditions at the DCA before and after eGov highlighting improvements and gains in efficiency. Then, further showing the hybridity in the enactment of eGovernment, I will explore how the pre-bureaucratic in the guise of ‘wasta’ endured despite eGovernment. I will explore at depth the local ways in which wasta is exercised and how it is enduring drawing on vignettes that show how wasta manifests in everyday work at the DCA. I will then explore at depth an unofficial practice called the ‘note system’ through which wasta is exercised at the DCA.

5.2.1 Work conditions before and after eGov: Improvements and efficiency gains

The overwhelming number of citizens submitting cases through the DCA’s service centre every day was one of the central issues the DCA suffered from and sought to address through eGov. For instance, a small section processing only one type of cases within one of the DCA’s front-line departments used to process “1600 cases each day” and in order to keep up with the overwhelming number of cases:

“There were shifts, one group of employees comes in the morning and another comes in the evening working around the clock.” (Field note, 16/05/2017).

The high volume of cases caused pressures on front-line staffs’ time and organisational resources at the DCA thus negatively affecting service delivery. This issue is typical of street-level bureaucratic work (Lipsky, 1983, 2010).

Additionally, there were several other issues that resulted from such overcrowdedness and high volume of work. For instance, interactions between citizens and front-line employees were far from ideal; citizens usually reported that the DCA front-

line employees might *'mistreat people, and they try to dismiss them at the smallest issue they find'* (Interview, Tracer office manager). As the street-level bureaucracy literature showed, front-line employees will attempt to reduce pressure on themselves by finding issues within citizens' cases to reject them and free up time to meet other demands. Illustrating this issue, Fahad, a Saudi male citizen, commented:

"The problem is with front-line employees; they do not listen to the citizen [...] their demeanour is always bad, you try to explain something to them, they will not listen to you. They look at the case; if it will not go through easily, then they would dismiss you, they tell you there is someone behind you; they want you to leave." (Interview, citizen).

Abdullah, A front-line supervisor, blamed the street-level work environment at the front-line for such behaviour. He stated:

"Our halls were over-crowded, and there were even a lot of health issues resulting from this over-crowdedness; this used to reflect badly on our work environment, morale and our interactions with citizens".

In addition to unresponsive front-line employees, there were also issues stemming from the excessive amounts of paperwork the DCA used to process. On this issue, Nasser, a deputy supervisor, mentioned that before the introduction of eGov, employees had to *'send large sacks of cases daily to the archive'* (Field note, 16/05/2017). Piles of case paperwork are usually tied together using a cord, placed in special sacks and stored at the archive. The large amount of paperwork and the traditional means of storing them meant that *'there was so much work and with that higher chances of missing cases and other human errors'* (Field note, 16/05/2017). Indeed, as a result of such conditions, misplaced case files were a common issue at the DCA. One citizen complained that front-line staff:

“[M]ight through your case somewhere on their desks and tell you to ‘come back tomorrow’. They might even forget your case, and when you come back for it, they tell you it is lost and then you have to redo the whole process.” (Interview, citizen).

Nonetheless, after the introduction of eGovernment and the redesigning of procedures, citizens, as well as employees at the DCA, reported significant improvements:

“It [eGov] made a huge difference. There are fewer people now coming to us. It also reduced the number of staff here. Before we used to have four units and six employees in each unit. Now we only have one unit and about nine employees in that unit. It also reduced paperwork we used to ask for and increased our productivity; cases are processed faster now than before.” (Interview, front-line supervisor).

Forcing citizens to use the eGov channel based on the enacted service redesign seems to have reduced the number of citizens visiting the DCA thus addressing, to some extent, the issues of over-crowdedness and pressures on the DCA’s front-line employees and organisational resources. There is less paperwork handled by the DCA after the enforcement of eGov. Thus, issues such as lost case files and over-strained archives have been mitigated to some extent.

Additionally, the issue of over-staffing the DCA suffered from has also been ameliorated. A front-line department, as the excerpt shows, has seen its number of staff members reduced from 24 members to 9. It is important to highlight at this juncture the fact that the DCA had not laid off staff made redundant by eGov instead, redundant front-line staff, according to a senior bureaucrat at the DCA, are usually seconded to other departments and locations within the DCA or even ‘loaned’ to other branches of the public bureaucracy to fill staff shortages within those places. This is mainly because the DCA is a public organisation and it is against the ethos of the public bureaucracy,

in general, to lay off staff members; had the DCA been “*a private sector organisation they would just terminate their employment.*” (Interview, senior bureaucrat).

Additionally, control and monitoring seem to have become more efficient as a result of reductions in workloads. A front-line supervisor illustrated this saying:

“Before eGovernment, we used to process about 300 documents in one day; now about 80% of that 300 comes to us through the eGovernment system. So this is 80% of our daily load taken off our backs; this enabled us to better monitor and control work at the front-line and take out discretionary space from front-line staff. Now, any cases that require bending of policy go through us as department heads.” (Interview, front-line supervisor).

This excerpt highlights that as a result of the eGov system absorbing a large number of cases from the front-line through digitisation, daily supervision work by front-line supervisors has become more efficient. Supervisors' monitoring work involves printing out a log of all operations processed through each employees' terminal and reviewing those logs on a daily basis. Instead of reviewing '300 cases' executed by front-line employees each day under his supervision, this supervisor now reviews fewer cases. The lower number of cases meant that supervisors are better able to identify and scrutinise cases processed against regulations in the daily logs of employees under their supervision. Nevertheless, exercises of discretion and the practice of making exceptions were not eliminated as a result of this enhanced supervision; rather it has been curtailed, to some extent, for front-line staff only to become more concentrated among supervisors and directors. Indeed, the pre-bureaucratic in the guise of 'wasta', seems to endure as we shall see in the next section.

5.2.2 The endurance of the pre-bureaucratic

Service delivery practices are coloured by cultural relations at the DCA and many other street-level bureaucratic organisations throughout the Middle East. Front-line staff, in a typical pre-bureaucratic fashion, may favour certain citizens based on social obligations to them stemming from tribal and familial relations as well as friendships. Additionally, employees may engage in favouritism based on intercessions of notable persons in a superior hierarchical position, be that in the social hierarchy (e.g., tribal chiefs and other influential figures) or the bureaucratic (e.g., senior bureaucrats and supervisors whether at the same or another branch of the bureaucracy). Within this cultural context, such forms of favouritism are described using the term ‘wasta’.

“Let me break it to you, plain and simple, to whichever government organisation you go [...] if you don’t have a connection, you will wear yourself out trying to get your cases processed, but, if you have a connection you will get much better attention and care from employees.” (Interview, citizen).

As the excerpt above indicated, it is a general assertion among citizens that one needs to engage in ‘wasta’ to access the public bureaucracy in an efficient manner. Citizens do this by finding an insider in the public bureaucracy branch they are visiting; the insider can either give them needed attention directly or intercede for them before another employee who can give the needed attention and process their cases promptly; otherwise, such citizens “will suffer through the normal bureaucratic process” (Barnett et al., 2013, p. 41). Wasta, in this context, has become ingrained in the public bureaucracy and taken for granted. One director at the DCA asserted that

“it has become a social habit that people usually try to find ‘wasta’ inside the department [the DCA] before they set foot in it.” (Interview, senior bureaucrat).

While eGov reforms were poised to eliminate *wasta*, as the previous chapter highlighted, the local enactment of eGov at the DCA seems to have maintained the practice of *wasta*. Given that the policy of channel segregation has preserved the older traditional channel, it is not a surprise that the pre-bureaucratic *wasta* endures despite eGov. Indeed, *wasta* remains prevalent, and interestingly, the most common exercise of *wasta* after eGov involves citizens wanting to avoid using the eGov channel. While, the policy enforces that all citizens must use the eGov channel, the DCA staff, as per their discretion, continue nevertheless to grant exceptions to selected citizens wanting to avoid using the eGov channel. There are mainly three broad themes that cover the reasons driving citizens to engage in *wasta* to avoid the eGov channel. These reasons are 1) it is easier and faster to access the service using '*wasta*' than eGov channel; 2) to avoid the mail system; 3) digital disadvantagedness. I will discuss each of these themes in what follows.

Wasta is easier and faster than eGov

In theory, as many writers had argued, the information system is designed to process cases objectively not favouring some citizens over others thus eradicating the pre-bureaucratic practice of '*wasta*' and curtailing street-level discretion. Nevertheless, the information system can do this only if citizens do not use '*wasta*' to avoid the system. Using the eGov channel requires registering on the online portal, visiting a DCA office to activate the account, submitting the request online and waiting for the document to arrive at the Mail office, which usually takes two-five days. For citizens who can engage in '*wasta*', it is much easier and faster to get their documents through the older paper-based channel instead. In the following discussion, I will show two vignettes, recorded while shadowing two different supervisors, that highlight this theme. Each of these vignettes also illustrates a different cultural dimension to the

exercise of *wasta*; namely the role of local tribal culture and the role of bureaucratic, hierarchical relations.

Vignette 5.1: Role of local cultural relations in engaging in *wasta* to avoid the eGov system.

A young male citizen in his 20s walked in the supervisor's office. The supervisor was on the phone. The young citizen stood there for a while waiting for the supervisor to finish. Once the supervisor hung up, the young citizen approached the supervisor's desk lending his hand for a handshake. The young man introduced himself as Ahmad, son of Alkak [pseudonym]. The supervisor began to greet him warmly, invited him to sit and asked about his father. The supervisor seems to know the citizen's father. After the mutual greetings finished, the supervisor asked the citizen what he needed. The citizen replied that he wants to renew his document.

The supervisor: Oh, that is very easy, do you have an account on the online portal?

The citizen: No, I do not actually.

The supervisor: Why is that?

The citizen: Well, I just came from the United States.

The supervisor: Ok then.

Then the supervisor pulled a form from his drawer and gave it to the citizen to fill it in. The citizen took the form and filled it in and attached copies of supporting paperwork he had brought with him along with the expired document. Then the supervisor called one of the front-line employees to the office. When the employee came, the supervisor gave him the form along with the paperwork and asked to process the case now. The front-line employee went for about 10-15 minutes and then came back with the new document. (Field note, 12/06/17).

This vignette illustrates how engaging in *wasta* makes ordering a new document easier and faster than using the eGov channel. In this vignette, a young citizen

sidestepped both the eGov system as well as front-line employees and approached the front-line supervisor. He was sent by his father, who seems to know this front-line supervisor. The citizen approached the supervisor shaking his hands and introducing himself as 'son of Alkak' [pseudonym], which (the original name) is the name of a famous tribal chief in the region. The supervisor recognised the name immediately and began greeting him warmly asking about his father thus indicating his close relationship with the father. This relationship seems to merit this citizen a favourable treatment; the supervisor asked about how he can help. The citizen replied that he wants to renew a document.

Following the policy that enforces such cases to be processed through the online system, the supervisor asked the citizen whether he had an account on the eGov portal. However, the citizen replied that he did not and mentioned the reason that he just came from the 'United States'; indicating that he might be studying there and not residing in the country currently. From this answer, it can be surmised that this citizen is trying to indicate that he is not interested in setting up an account on the eGov portal and that he prefers that the supervisor processes his case now.

In response to this, the supervisor used his discretion to make an exception by not forcing the citizen to use the eGov channel and instead reverted to the older paper-based model. The supervisor then handed the citizen a paper form, which the citizen readily filled in and attached to it the typical supporting documents required for such a case. The supervisor then commanded a member of front-line staff to process the case, which he did in a timely fashion. Unlike the typical two-to-five days waiting period for citizens who use the eGov channel, this citizen was able to get his new document in less than 15 minutes by engaging in 'wasta'. It could also be argued that even if the citizen

had an account on the eGov portal, then the supervisor would only ask him to submit an online request based on which the supervisor can also process the case immediately thus saving him the two-to-five days normal waiting period. The following vignette illustrates a similar case yet the social relations at play are slightly different.

Vignette 5.2: Using wasta through hierarchical relations to avoid the eGov channel.

I was shadowing supervisor Ahmad (pseudonym) at his office when a male citizen in his 40s walked in. The citizen introduced himself as Director Mohammad (pseudonym) from department D (another branch of the bureaucracy). The junior supervisor, who is of a lower rank than the director, welcomed the director and replied, 'is it, Director Mohammad Jamal?' The Director replied, 'no no, Mohammad Zaki'. The director then presented his forms and explained that he has a case that needs processing. The supervisor then invited the director to have a seat and took the paperwork himself and went to a front-line employee on one service counter. He seemed to command the employee to stop what he was doing and process the director's case. The employee did what was required while the supervisor stood next to him. Within minutes, the supervisor returned with the processed case and gave the director his processed documents. The director then thanked the supervisor and left the office. (Field note, 12/05/2017).

Similar to the situation in the earlier vignette, through engaging in wasta, this director was able to receive his processed document in a matter of minutes instead of days had he followed the redesigned eGov model. However, unlike the tribal chief's son who drew on tribal relations, the director utilised his position in the bureaucratic hierarchy to engage in wasta. Indeed, hierarchical relations, specifically within the public bureaucracy, are vital to the exercise of 'wasta'. For example, the director in this vignette sidestepped the front-line and the queues and decided to walk into the

supervisor's office directly making explicit his identity as a director of a different department at a different branch of the public bureaucracy. In doing so, the director seemed to use his position within the public hierarchy as a 'director' to distinguish himself from the other citizens to solicit a favourable treatment even though the bureaucratic rationality would dictate that public servants should treat all citizens equally.

It is within the power of the supervisor, for instance, to act in a bureaucratic manner and treat this citizen like the other citizens waiting in the hall and ask him to take a number and wait for his turn; however, he chose not to do that. The supervisor seems to accept that this citizen merits favourable treatment based on his hierarchical position. Hence, the supervisor signified that he valued the position of the director by offering him a seat and then taking the paperwork himself to the front-line employee and commanding the front-line employee to stop processing other citizens' cases and process the director's case.

There could be two reasons as to why the supervisor favoured this citizen by virtue of his position in the hierarchy. The first is the presence of an informal code of respect for seniority among public servants, where those who occupy higher positions within the hierarchy are given special treatments when they require services from other branches of the bureaucracy. The second, is another informal code of favour exchange, specifically between public servants in this case. Citizens such as the director, for instance, make their names and positions in the public hierarchy known to other public servants to indicate that they are willing to return the favour to those public servants who help them. This latter point is illustrated explicitly by the supervisor's words when he looked at me after the director had left and said:

“I have excellent social relations and connections with so many people. I mean if I, for instance, go to any other organisation you will find people serving me at the doors.” (Field note, 12/05/2017).

This statement indicates how front-line staff use their positions and exercise discretion by favouring citizens over others to exchange favours with them. In view of this, citizens who come across as better able to return the favour in more substantial ways, such as the director above, for instance, are more valued than those who do not.

In conclusion, both the tribal chief’s son as well as the director were able to get their documents promptly through employing *wasta*. Had they used the eGov channel, then both would have had to set up online eGov accounts, visit a DCA service centre to activate their accounts, submit an online request, pay additional mail delivery fees and wait two-to-five days for their documents to arrive at a nearby mail office. *Wasta* thus is a more convenient and cost-effective option for those who can engage in it than following the eGov redesigned model. Indeed, while it is easier for the eGov redesigned model to outperform the paper-based service model, outperforming the ‘pre-bureaucratic’ model in the guise of *wasta* can be very difficult as these vignettes showed.

Wasta to avoid the mail system

Another quite common reason why citizens engage in *wasta* instead of using the eGov channel is to avoid paying additional mail delivery fees. On this notion, Elyas, a front-line supervisor commented:

“This [eGov] system made our work a lot easier. Now citizens can pay their fees online and apply for a new document online and receive their documents through the mail system without even having to come to us. However, of course, a lot of citizens resist, a lot do not want to pay fees to the mail authority, and

they don't want to sign up for a new mailbox, so they come to us, and they plead and beg and try to find wasta to get their documents directly from us." (Interview, front-line supervisor).

The mail system has been a fundamental issue in the enactment of eGov in this context. As discussed earlier, large swaths of localities are without addresses, and properties are without mailboxes. The regulations stipulate that with each case submitted through the eGov channel, citizens must pay a mail delivery fee as well as set up a subscription with the mail authority where they can receive a mailbox located inside the Mail office. Instead of being delivered to citizens' homes, documents are typically either placed in citizens' mailboxes located in a mail office or withheld by a mail office member of staff until the citizen delivers his/her expired documents in exchange for the renewed document. Therefore, citizens must visit the mail office in both situations to collect their documents; many citizens find this process inconvenient. Illustrating this, Abdullah, a front-line supervisor stated:

"We force people to get their documents through the mail, but the mail does not deliver to them, they call them, and they ask them to come to them and pick it up." (Interview, front-line supervisor).

Therefore, many citizens felt that the mail system is a nuisance that they prefer to avoid. Citizens thus, as the first excerpt above indicated, would come to supervisors' offices to plea and ask for an exception to use the old paper-based service model and get their documents through the DCA's service centre instead of the mail office. For those citizens, the older paper-based model is cheaper and relatively faster; especially after the efficiency gains that ensued after eGov. Supervisors would turn down some of those citizens pleading for an 'exception' and tell them firmly to use the online system and, while, sometimes they allowed others an exception as per their discretion.

Wasta to help the digitally disadvantaged

Another aspect of the exercise of wasta after the introduction of eGov relates to digitally disadvantaged populations, or in other words, individuals who are unable to access or use information technology effectively. The majority of individuals that fit such category that visit the DCA are senior citizens. In such situations, cultural relations along with moral principles of individual employees seem to underpin exercises of wasta to help such populations.

“We do not deal with senior citizens in the same way we deal with the rest of citizens; like for example you cannot tell a senior citizen to take a number and wait.” (Interview, front-line supervisor).

In this cultural context, people uphold cultural values of collectivity and respect for seniority (Anthony, 2006; Long, 2005). For example, it is common at the DCA that employees address senior citizens using familial terms such as ‘uncle’ or ‘father’. As the excerpt above indicates, at the DCA and other branches of the public bureaucracy, it is frowned upon among front-line staff to ask or let senior citizens wait in the queue. Therefore, some senior citizens, for instance, will not take numbers and wait; rather they would sidestep the queue and go to the supervisor’s office where supervisors either processes their cases or ask a front-line employee.

While shadowing supervisors, I witnessed several occasions where a senior citizen walks into the supervisor's office asking to process a case. Supervisors in most situations would take the case themselves and process it, instead of telling the citizen to join the queue. On one occasion, a senior citizen walked in with a case that needed to be processed at another unit within the DCA, the supervisor addressed the citizen as ‘uncle’ and asked him to take a seat and wait in his office. The supervisor then took the case himself to the relevant unit and then came back to his office, while the senior

citizen sat there waiting; shortly after another employee from the other unit came in with the processed documents and gave them to the citizen. In contrast to the rest of the citizens who go through the normal bureaucratic process of waiting in a queue to see a front-line employee, this citizen, in consideration of his age, had the supervisor serving him while he waited in the supervisor's office.

Therefore, it is typical that senior citizens walk into supervisors' offices complaining that they cannot use the eGov system to submit their cases and, hence they ask for their cases to be processed manually. On this notion, Abdullah, a front-line supervisor, mentioned in an interview:

“Mohammad: Can a citizen come to you instead of using the online system to process cases?”

Participant: Well, for cases that can go through the online the system, the policy we have is that they have to come through the online system, this is compulsory. However, sometimes we turn a blind eye; we let things pass. We sometimes do that for humane reasons, sometimes an older person comes to you and says that he does not know how to use this system and so on, for such people we sometimes bypass policy and help them. But at the end of the day, this is still wrong, and it remains against regulations.” (Interview, front-line supervisor).

Abdullah's words corroborate a salient theme, namely that front-line employees and supervisors engage in *wasta* and breaking policy for humane reasons or moral obligations to help citizens who are unable to use the eGov online portal. Such rule breaking is socially accepted and employees, as Abdullah's words indicate, are rarely punished for it. The following is a vignette recorded while shadowing Nasser, a deputy supervisor, that further highlights this aspect.

Vignette 5.3: Breaking policy to help digitally disadvantaged citizens.

A senior citizen in his 70s walked in with paper forms and ID pictures stapled on to them. He handed them to the deputy supervisor [...] The deputy replied, "no, no, you have to use the eGovernment system, uncle."

The senior citizen replied: What is eGovernment system? I do not know this.

The deputy: Then go to a Tracer office and ask them to set-up one for you.

The senior citizen: I went to a Tracer office. I just came from one office. They filled these forms for me and took 30 riyals from me and told me to come here.

The deputy: 30 riyals?

The senior citizen: Yes.

The deputy: Why did you give them 30 riyals? Just to fill these forms? You deserve these 30 riyals more than them.

The senior citizen: What do I do son, I do not know they took it.

The deputy then took the forms, noted on them, signed them and directed the citizen to go to the service window where front-line employees can get it processed. (Field note, 16/05/2017).

In the interaction described in this vignette, a senior citizen approached deputy supervisor Nasser, with forms and paperwork in hand to request a new document. The senior citizen was merely following the older paper-based model, with which he was familiar. Deputy supervisor Nasser responded indicating that paper forms are not accepted anymore. He tried to explain to the senior citizen that there is a new procedure where he must use an electronic system to submit the case. The senior citizen replied indicating his unfamiliarity with information technology and the DCA's eGov reforms. The policy the DCA instituted stated that a case such as this must be processed electronically based on the redesigned service model. Caught between this policy and the difficult situation of the senior citizen, Nasser, the deputy supervisor, sought a way out by referring the senior citizen to the unofficial bureaucracy, namely Tracer offices, which I will discuss extensively in the next chapter.

Nonetheless, the senior citizen explained that he just paid a Tracer office an equivalent of £6 to prepare the case paperwork for him. At this juncture, deputy supervisor Nasser seems to sympathise with the senior citizen's situation as he considered the £6 to be unfairly charged by Tracers and feared that if the senior citizen returns to a Tracer office, they will charge even higher fees. Hence, the deputy decided to make an exception for this citizen and wrote an exception note to the front-line employees to allow them to process the case and print the new document without the eGov system.

Cases such as this are quite common. Indeed, senior citizens frequently visit supervisors asking for exceptions to get their cases processed based on the older paper-based model. Supervisors, such as deputy Nasser above, would either refer those citizens to Tracer offices or sympathise and make an exception. Thus discretion, exceptions, and *wasta* remain despite and sometimes because of eGov. In the next section, I will discuss in depth the practice of writing 'exception notes' as deputy supervisor Nasser did to help this citizen. Such exception notes are an element of an unofficial practice called the 'note system' through which *wasta* is exercised at this street-level organisation.

5.2.3 The note system: An “authorized but-not-quite-official system”¹¹

While not all exercises of *wasta* necessarily involve rule breaking, many nonetheless do. In cases of exercises of *wasta* that involve rule breaking tensions emerge on different levels. On one level, there is the conflict between the act of breaking rules

¹¹ (Goffman, 1961, p.175)

and the enforcement of the formal regulations, and this manifests in potential tensions with the control and monitoring department that monitors work activities of employees; especially front-line employees who are in charge of case processing. Additionally, there is tension with front-line supervisors who also monitor front-line employees' daily operations. On another level, when supervisors and directors want to engage in *wasta*, tension emerges between them and front-line employees, because only front-line employees can process cases as access to the information system is provided only to front-line employees through assigned user numbers (supervisors' access to the system does not allow for case processing). The control and monitoring department usually monitors front-line employees' activities through their users and might cross-check such activities with copies of case paperwork for rule breaking. If a supervisor, for instance, asks a front-line employee to process a case that involves a rule-breaking such as, overlooking an important document, then the front-line employee can argue that doing so might cause issues for him/her; especially since the control and monitoring has intensified and became more efficient after the introduction of eGov at the DCA.

To engage in *wasta* and resolve these tensions; hence, there is an unofficial or to use Goffman's (1961) term an "authorized-but-not-quite-official system." (1961, p.175). The note system is a practice through which these tensions are resolved, and *wasta* is exercised. When supervisors, for instance, want to engage in *wasta*, they write an exception note to a front-line employee:

"We give an exception in the form of a note or written exception on the case itself where I authorise front-line employees to give [...] an exception [...] front-line employee cannot give exceptions. So, we write these exceptions, and they are kept on record to protect the employee from future questioning." (Interview, front-line supervisor).

A typical note, for instance, would read '*Please process this case expediently*' or something similar. These notes, as the excerpt above indicates, are called "exception notes." Front-line staff can see these notes as a means of indicating that the citizen holding the note is coming through the intercession of the supervisor or director who wrote the note. Typically, these notes authorise bending of policy beyond the lines front-line employees feel safe crossing. When front-line employees receive a note with a citizen's paperwork, then they go ahead and process the case regardless of any issues that otherwise might prevent the case from being processed such as, missing documents. Front-line employees then store these notes with the relevant case paperwork to protect themselves from potential future questioning.

The arrangement is that when control and monitoring members of staff come across a rule-breaking in a front-line employee's record, then they would turn a blind eye as long as there is an exception note issued by a supervisor or a director and the rule breaking is not substantial. Additionally, the arrangement between the DCA's staff is that should there be a legal complaint filed regarding such case in the future then the person who wrote the note will be held accountable not the front-line employee who processed the case. These notes hence resolve the tension between front-line staff, supervisors or directors, as well as the control and monitoring department. Front-line employees are relieved from responsibility through such notes, supervisors and directors can now engage in *wasta*, and the control and monitoring department have paper evidence in the form of a note indicating who is to be held responsible should any legal issues emerge.

It is important to highlight at this juncture that the possibility of legal complaints is very low when it comes to rule breaking based on the exercise of *wasta*.

This is because engaging in *wasta* is predicated on trust. The code of solidarity that underpins *wasta* drives an employee's friend or fellow tribesman not to cause harm to the person who helped him. Doing so will be considered as dishonouring the name of the tribe as well as the reputation of the person who interceded. One supervisor indicated this during a discussion on the topic of exception notes saying:

“When someone comes through wasta, it gives a sense of security, and I feel safe to process the case because I know that the person who sent him to me [...] will not send me a bad case that will get me in trouble. So, there is peace of mind with wasta.” (Interview, front-line supervisor).

Indeed, the same cultural relations that underpin the exercise of ‘*wasta*’ drive citizens to resolve any issues that might arise informally without any legal actions. Therefore, front-line supervisors and directors do not hesitate to write these notes directing front-line staff to overlook minor issues and extend a favourable treatment.

However, in the case of rule breaking based on sympathy where such cultural relations or in other words, tribal solidarity, are not present; then the risks are high that supervisors might be caught in legal troubles should a complaint be lodged. The vignette below describes a situation where one front-line supervisor came close to falling into legal issues as a result of issuing an exception note to help the case of a senior citizen.

Vignette 5.4: An exception note ‘fired back’.

While I was shadowing Rayyan (a front-line employee) at the service counter, I saw a young male citizen (late 20s or early 30s), loudly arguing with the two supervisors in the supervisor's office. The citizen seemed angry and agitated. Later in the day I met Supervisor Elyas, and I chatted with him. He asked me whether I remembered the citizen who was complaining in the office earlier. I replied yes and asked him about it. Then he said:

Supervisor Elyas: Do you remember when I said to you that I always sympathise with senior citizens and whenever a senior citizen's case requires an exception, I always give it.

Mohammad: Yes.

Supervisor Elyas: This was one of them, and it fired back on me. This was a citizen who came a year ago, and he wanted to process a document on behalf of his old mother, but he did not have a 'power of attorney' bill. He went to the guys at the front-line, and they refused to serve him. He then came to me and pleaded that his mother is very old and she does not have an eGovernment account and that she cannot set up one and that he wants an exception [to get the case processed manually]. So, for his old mother's sake, I gave him an exception, and he then took it the guys, and they processed his case for him. However, he came today complaining that last year when he came to renew the document, he paid fees for a two year renewal, and we only gave him one year which has expired. So, he went to the director and lodged a complaint, the director then asked to investigate. So, we looked up the case, and we pulled it from the archive, and we found that I was the one who gave the note of exception and that he did indicate in his form that he wants two years. But, he can only get two years through the online system not through us here, that option is not available here, here we only do one year, he should know that.

Mohammad: So, what did you do about it?

Supervisor Elyas: To be frank, I paid him the one-year fees he was complaining about out my pocket just to settle the case and avoid any issues; because they will not understand here, they will not understand that you sympathise for humane reasons when giving an exception. They will just blame you [...] they will come after you. (Field note, 20/09/2017).

The events in this vignette illustrate the different dimensions to the note system and how *wasta* and rule-breaking are enacted through it. The citizen, in this case, visited the DCA on behalf of his mother who is unable to use the eGov portal. A central requirement in such cases is a power of attorney bill in order for the citizen to represent his mother and renew his mother's document. The citizen first visited a front-line

employee hoping to get the case processed despite not having a power of attorney bill. The front-line employee in question refused to serve him without the power of attorney bill as doing so is against regulations and might negatively affect the front-line employee should he break such rule. The citizen then visited the supervisor and pleaded his case. The supervisor sympathised with the citizen's case and in consideration of his mother's condition the supervisor issued an exception note. The citizen then took the note to the front-line employee who then processed the case and stored the note with the case paperwork in the DCA's archive in order to protect himself in case there is a future questioning. A year later, the citizen came back and complained that he paid the DCA fees for a two-year renewal of his mother's document, but he seems to only recently find out that only one year was added to the document's validity.

Following the formal procedures, an investigation began, the case paperwork was retrieved from the archive through the document's number. With the retrieved paperwork, there was an exception note issued by supervisor Elyas. In this situation, as per the unofficial agreement underpinning the note system, supervisor Elyas will be held accountable not the front-line employee who processed the case. Knowing that he will be held accountable had the investigation proceeded, supervisor Elyas sought to settle the case by paying the citizen the extra fees out of his personal funds. Had supervisor Elyas and this citizen were related through a common tribal bond, for instance, then the citizen might not have even lodged an official complaint in the first place.

This situation illustrates how the note system, while openly practised and acknowledged remains unofficial as one supervisor indicated in the following excerpt.

“You have to understand that giving exceptions in the first place is not allowed it is not legal and if there is any complaint and investigation taking place and they find that you gave an exception they then will blame you and say why did you give an exception in the first place. They will not understand that you faced difficult situations and you sympathised for humanitarian reasons, no they will just blame you.” (Interview, front-line supervisor).

In this unofficial arrangement, an exception note does not make breaking rules legal; it only authorises it locally within the department as long as no complaints are lodged. Given this, the note system thus seems to be a local negotiated agreement that comes to resolve tensions between the formal rules of the organisation, the interests of different groups within the organisation and the social pressures that stem from the cultural context and manifest in the practice of *wasta*. It is a negotiated order (Strauss, 1978) through which *wasta* is enacted in everyday work at the DCA as I shall argue in chapter seven.

5.3 Summary and concluding thoughts

In this chapter, the discussion has traced the enactment of eGov at the DCA and its outcomes. While eGov was portrayed as a post-bureaucratic reform curtailing bureaucracy and eliminating pre-bureaucratic practices such as *wasta*, the findings described in this chapter showed that eGov was implemented in a typical bureaucratic manner through, for instance, bureaucratic resolutions, policies and hierarchical authority. Moreover, while the enactment of eGov yielded gains in efficiency and improvements in work activities; it did not nonetheless eliminate the pre-bureaucratic practice of *wasta* neither the street-level discretion that underpins such practice. The enactment of eGov at the DCA was influenced by salient security rationality that was at the centre of different policies such as segregation of channels, which maintained the traditional paper-based channel along with the eGov channel. Additionally, a new breed

of bureaucratic cases called the ‘eGov system notes’ cases seem to have emerged because of this security rationality.

Maintaining the paper-based channel seem to have also maintained the exercise of *wasta*. Citizens engaged in *wasta* to avoid the eGov system. For such citizens, engaging in *wasta* to process their documents through the traditional channel was a far timely and less costly option than using the eGov channel. Additionally, citizens unable to use technology to access the eGov system found harbour in engaging in *wasta* to get their cases processed through the traditional channel. Instead of being eliminated through eGov and specifically digitisation of procedures, *wasta* seems to have been sustained in many ways because of eGov. The enactment of eGov at the DCA—drawing on Weber’s (1978) distinction between the pre-bureaucratic and the bureaucratic—is hence a hybrid of pre-bureaucratic, bureaucratic, and post-bureaucratic practices as I will further stress in chapter seven.

Lastly, the shadowing approach adopted in this study helped to observe the unofficial dimensions of everyday work at the DCA such as observing *wasta* in action and revealing how it is enacted. Such observations highlight the tensions between the exercise of *wasta* and formal rules. The note system described in this chapter is a distinctive negotiated order (Strauss, 1978) through which *wasta* is enacted. It is akin to the unofficial yet publicly practised arrangements reported in classic studies on bureaucratic organisations such as Gouldner’s (1954). Reports on such unofficial arrangements or negotiated orders and how they endure are rarely discussed in the literature on bureaucracy versus post-bureaucracy. The theoretical significance of such findings and how they relate to the current debates in the literature will be discussed in depth in chapter seven. The discussion now will continue this theme of exploring

unofficial practices to discuss the role of Tracers, a tier of unofficial street-level bureaucrats, in the street-level enactment of post-bureaucratic eGov in this context.

6 Tracer offices: The resilience of the hybrid street-level bureaucracy

“It is called a Tracer office; you might have a lost case for example or a case that needs to be pushed or followed up; they do anything you want them to do [...] they follow the money.” (Interview, Tracer office client).

The objective of this chapter is to introduce the role of Tracers as a largely unexplored tier of street-level bureaucrats in the street-level enactment of eGovernment in this context. As discussed in chapter four, a Tracer is a for-profit bureaucratic intermediary who typically establishes a commercial enterprise, namely a Tracer office, to which citizens and businesses can resort to access public services instead of visiting service centres of the public bureaucracy. The core business model of these Tracer offices revolves around attracting clients to hire them to process cases from the public bureaucracy on their behalf instead of using the free public channels, whether the traditional paper-based channel or the newly introduced eGov channel. Tracer offices thus strive to be entrepreneurial and customer-centric so that they attract and retain clients. Tracer offices frequently market themselves by saying that they *‘save citizens the hassles’* by processing cases from the public bureaucracy on their behalf and that they have built *‘strong connections’* (i.e., *‘wasta’*) inside the public bureaucracy that can help them process their clients’ cases expediently and in a satisfactory manner. Therefore, there are myriad official and unofficial ways in which Tracers solicit public services on behalf of their clients to be explored in this chapter. Tracers are a central

element in the everyday work at a street-level bureaucratic organisation like the DCA; it is hence insufficient to discuss the enactment of eGovernment at the street-level without describing the role of Tracers.

Bureaucratic intermediaries similar to Tracers exist in other contexts based on reports in secondary literature (e.g., newspaper articles, country guides) or passing mentions in different academic literature. In Brazil, for example, similar intermediaries are called ‘dispatchers’ (see Fredriksson, 2014); in Argentina, as well as in Spain, they are called ‘Gestores’ (see Hobbs & Postings, 2008); or ‘Coyotes’ in Mexico (see Spener, 2009). The work of such intermediaries and their roles at the street-level, especially during the enactment of post-bureaucratic reforms, are unexplored and hence under-theorised. The empirical findings relating to Tracers in this chapter will help to address this gap in knowledge. In this pursuit, I will strive to use the space of this chapter to provide a ‘thick description’ (Geertz, 1973) of Tracers’ work and use the space of the next chapter for analysis, discussion and reflections.

The chapter is divided into three main sections. In the first section, I will attempt to provide a detailed description of work inside these offices as well as explain the distinctive features of these offices that seem to drive citizens to resort to them, and the most common categories of clients that frequent them. The findings described in the first section should highlight the characteristics of Tracer offices as street-level bureaucratic organisations and their hybrid form and practices. The second section will draw on vignettes and observations of Tracers in action at the DCA. I will pay attention to the favourable relations and interactions between Tracers and official street-level bureaucrats and their pre-bureaucratic aspects; highlighting along the way some of the unofficial practices and negotiated arrangements between the two groups. The third

section will highlight how Tracers seem to endure through eGov. Overall, the three sections together help to understand the enactment of eGov at the street-level in this context through illuminating the vital role of Tracers in this enactment.

6.1 Tracer offices as street-level organisations

This section aims to provide a more in-depth discussion of work inside Tracer offices, what makes citizens resort to them, the main categories of their clients and why do they use them.

6.1.1 The organisation of work inside Tracer offices

Work in these offices is divided into three areas; namely, front-end or front-line work, back-end work, and support functions (see figure six below). The activities of front-line employees are: First, receiving and greeting clients. Second, taking clients cases and informing them of case requirements, as well as, taking the office fees. Third, organising case paperwork and sorting out cases and preparing them for processing by back-end staff. Fourth, storing and maintaining information on clients using simple software such as an MS Excel sheet or an MS Access database.

Additionally, Tracer office front-line staff assign lockers to repeat clients. Front-line staff use these lockers to store copies of clients' documents such as copies of their passports, IDs, business licenses for small business owners. Tracer offices use these copies of clients' documents to facilitate case processing on behalf of clients. Front-line staff maintain these lockers, secure them, and make sure that all documents remain up to date.

Back-end staff are responsible for processing client's cases from the relevant branches of the public bureaucracy. Back-end staff are colloquially called 'Tracers', as

they are the ones that do the ‘tracing’ and processing of cases in the public bureaucracy. Tracers usually come at night or in the earliest hours of the morning to take the daily batch of clients’ cases. Depending on the number of cases they have, Tracers usually spend all their workday at a branch of the public bureaucracy like the DCA for instance. Different back-end Tracers specialise in processing cases from different branches of the public bureaucracy; therefore, the higher the number of back-end Tracers in an office the wider is the scope of work of that office.

Back-end case ‘tracing’ work is undoubtedly the most vital aspect of a Tracer office’s work because the profitability of the office hinges greatly on its reputation in processing cases in an efficient and timely manner. In many Tracer offices, back-end Tracers do not receive a regular salary like other staff, rather they take a substantive share of the fees of each case processed; for example, if the fees a client pays for a case amounts to *‘150 riyals, then the office takes 50 riyals and the Tracer takes 100.’* (Interview, Tracer office manager).

In smaller Tracer offices, usually the Tracer office owner works as a back-end Tracer; in bigger offices, the office owner usually hires back-end Tracers and works instead as the office manager. Thirdly, depending on the size of the office, each office usually has a manager and few support functions (e.g., accounting and payroll, cashiers, janitorial services) staff. Front-line employees, support staff, and sometimes office managers are usually expatriate workers from countries such as Sudan, Egypt or South Asian countries such as India or Pakistan.

Local Saudi citizens almost always fill back-end Tracer roles; this is probably because back-end work hinges greatly on building connections with government employees and on understanding regulations. Given the local cultural context, non-

Saudi residents are not always suited for such work. It is relevant at this juncture to also add that it is common to find retired public front-line employees working as back-end Tracers or owning a Tracer office. It is expected that such Tracers benefit from the connections that they have made while in their previous jobs to excel at their current Tracer job as I will show in the following sections of this chapter.

Upon reflecting on how work is organised inside Tracer offices, it is prudent to highlight the bureaucratic manner of such organisation. The front-end and back-end configuration in addition to supporting functions roles coincide with the classic bureaucratic division of labour and role specialisation. Also, hierarchical authority is strongly present in the guise of office managers who supervise everyday work and report directly to the office owner(s). The discussion now turns to highlight the distinctive features of the Tracer service model.

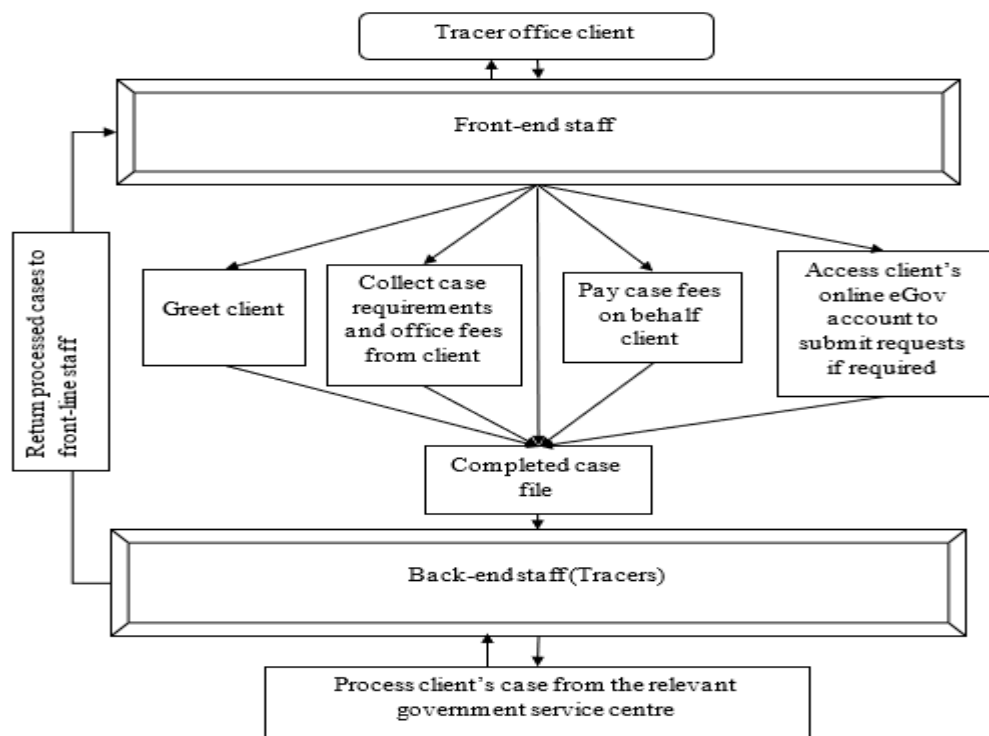


Figure 6: Tracer office service model

6.1.2 Distinctive features of the Tracer office service model

In the previous chapter, I have described three primary service models or routes to access public services, namely, the typical paper-based service model, the redesigned eGov service model and the ‘pre-bureaucratic’ wasta-based model. There is a fourth model, namely, the Tracer office model. When citizens opt to use a Tracer office to access public services; they must follow these steps. First, a citizen must choose to visit a Tracer office to express their interests in hiring them. Second, the Tracer office will ask the citizen to set up a ‘power of attorney’ bill in the office’s name; the citizen has to visit a public notary to issue this bill, and the Tracer office usually helps regarding preparing all the needed paperwork.

The ‘power of attorney’ bill is needed by the Tracer office to process cases on behalf of the citizen as per government regulations. Then the Tracer office will take the power of attorney bill along with copies of the client’s documents and store them in their files to facilitate future case processing. Upon completion of this process, the Tracer office is ready to serve the citizen by processing all types of cases from the public bureaucracy on their behalf.

In the subsequent discussion, I will highlight the distinctive features of the Tracer office service model. The central question that the following discussion will hopefully address is ‘why do citizens prefer to process their cases through the Tracer office?’ In what follows, the discussion will be broken down into several themes extracted from the data that illuminate the different dimensions that make Tracer offices an attractive option; these themes are 1) Tracer offices are ‘customer-centric’; 2) Tracer offices provide a one-stop shop experience; 3) Tracer office staff are experts on bureaucratic regulations; 4) Tracer offices process cases against regulations.

Tracer offices are customer-centric

Unlike a branch of the official public bureaucracy, where citizens described the front-line staff as *'aloof'* and *'unresponsive'*, Tracer offices, being private sector organisations, strive to be customer-centric to attract and retain office clients. Citizens, therefore, prefer visiting a Tracer office instead of a public bureau such as the DCA. Hamdan, a Tracer office manager, described their work saying:

"We are that 'fix' between citizens and the bureaucracy you know, that grease that smoothens the wheels, we make things easy for the citizen, you know. A citizen does not arrive at the bureau alone; there will be like 300 citizens all seeing the same employee, the employee gets fed up and tries to give you incomplete information to get you out of his sight." (Interview, Tracer office manager).

Indeed, unlike, the DCA's front-line employees who are keen to find ways to dismiss citizens, a Tracer office front-line employee will strive to attract and retain citizens as customers. Additionally, staff members at Tracer offices strive to win customers by promising to process their cases smoothly. Therefore, Tracer offices in this context are described as *'the grease'* for the public bureaucracy. This is because they understand the regulations of the public bureaucracy and have the expertise and skills to get their clients' cases processed expediently and efficiently. Tracer offices do so all while providing superior customer service to their clients and sparing them the effort of going through the traditional paper-based channel. Indeed, even public servants like Salim, a front-line employee at the DCA, seem to hold this view:

"They [Tracer office staff] mostly interact nicely with their clients so that they can retain their clients. After all, they are after money [...] people would prefer to go to a Tracer and not the official employee because Tracers treat them better and their offices are less crowded." (Interview, front-line employee).

Salim's words apply to most citizens that opt to hire a Tracer instead of visiting the public bureaucracy themselves. Citizens use Tracers because they are treated better at Tracer offices, which are also less crowded than a public bureau. It is expected that Tracer offices treat citizens better, they must provide superior customer care because—unlike a branch of the public bureaucracy—they are operating in a highly competitive market. This highlights the market rationality in the work of Tracer offices despite the fact that their core value-added activities revolve around processing cases from the public bureaucracy and soliciting what otherwise might be free public services.

Another reason that might attract citizens to Tracer offices is that Tracer offices provide a better and more inviting environment for citizens in comparison to a public bureau such as the DCA. A Tracer office manager stated:

“At a Tracer office, the citizen can be at ease because he is not inside an official government organisation. Citizens cannot be relaxed at a government organisation because they are afraid of making any mistakes with their applications and they are afraid to ask for help and guidance from government employees because they might not respond kindly. However, with us, they can be more relaxed. They come to us asking for help and guidance, and we come up with solutions for their problems and advise them on the best plans and courses of action without judgment.” (Interview, Tracer office manager).

Underpinned by an entrepreneurial ethos, Tracer offices strove to capitalise on the issues that citizens disliked about the public bureaucracy, such as, for instance, the stressful environment at government organisations. To attract clients, owners of Tracer offices thus try to provide a safe, welcoming and enjoyable experience for their customers. In stark contrast to the over-crowded and uninviting environment at the DCA, citizens feel relaxed and appreciated at a Tracer office where office staff can guide them with regards to case requirements and how to get their cases processed

effortlessly. Tracer offices success is thus predicated on the inefficiencies and organisational issues of the public bureaucracy.

Tracer offices provide a ‘one-stop shop’ experience

“These Tracer offices are helpful. For example, if you need to process a case, sometimes, you have to go to a studio shop to get a photo ID, then you have to go to a printing shop to make photocopies of your documents, then you have to go to a bank to pay the fees; you go to six or seven places. However, with a Tracer office, you find all that under one roof. They do everything for you. They print, they make copies, they take your photo and put everything together for you for a fee; and if you want them to process it for you from the government organisation, they can also do that.” (Interview, citizen-Tracer office client).

Following its customer-centric logic, Tracer offices attract citizens because they provide a one-stop shop experience. As the excerpt above shows, Tracer offices generate revenue by providing almost all the services citizens need before they process their cases. Examples of such services include photo ID service, photocopying and printing services, and fees payment services through the office’s bank accounts in exchange for cash from citizens. Additionally, some Tracer offices also sell all types of insurance policies such as health or car insurances, which are commonly required by government organisations, through their offices in cooperation with an insurance company. Tracer office owners usually secure a franchise license from an insurance company and sell that company’s insurance through their Tracer offices. Moreover, in this context, the mail system is not functioning adequately, and many clients do not have mail addresses or postal boxes. Tracer offices cater to such clients by providing the office’s mailbox address for clients who do not have one in order to receive and retain clients’ documents sent to them through the mail.

While some citizens might use a Tracer office as a ‘one-stop’ shop to fulfil all case requirements and prepare paperwork before they visit the public bureaucracy on their own, other citizens also take the extra step of hiring the Tracer office to process the case on their behalf. For repeat clients, the level of service and customer care are better; Tracer offices typically set up a locker inside the office for each of their repeat clients. The office would use the locker to store copies of all the client’s relevant documents to facilitate case processing on their behalf, as well as, store mail and processed documents for those clients. Ryyan, a Tracer office client commented:

“All of my documents are with the Tracer office, you trust the office; all you need is a phone call; ‘hello, please do this or that’.”

Since the office has ready access to a client’s documents; they can thus efficiently serve those clients over the phone. Should a client require a specific service, such as renewing a document, then they would call their preferred Tracer office and ask them to submit a request on their behalf without having to visit the office.

The Tracer office ‘one-stop shop’ experience is not limited to providing photo IDs and health or car insurances under one roof; it extends to constituting a unified point of access to all public services provided by the public bureaucracy. Khalid, a Tracer office manager, described this when he said:

“Here, at the office, we might get a person who wants something from the government revenue service, another wants something from the social insurance department, another wants a business license. [...] one might want something from the ID office, each department is in a different location [...]Tracer offices are important because they are providing services not anyone can provide, they are tidying up the government for the citizen. [...]there are like seven or eight departments, and they all can be accessed through the Tracer office, this is the important bit.” (Interview, Tracer office manager).

As Khalid described above, citizens visit a Tracer office requesting a variety of public services from applying for benefits and pensions to requesting ID documents. With branches of the public bureaucracy being in different locations and sometimes different cities, citizens find it easier to access the services they need through their preferred Tracer office instead. The Tracer office staff then prepare the case files and get the case processed regardless of the location of the different departments. Additionally, sometimes a single case requires processing from multiple branches of the public bureaucracy; thus, increasing complexity and inconvenience for citizens. Citizens wanting to avoid such complexity use a Tracer office, not only to get their photo ID or get their documents delivered to the office's mailbox but also to process and 'trace' their cases from the different branches of the public bureaucracy. Therefore, a Tracer office, depending on its size, can provide access to a wide range of public services under one roof and join-up the public bureaucracy through their back-end tracing work; thus, functioning as a private one-stop shop for public services for its clients.

In sum, the wide variety of services Tracer offices combine indicates the hybrid ways in which they function. From selling insurance policies—mostly because such policies are requirements for cases they process—to providing photo ID services and processing cases from the public bureaucracy, Tracer offices seem to constitute a hybrid form of street-level bureaucratic organisations. Such hybridity also manifests in combining market as well as bureaucratic rationalities and practices as we shall see next.

Tracers are experts on bureaucratic regulations

Another reason why citizens might prefer to use a Tracer office is to benefit from the expertise of the Tracer office staff in the regulations of the public bureaucracy.

“People use Tracer offices because of their experience in how government regulations work. Their experience helps their clients save a lot of time and efforts when they need to process cases from the government. [...] when people go to them, they usually say that when I hire a Tracer, I am buying my piece of mind.” (Interview, Tracer office client).

Most Tracer office staff usually develop in-depth knowledge of bureaucratic regulations and requirements to provide superior service to their clients. Such knowledge is a vital competitive advantage for Tracer offices as they compete for clients in the Tracer market. Tracer office staff gain such knowledge through experience and interactions with official government employees. During observations at Tracer offices, it became apparent that Tracer office staff, especially back-end Tracers and Tracer office managers, are quite knowledgeable about government regulations. While shadowing Mohsen, a back-end Tracer as well as an office owner, I noticed that he has a strong command over some bureaucratic regulations, and I asked him how did he acquire such knowledge? He replied:

“Experience, I did not take any training or anything; I only have a high school diploma. I know all the regulations of most of the government organisations. You learn from experience you get hit once, you learn, and you keep getting hit until you learn” (Field note, 10/01/2017).

Mohsen’s words show that some Tracers, unlike official employees who go through formal training, seem to acquire their knowledge through individual effort and through trial and error as they roam the branches of the public bureaucracy processing clients’ cases. This form of learning seems to have benefited Tracers immensely in enhancing their skills in processing cases from a sprawling public bureaucracy. This form of learning seems to help Tracers gain breadth and depth in their knowledge of the public bureaucracy and how it works, unlike front-line employees who are specialised,

and their expertise are confined to their section or department. Additionally, this form of learning through trial and error, arguably, enhances a unique skill of Tracer office staff, namely their abilities to identify and exploit loopholes in bureaucratic regulations.

Kamal, a Tracer office manager, illustrated this nicely when he stated:

“Kamal: We are better than government employees, and our expertise is stronger and more useful.

Mohammad: How so?

Kamal: I will give you an example, assume that two persons each got a new computer, and each wants to learn how to use it. One person spent time studying the user manual and he uses the computer precisely as the user manual tells him to. The other started playing with the computer from day one and spent much time experimenting with it, he takes risks, and he learns on the ground, not in the classroom; who will be more proficient?

Mohammad: The second one?

Kamal: Of course, because he learned not only what is in the user manual, but all the hidden ins and outs, and ways around the computer in order to get what he wants.” (Interview, Tracer office manager).

Kamal's words illustrate an interesting dimension to Tracers' work, namely that while official street-level bureaucrats specialise in specific tasks and are subject to the control of the public bureaucracy, Tracers are not. Kamal's words and analogy help to portray Tracers as hybrid street-level bureaucrats, who, while on the one hand are legitimised by the public bureaucracy through official licensing procedures, on the other hand nonetheless, they function outside its control. Tracers also develop their expertise in hybrid and unofficial instead of official ways learning not only the bureaucratic regulations but also ways around them.

These skills help Tracers to cater for their clients in more competitive ways. First, it helps them, for instance, by expediting case processing as they know the relevant requirements for their clients' cases and can prepare case files and fill the

appropriate forms satisfactorily for the official street-level bureaucrats. Second, being hybrid street-level bureaucrats, Tracers develop expertise in finding loopholes in bureaucratic regulations. These expertise help Tracer offices to attract two profitable segments of clients. First, clients whose cases have been rejected by the official street-level bureaucrats as they failed to provide all requirements or prepare their case files appropriately. Second, clients who cannot go through the official channel from the outset as they cannot fulfil requirements. Tracer offices are thus the main channel for such segments of clients; this specific line of work within Tracer offices will be discussed in depth in what follows.

Tracers process cases against regulations

Amer, a Tracer office manager, stated:

“We have experience in the regulations, you know, like what is required of you, what papers you should submit, how much you should pay in fees, and we submit the application. You might submit an application, but it gets rejected, then you would ask why, why did they reject me? Is it personal? Is it because I do not deserve it; or is it because there is a mistake somewhere? [...] so, the citizen, then goes to a Tracer office and pays 100 or 200 riyals, and they get it done for him.” (Interview, Tracer office manager).

In many situations, citizens receive a rejection on cases they submitted due to a wide range of reasons. Citizens expect that front-line employees might not provide enough information regarding the reasons for rejection; or if they did then, citizens might not be able to meet the requirements specified. Citizens in such situations, usually refer to a reputable Tracer office to help them identify the issues with their cases and then resubmit them. While some citizens resubmit their cases themselves after having the case paperwork prepared by a Tracer office, it is typical that some citizens hire the Tracer office to resubmit the case and push it through the public bureaucracy for them.

Depending on the case and its complexity, Tracer offices charge between 100-200 SAR (£20-40); nevertheless, the fees might become much higher if the case requires more work and more 'tracing'.

Another segment of citizens needs Tracer offices to help them avoid issues such as fines or other forms of sanctions imposed by the public bureaucracy. Such clients are usually unable to go through the official channel in the first instance, and Tracer offices are the main, if not the only, channel for such clients. The following vignette recorded while shadowing Tariq, a front-line staff member at the A1 Tracer office [pseudonym], highlights a form of such unsanctioned cases that Tracer offices are notorious for getting processed:

Vignette 6.1: Processing unsanctioned cases.

A male citizen in his late 40s early 50s walked in the office. Tariq, a front-line employee, received him. The citizen explained that he wants to renew his vehicle's registration. Tariq explained to him the requirements and told him that he needs to pay for vehicle insurance, fees and any overdue traffic fines and secure all the required paperwork including road inspection certificate. Tariq then asked

Tariq: Has the car passed road inspection?

Client: No.

Tariq: Do you have a valid exemption certificate [exemption from going through road inspection].

Client: No.

Tariq: Ok, we can do it for 250 riyals.

Client: If I can get exemption papers, how much will it cost?

Tariq: 100 riyals. (Field note, 10/01/2017).

The vignette above describes an interaction where a male citizen visited the A1 office to seek their help renewing his vehicle's registration. One of the central

requirements for such case is a certificate attesting that the vehicle has passed road inspection tests and is safe to be driven on public roads. These tests are designed to inspect the car and its gas emissions to make sure it meets safety standards. This citizen does not have such a certificate, and hence he visited this Tracer office seeking their help. Tracer offices are notorious for getting unsanctioned cases processed.

Some citizens seek to avoid this test for several reasons, most common of which is that they know that their vehicles will not pass the inspection due to faults such as gas emissions being above legal limits. Fixing such issues might cost them a large sum of money; therefore, they prefer to pay a lesser amount to a Tracer office that can help them avoid the road inspection test. Tracers understand the regulations, and they try to come up with a solution to win such clients. One such solution is securing an exemption. The regulations of the Department of Vehicles' Registrations allow for exemptions to the road inspection tests; one of those exemptions is for citizens who reside in remote locations distanced from congested areas and do not have easy access to road inspection facilities.

Tracer offices forge paperwork for their clients such as fake tenancy agreements to show that they reside in one such remote area—despite the reality being the opposite to exploit this exemption. Once the forged paperwork is secured, Back-end Tracers take the case to the Department of Vehicles' Registrations to get it processed. In such cases, it is common that back-end Tracers travel outside their city, if needed, to visit a branch of the Department of Vehicles' Registrations nearest to the location of the fake tenancy agreement; they do this to get the case processed.

Typically, the cost of processing such cases is much higher, almost double that of cases that do not require such a solution as the vignette shows. Forging paperwork to

exploit exemptions and policy loopholes is a typical way through which Tracer offices cater to clients wanting to bypass regulation. Tracer offices are notorious for such activities, which also indicate their status as hybrid street-level bureaucrats. This notion is hinted at in Kamal's words earlier when he illustrated that Tracers do not follow the 'manual' and are expert in bureaucratic loopholes.

6.1.3 Tracer office clients

This section will attempt to highlight another dimension to the role of Tracer offices by discussing the specific categories of their clients. Tracer offices' clients come from almost all segments of society; however, the frequency of use and degree of dependence on Tracers to access the public bureaucracy differs from one segment to another. The most common types of clients that visit Tracer offices frequently are citizens in full-time employment, senior citizens, expatriate workers, and small business owners. Each of these segments of Tracer offices clients, how they use Tracer offices and what services they mostly require, will be discussed in what follows.

Citizens in full-time employment

"Most people that go to them [Tracer offices] are busy professionals, a person who has a job cannot process his cases himself; he does not have time; he has other tasks." (Interview, Tracer office client).

Employed citizens such as teachers, public servants, police officers, private sector employees among others, constitute a principal group of clients for Tracer offices. Full-time employees working in a day job are preoccupied with their job during the time the public bureaucracy's service centres are open. Tracer offices remain open for business up to 11:00 p.m. far longer than the service centres of the public bureaucracy to cater to such clients thus reflecting their market ethos. Working

professionals, therefore, visit Tracer offices in the evening to submit their cases and pay the fees. Front-line staff then prepare the case paperwork and hand them over to back-end Tracers to be processed from the relevant branch the next morning.

Requesting documents from the DCA is a popular type of case that working professionals bring to Tracer offices. Additionally, there is a wide range of cases from a wide range of branches that this category of clients' requests; such as renewing vehicle registrations, applying for government loans as well as social benefits among others.

Senior citizens

“Almost three-quarters of our clients are dependent on Tracer offices when it comes to accessing government services. We make things easy for them, we work extended hours, and we are available to them throughout the day. The most dependent and the hardest to work with are senior citizens and expatriate workers. Senior citizens are dependent on us because they lack the knowledge and the resources that help them access government services and process their cases.” (Interview, Tracer office manager).

Senior citizens constitute a stable group of clients for Tracer offices. Senior citizens use Tracer offices for a host of reasons. One of the most fundamental reasons, as mentioned in the excerpt above, is that senior citizens might not be familiar with the different regulations and policies given that large numbers of this group are illiterate in this context. This fact is not a surprise since it was only in the 1960s and 1970s that a modern educational system, as well as the modern public bureaucracy, were introduced to the Saudi society. While significant effort had been exerted by the government to eradicate illiteracy among senior citizens, many nevertheless remain illiterate or gained only basic literacy skills that are insufficient to help them navigate the public bureaucracy on their own. In view of this, Tracer offices strive to attract and cater to senior citizens.

Additionally, even though front-line employees at the DCA try to cater for senior citizens as shown in the previous chapter, senior citizens, however, might still resort to Tracer offices to avoid the overcrowded halls characteristic of a public bureau such as the DCA. Additionally, official employees at the DCA or other branches might routinely refer senior citizens to visit Tracer offices as we have seen in the previous chapter. Beyond common cases such as renewing documents, senior citizens visit Tracer offices to ask for help in paying bills or fees; the Tracer office usually pays the senior citizen's bills electronically through the office's online banking account and accept cash in exchange in addition to a surcharge.

Expatriate workers

“Any expatriate worker must go to the Tracer office. The Tracer office is like the key. You must have a key for your house, in the same way, any expatriate worker must have a key to get public services, and the Tracer office is the key.”
(Interview, Tracer office client-expatriate worker).

According to the Saudi General Department of Statistics, approximately 33 million individuals live in Saudi, 12 million of them are expatriate workers (see Appendix 1). The focal expatriate worker sending countries are India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, the Philippines among many others. Most of those workers if not all end up clients for Tracer offices. As the excerpt above indicates, expatriate workers are dependent on Tracer offices when it comes to accessing public services; several reasons can explain this assertion. The most common reason is that large numbers of expatriate workers, especially individuals from non-Arabic speaking countries, are unable to read and write in Arabic and hence, cannot communicate effectively with front-line public employees. This issue is especially prevalent among low-skilled workers, according to Junaid, a Tracer office client from Pakistan:

“Most expatriate workers here in the country are not educated, some barely finished middle school, others barely finished primary school, and they all work in manual labour such as construction workers, tailors and so on. They did not finish school; they dropped from school because they had to find work. All those workers do not know [...] They do not know how to read Arabic or English; all they know is to go to the Tracer office for public services.”

Junaid’s words illustrate that most expatriate workers, especially those with limited education, rely heavily on Tracer offices to access public services. Given the fact that this group of clients constitute almost a third of the country’s total population, Tracer offices are keen on attracting such clients and retaining them. One way through which Tracer offices accomplish this is hiring Tracer office staff members from similar cultural backgrounds to those clients that can speak languages such as Urdu, Hindi or Persian. Therefore, such clients feel more comfortable using a Tracer office to process their cases instead of going to the public bureaucracy themselves because they can communicate effectively with Tracer office staff in their native language.

The fact that such large populations of expatriate workers, as well as, a large portion of senior citizens, feel they must use a Tracer office resonates with a central feature of street-level bureaucrats, namely, the fact that street-level bureaucrats work with “nonvoluntary clients” (Lipsky, 2010, p. 54). For expatriate workers, therefore, Tracer offices—especially those that hire employees who can speak their language—are “street-level bureaucracies [that] often supply essential services which [they] cannot obtain elsewhere.” (ibid., p.54). Such aspect of Tracer office’s work affirms their character as street-level bureaucratic organisations.

Small business owners

“Small business owners need Tracer offices the most; they help them maintain their licenses, renew documents and permits; they also maintain payroll records

for the workers. They understand everything; they can get the work permits; they help with the insurance. They are a big help. They give you a box in the office, and they keep copies of all your records and paperwork for you.” (Interview, Tracer office client-owner of a small construction company).

It is typical that medium and large-sized companies set up work units similar to Tracer offices and employ back-end Tracers, as company employees, to process cases for the company from the public bureaucracy. In this regard, the Tracer is institutionalised in such medium and large organisations; this fact highlights the salience and the widespread of Tracers in this context. Unlike organisations that can afford to hire Tracers as full-time employees, smaller establishments such as small construction companies, cleaning and maintenance companies, or even small retail shops do not have the financial capabilities to employ full-time Tracers. As the excerpt above indicated, such organisations, tend to rely on hiring commercial Tracer offices and paying per case processed. The owner of a small business in this context uses a Tracer office to process cases from the public bureaucracy for him/herself, their business, or relating to the employees working for the business. While small business owners use Tracer offices for a variety of cases, there are nonetheless, specific types of cases that they frequently submit such as renewing business licenses, renewing subscriptions to local chambers of commerce, paying city municipality fees, paying annual taxes and dues to the government revenue service.

6.2 Following Tracers into the public bureaucracy

The first section described how Tracer offices are organised and how they conduct their everyday work highlighting their street-level bureaucratic character. The discussion now will focus on how back-end Tracers (henceforth referred to as Tracers) process their clients' cases inside the public bureaucracy shedding light on the relations

between Tracers and official street-level bureaucrats. The discussion will highlight how Tracers are valuable not only to citizens but also to official street-level bureaucrats at a public organisation like the DCA.

6.2.1 The use of permits to regulate the work of Tracers at the DCA

The DCA is one of the most attractive branches of the public bureaucracy for Tracers; indeed, the notoriety of the DCA as an overcrowded and inefficient street-level bureaucracy might drive citizens to hire Tracers. For Tracers to process their clients' cases at the DCA, or any other branch of the public bureaucracy, they must apply for a Tracer permit from that specific branch. Each branch issues Tracer permits valid only within that branch's service centres. At the DCA, the application requirements for a Tracer permit are 1) a copy of the commercial registration of the Tracer office the applicant Tracer is associated with, 2) copies of the Tracer's national ID and personal photos, and 3) a completed application form. The number of permits for each Tracer office is usually capped to one or two at most, as Salim, a front-line employee indicated:

“Each tracer office chooses one person to apply for a permit, then the department grants the permit to that person, and only tracers that have permits are allowed to process cases with us.” (Interview, front-line employee).

At the DCA, having a Tracer permit indicates that the Tracer office the Tracer is associated with is legitimate and trusted by the DCA; thus, the permit adds credibility to Tracers and helps maintain trust between the DCA employees and Tracers. As one Tracer indicated, *‘if you have the [Tracer permit] card then they will not complicate things for you’* (Interview, back-end Tracer). Additionally, permits are a way to professionalise the work of Tracers in this context. The permit affirms the Tracer's official status as a legitimate actor in the street-level context of service delivery.

Each time a Tracer visits the DCA to process a case, he must make multiple copies of his permit and staple a copy with each case he submits for processing. The front-line employee processing the case retains and stores the copy of the Tracer permit with the case paperwork in the DCA's archive. Because each Tracer office can only send one or two Tracers to the DCA, depending on how many permits the DCA issued to them, a Tracer usually comes with a substantial number of cases to be processed.

6.2.2 Tracers at the DCA's service centre

The following vignette, recorded during an observation session at one unit within the DCA's service centre, describes how Tracers are easily distinguished from other citizens.

Vignette 6.2: Tracers at the DCA's service centre.

I see about 4 or 5 individuals who seem to be Tracers roaming around this unit. Their ages are in the 40s or 50s [...] Even though they dress like citizens they are easily distinguished from citizens through the following hallmarks:

- 1- They have an unusually large amount of cases; usually stacks of case paperwork.*
- 2- They have suitcases or large binders where they keep all the paperwork.*
- 3- They stay longer than other citizens, and most of the times they are there once the department's service centre opens and they stay until it closes.*
- 4- They keep moving from one office to another and from one window to another processing cases.*
- 5- They seem to know everyone in the service centre very well and call them by their first names. I also quite often see them joking with front-line employees; they sometimes even come into the employees' side of the hall to chat. (Field note, 12/06/2017).*

This vignette shows how it is easy to distinguish Tracers from the other citizens visiting the DCA. While citizens usually leave the service centre once front-line

employees process their cases, Tracers on the other hand, especially from busier offices, tend to stay around the service centre throughout its business hours from 8:00 to 14:30. Tracers come with many cases that require processing from different units within the DCA's service centre; therefore, they need to stay longer at the service centre. Additionally, Tracers tend to frequently move back and forth between different service counters as each counter specialises in processing specific types of cases.

While most Tracers seem to be acquainted with the front-line staff at the DCA; it is veteran Tracers working for busier offices that have spent years processing cases from the DCA that seem to be the most acquainted with the front-line staff. Indeed, such Tracers seem to be quite at ease around the DCA's service centre and acting almost as if they are members of the DCA. For instance, it is quite common to see such Tracers coming in and out of 'staff only' spaces without any restrictions. While shadowing a front-line supervisor, I noticed how one Tracer comes into the supervisor's office frequently, to sit and sort out his clients' paperwork before he launches to another service counter without any objections from the supervisor (field note, 12/6/2017). Given Tracers collegiate interactions with front-line staff and how they behave around the department, an outsider could easily mistake some of those veteran Tracers as the DCA's employees—even though they are not. The following section sheds light on Tracer and front-line staff relations.

6.2.3 Front-line staff-Tracer relations

“Tracers try to be nice; they try to tell jokes to break the ice between them and government employees [...] After all, the work of Tracer offices depends greatly on wasta and strong social relations with government employees.” (Interview, Tracer office manager).

Wasta is a vital asset not only for citizens but more so for Tracer offices. It is vital for Tracers to maintain friendly relations with front-line employees to receive favourable treatments and get their clients' cases processed expediently. Offices with Tracers who can engage in wasta and have strong connections inside the public bureaucracy have a competitive advantage over others. Such offices will not shy away from promoting that they have wasta inside the public bureaucracy; after all, "*a Tracer office that has wasta gets your cases processed in one day and will not delay you.*" (Interview, Tracer office client-citizen).

Wasta is important for Tracer offices for two reasons; first, because processing clients' cases, in a timely fashion, hinges sometimes on front-line employees favouring Tracers over others and processing their cases expediently. Second, as Tracer offices cater for clients that come with missing documents or that fail to meet some regulations; it is vital that they find front-line employees who are willing to turn a blind eye and get such cases processed. Therefore, to exercise wasta, Tracers strive to maintain favourable relations with front-line employees. Following a pattern of interactions similar to Gouldner's (1954) 'indulgency pattern', Tracers tend to interact with front-line staff in a friendly and quite amenable manner. As a result of such amiable behaviour, some front-line staff tend to favour dealing with Tracers over typical citizens as the words of Zakaria, a front-line employee, indicate:

"They [Tracers] are easier to deal with than normal citizens because they do not get upset and are very pleasing, citizens, on the other hand, are very hard to deal with because they will not appreciate the nature of pressure in our work and they will shout and demand that their cases be processed as quickly as possible. Tracers appreciate our work, and they will be compassionate and understanding. Sometimes we even push away Tracers' cases in order to process citizens' cases, and they will not get upset or anything because they

know they will come back tomorrow with another set of cases.” (Interview, front-line employee).

It is evident that front-line staff such as Zakaria above favour interacting with Tracers over citizens; this can be readily surmised from how Zakaria contrasted Tracers and citizens in the excerpt above. As a result of Tracers' cordial and amicable demeanour, front-line staff can push a Tracer's case aside to finish processing a citizen's case. Tracers strive to accommodate front-line staff as they need them on a regular basis.

Not all Tracers are equal in their abilities to initiate and maintain such favourable relations with front-line employees; doing so requires greater interpersonal skills and social acumen on behalf of Tracers. Indeed, Tracers who can make employees laugh and know how to be understanding and accommodating are more successful in this line of work. Additionally, Tracers who can afford to visit the DCA frequently are more likely to be accepted into front-line staff circles. Such Tracers benefit from the ability to spend a longer time around the front-line staff. Thus, they get to know the front-line staff better and find ways to extend and exchange favours with them.

One common way through which Tracers seem to extend and exchange favours with front-line staff is through processing cases for them at other branches of the public bureaucracy. Yassir, a retired Tracer, stated:

“With government employees, we are like brothers, I mean you can build strong brotherly relations with them and win them, and every time you go to them, they take you in open arms, and they process your cases for you with ease. Also, you know sometimes one employee needs help in another government organisation, and you are going there anyway, so you help him by getting his case done for him. Moreover, while you are at the other government organisation, you find another employee who wants something from the other organisation, so you help him and so on. When you do this, you do not take money from them of course,

because you want to win them. This is how it works 100%, and Tracers focus on winning people even if sometimes you lose in the short run. Because once you win someone, then we are brothers, we stand by each other." (Interview, retired Tracer and current small business owner).

While, Tracers might not share a tribal association with front-line staff, neither enjoy a superior bureaucratic or social position, they nonetheless are well positioned to extend and exchange favours with them. Full-time employees, including front-line staff at the DCA for instance, are a vital category of clients for Tracers as discussed earlier. Such employees might need to process a case at another branch of the public bureaucracy. Given that they are working during the public bureaucracy's 8:00-14:30 service centres' work hours, it is difficult for them to leave their posts to process their cases. Tracers capitalise on such situations by processing cases on behalf of them at other branches. Tracers do this either themselves as Yassir's words indicate or through another colleague Tracer.

A Tracer in such situations is willing to *'lose in the short run'* (i.e., by not charging fees or accepting that his cases pushed aside for a bit as indicated earlier) because they want to build favourable relations with front-line employees. They thus extend favours to front-line staff while hoping that front-line staff would return the favour by processing their clients' cases. As the frequency of such favours increases, Tracers deepen their connections inside the public bureaucracy and widen and strengthen their network. Additionally, it could be argued that such relations between Tracers and front-line staff create situations ripe for corrupt activities such as illegal payments or profit sharing between the two parties; nonetheless, the lack of empirical evidence impedes further exploration of this theme. All in all, such favourable relations and how Tracers try to cater for and satisfy officials are manifestations of pre-

bureaucratic relations and practices in everyday work at the street-level. The theoretical implications of such findings will be explored at length in the discussion chapter.

Tracers ameliorate street-level bureaucratic conditions

“A tracer comes to us with 100 cases in his hands, so that one person with one hundred cases is better than 100 people each with his case lining up in front of the service counter.” (Interview, front-line employee).

Regarding accessing public services, citizens have two routes to choose from, namely the official route in the guise of the public service centre (or the eGov channel) and the Tracer office route where they must pay fees to a Tracer office and delegate a Tracer to visit the DCA on their behalf. All cases citizens submit to a Tracer office that need processing from the DCA are typically compiled together and are given to usually one or sometimes more Tracers — depending on the numbers of cases. The Tracer then visits the DCA on behalf of a significant number of clients to process their cases. As the front-line employee indicated in the excerpt above, a Tracer that comes with 100 cases, for instance, does so on behalf of ‘100’ citizens; thus absorbing 100 citizens from the DCA’s already overcrowded service centre; this significantly helps by reducing over-crowdedness at the DCA. Additionally, as explained earlier, a Tracer acts in a congenial manner, unlike citizens who might be impatient. Therefore, Tracers absorb crowdedness, as well as, help in making *‘things calmer and [allow employees to] be better focused’* at their work (interview, front-line employee).

Moreover, unlike typical citizens, members of staff at Tracer offices understand the regulations and requirements and prepare applications and case paperwork to the satisfaction of official street-level bureaucrats. Hence, cases that come through a Tracer are well prepared and require less effort to be processed by a street-level bureaucrat. As, Aziz, a Tracer office front-line employee, mentioned:

“We take out loads of time and efforts from the shoulders of government employees. Instead of the government employee working with citizens, we deal with those people, and we sort out their cases and add in all the required paperwork so that the case arrives neatly to the government employee and all he should do then is process it without complications.” (Interview, Tracer office front-line employee).

Tracers strive to accommodate front-line employees and maintain good relations with them; they will strive to make sure that cases arrive at front-line employees’ desks adequately prepared with all required paperwork sorted appropriately. Given this, Tracer offices contribute to reducing case processing times thus saving employees time and effort, as well as, save costs for the government. Tracer offices do this because they absorb citizens from government service centres thus reducing pressure on government resources and arguably reducing the need for additional staff members at government service centres.

Outsourcing street-level bureaucratic work

“Government employees send citizens away to us when they come to them asking for a service or inquiring about something. They tell them to go to a nearby Tracer office and that they will help. Many people now cut the story short and come to us directly.” (Interview, Tracer office manager).

Given the benefits of Tracers for front-line staff, it is thus in front-line staffs’ best interests that citizens use Tracers instead of visiting the DCA themselves to process their cases. Indeed, as the excerpt above shows, given the street-level bureaucratic conditions at the DCA, as well as, the favourable ways in which Tracers interact with the DCA’s official street-level bureaucrats, it is a common, yet unofficial, practice that official street-level bureaucrats direct citizens to use Tracer offices. An overview of the situations when the DCA’s street-level bureaucrats refer citizens to Tracer offices shows

that there are mainly two broad reasons behind this behaviour. First, to reduce work pressure and free up time. Second, encountering citizens and cases, they are unable to help or process. Each of these reasons will be discussed, respectively, in what follows.

Outsourcing to reduce the workload on front-line staff

“Government [employees] usually do not serve you properly, and they do not tell you what you need to do or what is wrong and what can be done to fix it, they just tell you that you have an issue in your application and you should use a Tracer office.” (Interview, Tracer office manager).

“Sometimes we might be under too much pressure, and there is a lot of work in our hands, and we do not have the time to deal with some of the cases that come to us. In such situations, we usually refer those people to nearby Tracer offices.” (Interview, Front-line employee).

As the excerpts above show, it is common practice that street-level bureaucrats at the DCA refer some citizens who come to them to Tracer offices. When a citizen, for instance, approaches a front-line employee at the DCA with a case, if the citizen did not prepare the application adequately or has missing documents, then the front-line employee would refer that citizen to use a Tracer office. Some employees would explain what is wrong with the case, others might not, and they would only tell the citizen to ‘use a Tracer’.

It is not an official policy at the DCA that employees should refer citizens to use a Tracer; instead, employees engage in this practice informally as one aspect of the myriad unofficial negotiated arrangements in their everyday work. A Tracer office in this situation would carry out front-line staff’s tasks by explaining to the citizen what is wrong with their case and how to remedy the situation. Tracer office staff can easily explain to those citizens the regulations and can help them with preparing the case applications and paperwork. Some citizens choose to hire a Tracer to visit the DCA on

their behalf; others might not and would only pay a Tracer office to help them with preparing the case files.

Outsourcing to avoid time-consuming cases

“You have people who do not understand policy, procedures and what is required from them and even how they might go about accessing the service they need, in such case the government employees usually refer such people to Tracer offices.” (Interview, Tracer office manager).

The second situation where front-line staff usually refer citizens to Tracers is when they encounter citizens who have difficulties understanding the regulations and meeting requirements or citizens with whom it is difficult to communicate due to language differences. For instance, some citizens are unable to read and write, and they would need assistance in explaining to them the requirements, front-line staff refer such citizens to Tracer offices. Additionally, it is quite common that some expatriate workers, who are unable to communicate effectively in Arabic, visit the DCA to process a case. When front-line staff face difficulties communicating with such individuals, they would refer them to a Tracer office where they usually find someone who speaks their language.

Tracer offices help such clients by preparing their case paperwork for them; while some clients choose to hire a Tracer to process the case on his/her behalf; others might only pay Tracer offices to help with preparing the case paperwork adequately. In such situations, it is accepted practice among public servants that the Tracer office staff would send with the client a written note with additional clarifications to save them time processing the case; illustrating this, Ryyan, a Tracer office client, commented:

“The Tracer office knows the regulations and policies, they can help with sorting out the case paperwork, and they even might write a note for you to give

to the front-line employee so that the employee can know exactly why you are coming to him and so that you will not waste his time." (Interview, Tracer office client).

Tracer offices thus help front-line employees at the DCA, as well as other branches of the public bureaucracy, by saving them time and effort mainly in two ways. First, by preparing the case paperwork adequately and second, by communicating effectively with front-line employees through attaching a note with the case explaining issues that help front-line employees save time in their interactions with citizens. The use of these notes also helps, to some extent, in overcoming the language barrier between expatriate workers and official front-line employees at the DCA. Such use of notes written by Tracers is not formally prescribed policy, rather, like the note system discussed in the earlier chapter; it is another element of the various unofficial and negotiated practices that characterise everyday work at the DCA.

To summarise at the end of this section, the discussion thus far can be seen to have highlighted first, how Tracers' work inside the DCA is bureaucratically regulated and legitimised through the use of permits. Second, highlighting the pre-bureaucratic in the guise of *wasta* relations and exchanges of favours between Tracers and official staff, as well as, the unofficial practices and negotiated arrangements such as outsourcing cases to Tracers. These elements demonstrate Tracers' vital role as hybrid street-level bureaucrats and the value they add to government organisations. Describing these elements helps in terms of understanding how Tracers endure through eGov, a topic to which the discussion now turns.

6.3 Tracers after eGovernment

While, in theory, the introduction of eGov should dis-intermediate Tracers rendering them redundant (Al-Jassem, 2010; Rakan, 2015), the realities on the ground indicate that Tracer offices are not only enduring but are also playing a vital role in the enactment of eGov at the street-level. Several reasons might explain the endurance of Tracer offices. First, is the fact that the DCA staff use Tracer offices strategically in enforcing the adoption of eGov by continuing to refer to them citizens who visit the DCA seeking to avoid the electronic system (e.g., citizens unable to use the electronic system or those that want to avoid extra mail fees). Tracer offices in this way can be seen to absorb resistance to eGov at the street-level thus facilitating its enactment. Second, Tracer offices seem to endure because their service model continues to be resilient and far more attractive for some citizens than both the eGov as well as the traditional paper-based service models. Third, because two essential categories of Tracer offices' clients, namely senior citizens and expatriate workers, are unable to use eGov due to digital and social disadvantages, they thus remain dependent on Tracers to access eGov. Each of these themes will be discussed in depth in the coming paragraphs.

6.3.1 Endurance of the unofficial 'outsourcing' to Tracers

"We have transformed to eGovernment, everything is electronic and is done through the electronic system, and if the person does not know how to use the system, he just goes to a tracer office, and they help him." (Interview, front-line employee).

As discussed in the earlier chapter, following the redesign of the document ordering service and the introduction of an electronic channel in the form of an online portal as part of the eGov reform, the DCA instituted a policy forcing the adoption of this electronic channel. Many citizens resisted using the electronic channel due to

reasons such as avoiding extra mail fees, the fact that it takes a longer time to get their documents through the eGov channel, or an inability to benefit from it due to lack of access to or inability to use ICTs effectively. Such citizens, especially those unable to engage in ‘wasta’, would normally visit front-line supervisors’ at the DCA to plea for an exception. As the excerpt above indicates, having Tracer offices in business meant that those that do not want to use the eGov system could simply be sent to or unofficially outsourced to Tracer offices. Zad, a front-line employee at the DCA, illustrated this notion in the following excerpt:

“Mohammad: Do you usually encounter people who do not want to use the eGovernment system or cannot use it, and they come to you wanting to be served without it?”

Zad: Yes, there are people like that.

Mohammad: How do you deal with them?”

Zad: No, if they do not want to use the eGovernment system then we send them to Tracer offices.” (Interview, front-line employee).

Indeed, with the practice of referring citizens to Tracer offices being an element of a range of unofficial practices among front-line staff at the DCA as discussed earlier, the standard, yet unofficial, procedure when citizens plea for an exception to avoid the eGov channel is that they are referred to visit a Tracer office. In doing so, the DCA’s front-line staff seem to use Tracer offices to absorb resistance to eGov in the that they outsource to them those citizens who prefer not to use the eGov channel. In this manner, Tracer offices are playing a vital role, first by being a channel to which official front-line staff can outsource issues such as resistance to using eGov; second, by providing access to eGov for those citizens, front-line staff send to them.

Additionally, the DCA’s front-line staff not only send to Tracers citizens pleading for exceptions to using the eGov channel, but also citizens who come with

missing documents especially in relation to ‘eGov notes’ cases. Citizens normally come to a front-line employee at the DCA explaining that the eGov system will not process their cases; albeit they come without the note because many are unaware of the fact that they must print a screen-shot of the note and bring it as evidence that the system has refused to process their case. When such citizens come to the service counter, they are routinely told by front-line employees to ‘*go to a Tracer office outside, print it and bring it to us.*’ (Field note, 16/05/2017).

Tracer offices, being conveniently located near government organisations, cater to such citizens when they come to them. Citizens would provide their eGov portal logging in credentials to a Tracer office front-line staff member, who then accesses their eGov accounts, tries to submit the request again and when the note shows up on the screen, they print it for them in exchange of a fee.

Moreover, recently, under a new policy, the DCA stopped offering paper forms at its service centres in its efforts to go ‘paperless’. This policy also seems to aim to reduce crowdedness at the DCA’s service centres resulting from citizens use of its facilities to fill their forms. Citizens, especially those referred by the eGov system to visit the DCA’s service centre, are supposed to download the forms from the DCA’s website and fill them in before they visit the service centre. Nonetheless, citizens frequently came to the DCA under the assumption that they would find the forms at the service centre. When citizens come and do not find the forms, they are told by front-line employees to ‘*go to a nearby Tracer office*’. While shadowing supervisor Abdullah on the front-line, he explained why they send such citizens to Tracer offices saying:

“Supervisor Abdullah: Now our main office stopped supplying forms, they say it is all on the website, so they do not print forms anymore.”

Mohammad: Why you think they are doing that?

Supervisor Abdullah: To force people to go online [...] But tracer offices now played this to their advantage. Now they sell our forms to people for 10 riyals per form.

Mohammad: Where do Tracer offices bring these forms from?

Supervisor Abdullah: From the website, they print them out from the website, and they sell them to people for 10 riyals". (Field note, 20/09/17).

The words of supervisor Abdullah above illustrate the entrepreneurial ethos of Tracer offices and their hybrid character as street-level bureaucracies. On the one hand, Tracer offices assumed the role of supplying the DCA's paper-based forms to citizens, hence maintaining, to some extent, an element of the bureaucratic. On the other hand, Tracer offices are sourcing these forms for free from the DCA's website and are profiting from selling them to citizens hence highlighting their entrepreneurial and market ethos. This entrepreneurial ethos seems to help them turn a threat, namely eGov, into an opportunity by capitalising on missing links in its enactment at the street-level. These findings buttress the assertion that eGov seems to have created a market for Tracer offices instead of curtailing them. Front-line staff continue to follow the unofficial practice of outsourcing to Tracer offices more frequently after eGov and Tracer offices do not hesitate to seize an opportunity, such as the DCA's going paperless policy or its enforcement of eGov channel policy, to sustain their business and play a vital hybrid 'street-level' role. Illustrating this assertion, Tayyeb, a back-end Tracer, as well as an office owner, stated:

"When they introduced eGovernment they immediately closed all traditional channels, so you cannot go to the official bureau. They will tell you to go online, it is all online, and they have no authority to help anyone they say; this created

a market for us. People now instead of going to talk to the government organisation they simply come to us, and we take care of it all for them.” (Interview, back-end Tracer).

Indeed, as the frequency of outsourcing to Tracers increased among front-line staff after eGov, Tracer office’s market has improved. Tracer offices, being customer-centric and entrepreneurial, moved with agility and swiftness to capture new clients by enlarging their service offerings to include all types of e-services newly provided by the public bureaucracy after the introduction of eGov reforms. From offering to pay fees electronically through their office’s bank accounts in exchange for cash to helping citizens set-up their accounts on the online portal, Tracer offices offer all sorts of e-services under one roof for their clients.

Tracers remain more convenient than eGov

The first part of this chapter highlighted how the process of accessing public services through a Tracer office is far more convenient and efficient than the official paper-based channel. Tracer offices followed a customer-centric approach and acted as one-stop shops, joining-up the public bureaucracy for their clients through back-end tracing work (long before the introduction of eGov), and building the appropriate connections and *wasta* relations inside the public bureaucracy to get cases processed. Additionally, Tracer offices maintained records of all their clients’ documents so that they can serve their clients over the phone.

The deficiencies and street-level issues of the paper-based model contributed to the success of the Tracer office service model. The eGov reform was supposed to address these issues making access to public services more convenient and efficient thus rendering Tracer offices redundant. Nevertheless, the enactment of eGov at the street-level as shown in the previous chapter was far from its utopic vision; there were several

issues, and weak links such as the deficiencies of the mail system, which became opportunities on which Tracer offices capitalised. For instance, Tracer offices now cater to their clients by making that trip to the mail offices to get their documents on their behalf and delivering it to their doorsteps. In doing so, Tracer offices are not only filling in the missing links in the enactment of eGov at the street-level but are also maintaining their model as more convenient and faster for their clients than the post-bureaucratic eGov model.

Additionally, in line with their practice of storing clients' documents, it has become a typical practice after the introduction of eGov that Tracer offices store the usernames and passwords of their clients' accounts on the eGov portal. Illustrating this, Rashid, a Tracer office manager, explained:

“We have a dedicated database for our clients; we have information there like clients' mobile phone numbers, usernames, passwords all that is there in the database for our regular clients. Once they register with us, we take that information, and we tell them next time you want anything you can call us on the phone.” (Interview, Tracer office manager).

As Rashid words indicate, Tracer offices would explain that they store these credentials to cater to their clients and reduce the amount of information they ask from them. Moreover, clients seem to provide this information to Tracer offices willingly to facilitate case processing knowing that the eGov portal always asks for a one-time password sent to the client's mobile phone. So, in a typical scenario, when clients need to renew documents from the DCA, for instance, they would call their preferred Tracer office. The Tracer office front-line employee answering their call would look up their username and passwords on the office's database and use them to log in to the eGov

portal. Then, the information system sends a one-time password composed of six digits to the client's mobile phone as a text message.

The client then would tell the Tracer office employee the one-time password to complete the login. Once the front-line employee is logged in, he would submit the online request and pay the required fees from the office account. Then a staff member would travel to the Mail office to pick up the new document after it has been processed and deliver it to the client. This instance shows how, for Tracer office clients, accessing public services through a Tracer office can be more convenient than using the eGov portal directly. This is especially so for clients such as small business owners who frequently request a large number of documents from the DCA for their workers.

Moreover, the enactment of eGov at the street-level seems to have benefited Tracer offices notably as Kamal, another Tracer office manager, explained:

“Mohammad: How do you think eGov affects the work of Tracer offices?”

Kamal: Well, it made things a lot easier for us. We now do not have to wait for government employees to serve us, we can serve our clients efficiently and all from our offices without the need to go back to government organisations. It helped us improve our response time and reduce case processing time.”

(Interview, Tracer office manager).

The enactment of eGov at the street-level thus, specifically in relation to cases that can be processed electronically, seems to have dis-intermediated the official street-level bureaucrat from the chain of relations. For such cases Tracer office staff as the excerpt above indicates, can process their clients' cases more efficiently and promptly as they do not need to visit the public bureaucracy; rather only the Mail office to pick up their clients' documents.

Nonetheless, should a client's case require a visit to the service centre, such as in the situation of eGov notes cases, then Tracer office staff remain well positioned to provide superior service. Front-line staff would print the note, fill in the forms and prepare the paperwork and give the case to Tracers to process from the service centre. Tracers then would not hesitate to capitalise on *wasta* relations to get the case processed as quickly as possible and without complications.

Tracers capitalising on technological/social disadvantages

"I do not read Arabic; I must read Arabic then I can read and learn. I do not have a computer too, and I do not know how to use it if I had it." (Interview, Tracer office client- Expatriate worker).

A third and fundamental way through which Tracer offices are enduring and playing a vital role in the enactment of eGov at the street-level is through providing access to e-services for citizens who cannot access them by themselves. As discussed earlier, there are two categories of clients that rely heavily on Tracers; namely senior citizens and expatriate workers; especially those from non-Arabic speaking countries. Both categories of clients suffer from a social disadvantage since many of them are unable to read or write in Arabic. Those two categories would face difficulty using the eGov online portal. In addition to these two categories of clients, the introduction of eGov also added another vital segment of clients, namely the 'digitally disadvantaged' (Sipior, Ward, & Connolly, 2010). An individual who is unable to access public services through the eGov channel would fit into this category.

The introduction of eGov and specifically the policy of forcing the adoption of eGov meant that such citizens had to use the electronic system; nonetheless, socially or technologically disadvantaged citizens would not use the eGov channel and would try to visit the service centre to have their cases processed manually. In such cases front-

line staff at the DCA refer such citizens to Tracer offices, as the words of Salim, a front-line employee indicates:

“We usually refer to Tracer offices cases that we find ourselves incapable of addressing. For example, a lot of senior citizens that come to us do not even have eGovernment portal accounts neither do they even have bank accounts and if they do, they might not know how to use the ATM. We cannot help such citizens because they must have accounts on the eGovernment portal in order to submit their cases and they must use e-banking channels to pay their fees. So, we refer them to nearby Tracer offices who will accept cash from them in addition to a surcharge of 10 riyals or so and use e-banking to pay their due fines and fees.” (Interview, front-line employee).

As the words of Salim illustrate, front-line employees would argue that they are unable to handle cases of such citizens since the policy dictates that citizens must submit their requests electronically. While some front-line staff would sympathise and make an exception as we have seen in the previous chapter in the case of the senior citizen and deputy supervisor Nasser (see Vignette 5.3), many others would refer those citizens to use a Tracer office. Indeed, Tracer offices remain the main if not the only channel of access for such citizens; especially after the DCA had enforced the use of the electronic channel. When such citizens visit a Tracer office, then Tracer office staff would serve them by paying fees from the office account in case they do not have bank accounts and would help them set up their accounts on the eGov portal. Tracer office staff would choose the usernames and passwords for such clients, they would save these credentials on their files, and would usually print them on a piece of paper for citizens to keep with them.

It is also important to highlight that not only expatriate workers or senior citizens that need Tracers but any citizen who lacks access to or is unable to use the eGov portal

effectively. While shadowing Riaz, a front-line employee at a Tracer office, I noticed that citizens of different age groups and social backgrounds visit this Tracer office to ask for help submitting online requests and accessing their accounts on the eGov portal; the following vignette is extracted from field notes illustrating one such case.

Vignette 6.3: Digitally disadvantaged client.

“A young client in his 20s came asking about updating his information through his account on the eGov portal to maintain his eligibility for social benefits. He handed Riaz a small card of a business card size, that shows his username and password. Riaz took the card, logged in, then a One-Time Password (OTP) was sent to the client's mobile phone. The client gave Riaz the OTP. Riaz then accessed the client's account on the eGov portal and updated his information. I asked Riaz whether it was he that made the ‘login credentials card’ for the client. He replied that he prints them out on A4 papers, and they usually take them to the stationery shop nearby where they cut them into wallet size cards.” (Field note, 11/1/2017).

In this vignette, a young citizen, who seemed to be unable to effectively use or access the information technology required to use the eGov portal, has visited Riaz's office. The citizen wanted to update his information on the portal so that he maintains his eligibility for a type of social benefit he is receiving from the government. He gave Riaz a small piece of paper he had, on which the username and passwords to his eGov portal account are written; this indicates that he had visited this Tracer office before and sought their help to set up his account. Hence, the username and the passwords were printed and given to him, and he used a stationery shop near the office to cut and safe wrap the paper to fit in his wallet.

After Riaz inserted the username and the password, the information system asked for a One-Time Password (OTP) as an added layer of security. The information

system sent the OTP to the client's phone, who then gave it to Riaz to complete the login and carry out the procedure. The OTP plays a vital role in save guarding the client's account against unauthorised access and use by Tracer office staff.

This client is representative of many clients who rely on Tracer offices more so after the introduction of eGov as they suffer from different forms of digital disadvantages. Given this, it can be argued that instead of being curtailed or eliminated by eGov, Tracer offices not only seem to have found opportunities to thrive but are, at the same time, playing a vital role in facilitating the enactment of eGov and making it work at the street-level. This seems to stem from the hybrid ways in which Tracer offices function as unofficial street-level bureaucratic organisations. This hybridity allows Tracer office staff, unlike the formal street-level bureaucrats, to engage in practices such as storing clients' login credentials, paying fees for them through the office's e-banking accounts, selling them paper-based forms, in addition to tracing and processing their cases for them from the public bureaucracy. Despite their questionable practices, Tracer office seem to be playing an important role in the society. They remain vital, at least, as long as no other and better organisations exist to assume their role.

6.4 Summary and concluding thoughts

This chapter sought to highlight the role of Tracer offices in this context. It is inadequate to discuss the transformation of the Saudi public bureaucracy without discussing Tracer offices. While distinctively street-level bureaucratic organisations whose core function revolves around providing access to public services, Tracer offices are also entrepreneurial ventures that strive to generate revenue through delivering public services in seamless customer-centric ways. They functioned as 'one-stop' shops long before 'one-stop' shops become a standard element of the reform narrative, and

they were joining-up the public bureaucracy traditionally through their ‘tracing’ work long before ‘joined-up government’ became the catchphrase of the day.

The first section of this chapter highlighted the bureaucratic as well as the market rationalities that underpin the work of Tracer offices thus illustrating a dimension of their hybridity. The second section—as I will further explain in the next chapter—shed light on an ‘indulgency pattern’ (Gouldner, 1954) between Tracers and official employees highlighting the pre-bureaucratic relations and practices through which favours are exchanged between the two groups. The second section also highlighted a ‘negotiated order’ (Strauss, 1978) between these official employees and Tracers such as the practice of outsourcing and referral of cases to Tracers.

The third section illuminated how Tracers, as hybrid street-level bureaucrats, are facilitating the enactment of post-bureaucratic eGovernment at the street-level. Specifically, the section highlighted how the unofficial practice of outsourcing street-level work to Tracers became a vital element in the street-level enactment of eGov. Additionally, the section shed light on the hybrid street-level practices at Tracer offices such as the storing of clients’ eGov portal login credentials and payments of fees through office’s e-banking accounts as vital ways through which Tracer offices are enduring despite eGov. In the next chapter, these findings along with those described in the previous chapter and their theoretical implications will be analysed and discussed in relation to current debates in the literature.

7 eGovernment hybridity at the street-level: A ‘mock post-bureaucracy’ pattern

The objective of this chapter is to address the research questions of the thesis and discuss the contributions that can be derived from relating the data described in the previous two chapters to the relevant debates in the literature. The research questions focused on exploring the enactment of eGovernment at the street-level and the insights that can be gained to advance the debate on bureaucracy versus post-bureaucracy and street-level bureaucracy. In response to this research focus, the central argument of the chapter is that eGovernment is enacted at the street-level through a local negotiated order through which the pre-bureaucratic is maintained along with the bureaucratic and the post-bureaucratic. The pre-bureaucratic manifested most clearly through an enduring ‘indulgency pattern’ (Gouldner, 1954, p.45) among officials and Tracers. Additionally, the enactment of eGovernment is characterised as following a ‘mock *post-bureaucracy* pattern’. These elements will be unpacked and discussed in depth highlighting the insights that can be gained and contributions to the debates on bureaucracy versus post-bureaucracy as well as street-level bureaucracy.

The chapter is divided into three sections. The first section, drawing on Strauss’s (1978) negotiated order construct as well as Gouldner’s (1954) notion of the ‘indulgency pattern’, will discuss the endurance of what Weber (1978) characterised as pre-bureaucratic practices and how cultural relations imbue everyday work at the DCA.

The second section relates the theme of the endurance of the pre-bureaucratic to the enactment of eGovernment. The section, drawing on Gouldner (1954), introduces the concept of 'mock *post*-bureaucracy' and relates it to the debates on bureaucracy versus post-bureaucracy as well as debates on eGovernment and street-level bureaucracy. The third section extends the themes developed in the previous two sections and relates them to the theme of hybridity and discusses the role of Tracers as hybrid street-level bureaucrats in the enactment of eGov at the street-level. In a penultimate section, I will draw on the theme of 'epochalism' in exploring the question 'why was the pre-bureaucratic overlooked thus far in the debate on bureaucracy versus post-bureaucracy?' The overall arguments of the chapter are brought together in a conclusion section.

7.1 Cultural relations, the negotiated order, and everyday work: A prelude

The DCA like most formal public organisations has a formal structure that corresponds with the typical elements in Weber's ideal bureaucratic type including rules, standard operating procedures, and hierarchically ordered and specialised roles that are supposed to govern and pattern the work activities of its staff. Nonetheless, as I have shown in the earlier chapters, especially with regards to the prevalence of 'wasta' and exceptions notes, formal rules did not determine employees' behaviour at the DCA. Organisations such as the DCA are not immune to the influence of social relations from the wider cultural context. Given this, a distinction has to be made between the formal structure or an organisational role as formally prescribed and the 'performance' of the role by an actor (Goffman, 1983; Manning, 2008). Workers rarely enact formal structures without discretion, and hence they tend to develop alternative working arrangements and shared understandings that are influenced by the local cultural context

and do not necessarily adhere to the formal bureaucratic rationality (Fine, 1984; Manning, 1977; Strauss, 1985; Watson, 2015).

Elucidating this assertion further is the notion of the ‘negotiated order’, which was proposed by Strauss (1978) to describe the realm of work in organisational settings as a context for socially constructed, complex, and precarious arrangements that do not necessarily adhere to formal rules and are imbued with cultural relations (Bechky, 2011; Fine, 1984). According to Strauss:

[A negotiated order] on any given day can be conceived of as the sum total of the organization’s rules and policies, along with whatever agreements, understandings, pacts, contracts, and other working arrangements currently obtained. These include agreements at every level of the organization, of every clique and coalition, and include covert as well as overt agreements. (Strauss, 1978, p. 6).

Strauss’s ‘negotiated order’ construct thus provides a localised and culturally sensitive view of organisations (Bechky, 2011; Watson, 2015). It attends to how cultural relations imbue organisational work (Fine & Hallett, 2014; McCabe, 2002). It does this through attending to the *negotiation context* where, for example, tensions between the local cultural relations and formal rules are worked out through negotiated arrangements and emergent unofficial practices among employees (Barley, 1986; Bishop & Waring, 2016; Maines, 1982; Thomas, 1984).

As illustrated in the previous chapter, everyday work at the DCA is enacted through a negotiated order. Front-line employees, supervisors, directors, as well as Tracers are individuals with different backgrounds, intentions and interests who work

and interact within an organisational context (e.g., their roles and patterns of interactions). The performances of their roles, their interactions, and their lives in this organisational setting are not isolated from the broader cultural relations. Cultural relations beyond the organisation such as the tribal culture were inextricably intermeshed with the demands and operation of work in employees' everyday performances of their roles at the DCA. Additionally, workers' tribal affiliation and the expectations that come with such affiliation (e.g., helping or favouring tribal members over others) were inseparable from their roles as bureaucrats; this was evident especially during the enactment of *wasta*. In the following section, I will attempt to analyse and discuss how such cultural relations meld into everyday work and shed light on the negotiated order through which such melding is enacted and rendered practical.

7.1.1 An indulgency pattern at the DCA

Gouldner (1954) in his seminal study of a Gypsum plant demonstrated how local cultural relations suffuse "the dynamics of bureaucratic organization" (1954, p.20). He dedicated a chapter to discussing the cultural relations of the local community and how such relations imbued everyday work at the plant. He used the term "indulgency pattern" (1954, p.45) to refer to a pattern of interactions and practices that reflected favourable relations and shared understandings that mostly departed from the official formal rules and policies and reflected the influence of the cultural context. The previous two chapters reported on a salient pattern of interactions and practices at the DCA that was similar to Gouldner's 'indulgency pattern' as it combined official bureaucratic rationality with the local culture. In the rest of this section, I will discuss how *wasta* is best understood as a local 'indulgency pattern' and that it is enacted and maintained through a negotiated order.

The practice of *wasta* is one salient manifestation of an indulgency pattern at the DCA. It stems, to a large extent, from the local tribal cultural relations, which employees were unable to separate from the operation of everyday work. Consider, for instance, the interactions reported in chapter five between supervisors and citizens engaging in ‘*wasta*’; in such interactions citizens that came to supervisors through a friend, a family relative or even a person of a notable status to the supervisors, interacted with the supervisors differently. Supervisors gave such citizens a better reception, served them promptly and favoured them over others. Additionally, if the favoured citizens’ case required processing in another department within the DCA, then the supervisor or the front-line employee would accompany the citizen and introduce him to another colleague supervisor interceding for him and asking for favourable treatment to be extended. In such cases, hierarchical social relations also become intermeshed with the practice of *wasta* hence indicating how the local culture suffused the bureaucratic organisational relations.

In this vein, the influence of the local tribal relations, or what Weber (1978) may have characterised as pre-bureaucratic, is difficult to isolate from employees’ performances of their formal roles. It would be inconceivable to expect supervisors to separate tribal relations from their everyday work because that would negatively impact upon their lives outside of work significantly. Hence, employees’ performances of their roles are inherently social, subjective, and contingent instead of always formal, objective, and detached (Fine & Hallett, 2014; Mintzberg, 2001). Such a pattern of interactions through which *wasta* is exercised exemplifies an indulgency pattern (Gouldner, 1954, p. 45). While the cultural relations and the local context in Gouldner’s mine are indeed different than those that underpin *wasta* in this context, both cases nevertheless, can be seen to engender an ‘indulgency pattern’ as both cases show how

local cultural relations suffuse and shape organisational practices in ways that deviate from formal policies.

Another manifestation of an indulgency pattern at the DCA can be observed in the relations between Tracers and official front-line staff. As reported in chapter six, Tracers sought to behave in a friendly, subservient and collegiate manner toward official staff. They sought opportunities to serve official staff, to extend favours to them, and to make their work easier. Tracers did so hoping for mutually favourable treatments, which they seem to receive. Official front-line staff, in return, favoured Tracers over citizens and facilitated their case processing. Moreover, official staff, capitalising on this indulgency pattern, frequently referred citizens to Tracer offices. In this regards, front-line staff can be seen to outsource some of their work to Tracer offices unofficially. This outsourcing lowers front-line staff's workload while, at the same time, it financially benefits Tracer offices.

This outsourcing practice can be seen to maintain the favourable 'indulgency pattern' between official front-line staff and Tracers. Such practice bares a strong resemblance to the exchange of favours between workers and supervisors that Gouldner reported in his study. Supervisors, at Gouldner' plant, turned a blind eye to workers taking company property for their personal use and workers returned the favour by sharing gifts with them (See Gouldner, 1954, pp. 60-61). Such exchange of favours between supervisors and workers was predicated on the fact that "[b]ecause they grew up together and have known each other for many years, the supervisors and workers developed personalised, informal relations on the job that reflect their community relations." (Gouldner, 1954, p. 39). Such community relations manifest differently in the Saudi context primarily in the guise of the unique local tribal cultural relations. The

informal relations between Tracers and official front-line staff might be underpinned by tribal bonds and are based on exchanges of favours as Tracers' income is contingent on maintaining such informal relations and official staff benefit by lowering their workload.

The central theme derived from Gouldner's (1954) study, therefore, is the significance of the local cultural context and how pre-bureaucratic relations influence employees' performances of their roles in bureaucratic organisations and hence come to imbue organisational practices. While cultural relations might be different from one context to another and infuse everyday work in unique ways, they share an overarching pattern characterised by deviation from formal bureaucratic rationality that is neatly captured by Gouldner's notion of the 'indulgency pattern'.

Gouldner's 'indulgency pattern' is valuable in describing such relations; nevertheless, it falls short of elucidating how such favourable pre-bureaucratic relations are enacted in practice, legitimised, and maintained over time along with and despite bureaucratic rules. In this vein, Strauss's (1978) negotiated order construct becomes a valuable reference. For example, *wasta* at the DCA, especially when rule breaking is involved, is exercised through the practice of the note system, which, as discussed in chapter five, is a local negotiated arrangement between the different parties at the DCA.

The note system, whereby supervisors openly break rules and engage in *wasta* through writing exception notes, is a salient instance of the negotiated order at the DCA. The local cultural relations, the formal structure of the DCA, in addition to the needs of different occupational groups (i.e., supervisors, front-line staff, directors) brought different sources of tensions and hence became central elements of the negotiation context of this unofficial practice. The note system emerged as an unofficial locally

negotiated practice through which these tensions are worked out. The note system thus is an example of the 'negotiated order'. It is 'negotiated' among the different parties involved and has become an established way of work at the DCA; hence an 'order'; yet not formally legislated.

The practice of outsourcing to Tracers is another instance of the negotiated order at the DCA. It is unofficial yet accepted and widely practised. With time, such practice has become ingrained, as the discussion in chapter six showed. Front-line staff outsource to Tracers on a regular basis and for a variety of reasons making Tracers an integral aspect of street-level work at the DCA; even though they are not employed by the DCA. This negotiated order was beneficial not only to Tracers and front-line staff but also to the DCA as an organisation and the public bureaucracy in general as, undoubtedly, it is yielding cost reductions as Tracers carry out such official work. Such outsourcing despite being widespread and ingrained remains an unofficial practice.

The note system, the practice of outsourcing to Tracers, and the overall negotiated order at the DCA can be seen, in this regard, as a conduit through which the 'indulgency pattern' is enacted. Moreover, this negotiated order can also be seen to maintain the 'indulgency pattern' over time as well. In other words, maintaining the negotiated order of the note system and the practice of outsourcing also maintains the practice of *wasta* and the favourable relations between Tracers and official staff that characterise the indulgency pattern at the DCA. In what follows, I will relate these theoretical insights and arguments on the 'pre-bureaucratic' to debate on bureaucracy as well as the debate on street-level bureaucracy.

7.1.2 The resilience of the pre-bureaucratic

Illustrating the indulgency pattern at the DCA shows how cultural relations suffuse organisational practices and imbue employees' performances of their bureaucratic roles. The notion of the negotiated order highlights the resilience of such practices and performances and how are they maintained over time. These insights have implications for the debate on 'bureaucracy' such as Du Gay's (2000) argument that the 'bureaucratic' order or, in other words, people's lives in bureaucratic organisations, are, or must be, isolated from other orders of life. Similarly, Kallinikos's (2004) thesis of the 'non-inclusive modulation of the individual-organization relationship' (2004, p.16) praised the institution of bureaucracy for enforcing a separation of individuals from their formal roles. These authors assert bureaucracy's superiority over pre-bureaucratic forms.

It is difficult to accept Du Gay's (2000) as well as Kallinikos's (2004) arguments because their basic premise that the performances of roles in everyday work can be "dissociated from the totality of the lifeworld and from the distinctive mode of being of every person" (Kallinikos, 2004, p.21) does not seem to stand given the thesis's findings. Bureaucrats are situated social beings who perform their roles socially as humans situated in cultural contexts. They are embroiled in social relations, customs and values that imbue their performances as the findings of this thesis show (Casey, 2004; Graham, 2002; Maynard-Moody & Musheno, 2000, 2015; 2003). The findings in this thesis regarding the indulgency pattern reveal that everyday work in a formal bureaucratic organisation is enacted "through a social, rather than entirely policy driven, process" (Fine, 1984, p. 243).

This infusion of cultural relations into bureaucratic roles remains, to some extent, even in contexts where there is intense organisational control such as in total institutions as Goffman revealed in relation to 'the under life of a public institution' (Goffman, 1961, p. 157). In his classic ethnographic study of a psychiatric hospital, Goffman noticed that the "official doctrine according to which an institution is run may be little honoured in practice...[where work seems to follow an]... "authorized-but-not-quite-official system" (1961, p.175) or, in other words, a negotiated order. Moreover, it is important to highlight that such 'humanised' performances can be indeed collective and enacted in concert in an organisational setting as indicated by the notion of the negotiated order (Fine & Hallett, 2014; Hallett, 2010; Thomas, 1984).

The note system is a case-in-point that illustrates such 'humanised' collective performances. The note system allows supervisors and directors to engage in 'wasta' and, at the same time, offers front-line employees who process such exceptions, protection in case the 'exception' made by the supervisor or director leads to legal issues. Even employees monitoring the work activities of front-line staff within the control department agreed to turn a blind eye to rule-breaking, as long as, supervisors issue exception notes. In this regard, it is interesting also to highlight that even performances of roles of organisational authority, which are supposed to enforce the formal bureaucratic rules and depersonalisation, were not strictly formal. Employees in organisational positions of authority are also social actors situated in a cultural context in the same manner that the street-level bureaucrats they are monitoring are situated. Hence, staff members in charge of monitoring and control tend to perform their roles following a negotiated order that was sympathetic to, and emerged from within, the local cultural context.

In this vein, exercises of discretion, rule-breaking and informality are central elements of role performances and everyday work in organisational settings (Brodkin, 2007; Radoynovska, 2018). This assertion supports the arguments of Strauss (1978) as well as Watson (2015) in questioning the binary of the informal-formal in descriptions of work. The informal defined by its opposition to the formal is a product of the valorisation of the formality and depersonalisation of bureaucratic work. This distinction, ingrained as it is in the literature, becomes blurred in everyday work in organisational settings. It is hard to find a human performance of a role that remains strictly 'formal'. After all, practices such as the note system and outsourcing to Tracers were performed openly and unreservedly as if they are official practices even though they are not. For outsiders such as citizens as well as the researcher such practices appeared formal; until some participants mentioned that they are against regulations but '*people do it anyway*'. What might be considered informal appears formal as it is performed frontstage most of the time and not in the backstage to use Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical metaphor.

Such findings counterbalance the, at times, pessimistic views that privilege bureaucratic structures in dominating and dehumanising employees (Bauman, 1989; Weber, 1978). In this case, it seems that people humanised organisational roles even those in positions of control and authority, and enacted everyday work through negotiating such arrangements that allowed cultural practices and relations to imbue bureaucratic work. The presence of such a negotiated order in this context, does not, of course, necessitate the absence of pressures toward dehumanisation. Indeed, as several studies highlight, in some contexts, bureaucratic structures might indeed dehumanise employees through distance and subjection to formal rationality (see Bauman, 1989; McCabe, 2015). In this regard, an interesting approach would be to explore the role of

negotiated orders in intensifying the domination of bureaucratic structures and hence dehumanisation. Attention to this darker side of negotiated orders is indeed mostly overlooked as the dominant view in this approach tends to pay attention to how negotiated orders undermine and 'humanise', instead of, for example, reinforce bureaucratic structures and hence 'dehumanise'.

7.1.3 Cultural relations and street-level discretion

The street-level bureaucracy literature gains from an appreciation of how cultural relations suffuse and 'humanise' street-level work put forth by an ethnographic sensibility, which is, for the most part, absent in this literature and hence strongly needed to advance the debate (Buffat, 2015). Additionally, the street-level bureaucracy debate would be enriched by an appreciation of negotiations and unofficial arrangements that Strauss's (1978) notion of the negotiated order elucidates. The contributions of this discussion to the debate on street-level bureaucracy stem from showing, first, how exercises of street-level discretion are underpinned and guided by cultural relations and practices instead of entirely instrumental functional aims such as lowering workload as the dominant assertion in this literature indicates. Second, in showing how exercises of discretion; especially those that involve rule-breaking, are enacted as well as enabled and sanctioned in practice through a negotiated order. These two elements will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

First, a central idea in the street-level bureaucracy literature is the notion that street-level bureaucrats exercise discretion and tend to break formal policy in their everyday work (Lipsky, 1983; Prottas, 1979). Such exercises of discretion are assumed to be underpinned by instrumental objectives such as reducing high workload (Barnes & Henly, 2018; Brodtkin & Majmundar, 2010) or even engaging in corrupt activities for

personal financial gains (Lipsky, 2010; Smart, 2018). The dominant focus in this debate hence tends to be on finding ways to curtail such negative use of discretion (Brodin, 2007; Hupe & Hill, 2007; Wenger & Wilkins, 2009). Such accounts, nonetheless, downplay the influence of social relations and cultural contexts. As this thesis's findings on *wasta* and the indulgency pattern highlight, street-level bureaucrats are situated social actors whose exercises of discretion are guided by cultural relations and practices. This highlights a different dimension to exercises of discretion and that they are more complex than what is described in the street-level bureaucracy literature.

Second, while discretion is a central element in the street-level bureaucracy literature, there is little discussion of how it is exercised in practice and sanctioned; specifically, when rule-breaking is involved. The notion of the negotiated order provides rich insights into the exercise of discretion in the course of everyday work. For example, the discussion on the note system demonstrates how street-level bureaucrats' exercises of discretion to bend the rules are enabled and legitimised through the unofficial arrangements that underpin this system. While indeed there are a wide range of exercises of discretion at the street-level, but if we focus on those that engender rule-breaking as the literature alludes to, then understanding how such rule-breaking is enacted and maintained in practice despite formal policies is fundamental. The thesis thus contributes to this literature by drawing attention to the negotiated order at the street-level through which formal rules are 'safely' and routinely bent. This is a novel contribution and calls for further understanding of street-level discretion through detailed ethnographic approaches.

In this vein, the thesis demonstrates that to understand street-level work, it is vital to study the performances of street-level roles ethnographically paying attention to

cultural relations, patterns of interactions and negotiations to bring to the fore such negotiated orders and how are they constructed. Such an understanding advances the debate in this literature by accepting that “[w]hen worlds are laid on, under-lives develop” (Goffman, 1961, p. 267). The whole notion of curtailing or even more drastically eliminating human discretion from the performances of street-level bureaucratic roles is rendered impractical by such an ethnographic sensibility.

Hence, the debate needs to move beyond concerns with enforcing the formal structure to studying the patterns of interactions, the meanings people make, the social relations, the local cultural context, and how these elements mesh with the formal structure in the everyday performances of street-level work. Arguably, not all exercises of discretion are problematic, and, at times, it might even be desirable as Maynard-Moody and Musheno (2000) highlighted. Therefore, we should be concerned with describing and understanding how and when discretion is enacted, its broader cultural context of enactment and the different dimensions of the implications associated with such enactments; an ethnographic sensibility offers the best approach for this task.

To conclude this section of the chapter, these findings and arguments demonstrate and make a case for attending to the continuing relevance of the 'pre-bureaucratic' despite formalisation and bureaucratisation. The dominant assertion in the literature is that bureaucracy is a device of modernity and the fact that we are living in a modern epoch means that the pre-modern/pre-bureaucratic is no longer relevant (du Gay, 2000; Hales, 2002; Kallinikos, 2004). The findings of the thesis indicate otherwise and call for a rereading of Weber's work to recover the pre-bureaucratic. The pre-bureaucratic in the guise of the cultural practice of *wasta* and the indulgency pattern between Tracers and official staff remains salient. While other studies have shown

similar findings such as widespread favouritism in modern workplaces (see Castilla & Rissing, 2019; Lachmann, 2011); the pre-bureaucratic in the context of post-bureaucratic reforms, nonetheless, remains largely unexplored. A central contribution of this thesis is to bring the pre-bureaucratic back into the debate on bureaucracy versus post-bureaucracy. This section can be seen as laying the grounds for further discussions of this contribution in the coming sections.

Additionally, this section highlighted the importance of attending to cultural relations and negotiated orders in studying ‘street-level bureaucracy’, which is an expression of the pre-bureaucratic. The findings on *wasta* demonstrate that exercises of discretion at the street-level are also underpinned by cultural relations and enacted through a negotiated order that combines cultural relations and elements of formal structures while allowing street-level bureaucrats to bend the rules. In the following section, I will continue building on the theme of the pre-bureaucratic by relating it to the debate on post-bureaucratic reforms.

7.2 Technology, the negotiated order, and ‘mock post-bureaucracy.’

In the previous section, I discussed the endurance of the pre-bureaucratic and its continuing relevance. Building on this argument, I will argue, in this section, that the enactment of eGov at the street-level is best understood as a ‘mock post-bureaucracy’ pattern. This term will be unpacked in what follows. Then, I will highlight the contributions that can be derived from this discussion to the debates on bureaucracy versus post-bureaucracy, as well as, technology and street-level bureaucracy.

7.2.1 A 'mock post-bureaucracy pattern.'

In what follows, I will explain and discuss, drawing on Gouldner (1954) and Strauss (1978), the 'mock post-bureaucracy pattern' that characterises the enactment of eGovernment at the street-level in this context. Reflecting on the policies and reports discussed in chapter four, the eGov reforms, specifically digitisation, was supposed to eradicate pre-bureaucratic practices such as *wasta* and the use of Tracers (Abudawood, 2018; Al-Filali, 2006; Al-Jassem, 2010; Al-Shehri, 2013; Rakan, 2015; Thompson, 2017). Nonetheless, these ambitions did not materialise as intended. It can be surmised from the ethnographic findings of this thesis that the enactment of eGov reforms did not evolve deterministically and instead has been and continues to be negotiated and adjusted at almost every level. For instance, as highlighted in chapters four and five, the eGov planners and strategists negotiated with relevant committees in each branch of the public bureaucracy; specifically, during the formulation of branch-level transformation plans. While eGov strategists from the central eGov program pushed for the specific vision articulated in eGov plans, their interests clashed with the somewhat bureaucratic interests of the DCA planners and its policies and regulations. Hence, the negotiations resulted in alterations and local adjustments, such as the 'eGov notes cases' that seemed to be legitimised by a security rationality that favoured typical bureaucratic procedures over digitised post-bureaucratic ones.

Such negotiations and adjustments became vital aspects of the negotiation context at the DCA. Negotiations at the policy-making level at the DCA yielded formal rules such as the separation of the electronic channel from the traditional paper-based channel, which was maintained to handle the 'eGov notes cases.' This formal rule, which stated that only exceptional cases such 'eGov notes cases' can be processed through the traditional paper-based channel, also became a subject of negotiations at the

street-level in the everyday interactions between staff, citizens and Tracers. Consider, for instance, the exception pleas that citizens frequently performed in front of supervisors and front-line employees to avoid using eGov. Every plea can be considered an interaction (Goffman, 1983) wherein the enforcement of this rule is negotiated instead of coercively enforced.

Supervisors gave exceptions to the eGov enforcement rule at their discretion. This practice was evident in how supervisors routinely granted exceptions based on the local cultural values that they followed and upheld as they performed their roles. An example of this is the routine approval of exceptions for senior citizens many of whom were unable to use technology to access the eGov portal. In addition to such pleas, is the salient practice of 'wasta'. For many citizens, engaging in wasta was a faster, more convenient and less expensive option than following the post-bureaucratic service delivery model and using the eGov portal; hence they exercised wasta to gain exceptions to the formal rule that enforced the adoption of the eGov portal. These exceptions were enacted through the note system, which is a central element of the negotiated order at the DCA.

These findings echo Gouldner's (1954) 'mock bureaucracy' pattern. Gouldner observed that "many of the bureaucratic cues were present—rules, posters calling for their enforcement and inspections—but in the ordinary day-to-day conduct of work, this bureaucratic paraphernalia was ignored and inoperative" (1954, p.187). He observed this pattern of practice specifically in relation to the 'no smoking rule' at the plant. This rule was ignored most of the time and enforced according to what can best be described as a local negotiated order; namely upon the announcement of the arrival of fire safety inspectors from the insurance company. Similar to the 'no smoking rule', the rule for

the enforcement of the adoption of the eGov digital service delivery channel at the DCA was also ignored and enforced within a local negotiated order. Street-level bureaucrats at the DCA, similar to the plant workers in Gouldner's study, exercised discretion in enacting this rule. They decided when to give an exception to this rule, when to direct a citizen to use a Tracer office, and when to enforce it and ask citizens to follow the redesigned service model and use the online eGov portal. Given this, it can be argued that the enactment of post-bureaucratic eGov at the DCA seems to follow a 'mock *post-bureaucracy*' pattern to use Gouldner's term.

What is also unique about this 'mock post-bureaucracy' pattern at the DCA is the central role of Tracer offices. Tracer offices were poised to be eradicated through eGov, namely as a result of being disintermediated as citizens begin using the eGov portal to access public services themselves (Al-Jassem, 2010; Al-Shehri, 2013). Nevertheless, this 'mock post-bureaucracy pattern' shows that Tracer offices have been maintained primarily through the negotiated order at the DCA where front-line staff routinely referred citizens to use Tracer offices to access eGov. This practice of outsourcing or referring citizens to Tracer offices after eGov is a salient expression of the 'mock post-bureaucracy pattern'. For example, in situations where citizens are referred to use Tracer offices, the Tracer office staff access the eGov portal using citizens' credentials instead of citizens using the online portal themselves. This practice, while it enacts eGov; does so nonetheless in a manner that undermines the formal intentions of the reform program that assumed citizens would be empowered as they use the eGov portal themselves thus dis-intermediating Tracer offices and rendering them redundant.

In this vein, the ‘mock post-bureaucracy’ pattern in its different manifestations discussed earlier can be seen to undermine, to some extent, the intentions of the eGov reforms and the power ascribed to information technology in transforming service delivery practices. This can be observed by attending to the negotiated order and its underpinning practices and rationalities through which the ‘mock post-bureaucracy pattern’ is enacted and maintained in the everyday work at the DCA. The implications of this argument for the bureaucracy versus post-bureaucracy, as well as, street-level bureaucracy debates will be discussed next.

7.2.2 Recovering the pre-bureaucratic in the bureaucracy versus post-bureaucracy debate

The significance of this ‘mock post-bureaucracy’ pattern for the bureaucracy versus post-bureaucracy debate manifests in two ways. First, it indicates the salience and continuing relevance of ‘pre-bureaucratic’ practices as well as the role of cultural relations in the context of post-bureaucratic reforms. Second, it contributes to debates on the role of technology in post-bureaucratic reforms by demonstrating the importance of attending to the negotiated order through which technology is enacted. The implications of the ‘mock post-bureaucracy pattern’ for debates on street-level bureaucracy are also highlighted in the last segment of this section. Each of these themes will now be discussed.

The debate on bureaucracy versus post-bureaucracy since its inception with the writings of Bennis (1965) has been preoccupied with the shift from the bureaucratic to the post-bureaucratic. As highlighted in the literature review chapter, the arguments in this literature coalesce around the notion that the outcomes of this presumed shift indicate a melding of bureaucratic and post-bureaucratic elements. This is the dominant

assertion in technology-enabled post-bureaucratic reforms such as eGov (see Bloomfield & Hayes, 2009; Clegg, 2011; Harris, 2006, 2008, 2011; Introna, Hayes, & Petrakaki, 2009; Locke & Lowe, 2008; Meijer, 2008; Plesner, Justesen, & Glerup, 2018) as well as, other post-bureaucratic forms such as project work (Clegg & Courpasson, 2004; Hodgson, 2004) or teamwork (Hodgson & Briand, 2013; Knights & McCabe, 2000b; Sewell, 1998). In this literature, the post-bureaucratic was defined mainly based on its opposition to the bureaucratic. Indeed, “new organizational forms are many but united by one thing—they are all conceived in opposition to the classic model of bureaucracy” (Clegg, 2011, p.218). In this narrative, the pre-bureaucratic was overlooked mostly because the “current take on bureaucracy is not as an emerging form of organisation, but as one that is on the wane, viewed not through the lens of known pre-bureaucratic forms, but of possible post-bureaucratic forms” (Hales, 2002, p. 52). The findings in this thesis and specifically the notion of the 'mock post-bureaucracy' pattern contribute to the debate by bringing back the forgotten pre-bureaucratic into focus.

This thesis contributes to knowledge by showing how the 'mock post-bureaucracy pattern' is a manifestation of the pre-bureaucratic, the bureaucratic, and the post-bureaucratic as enacted in practice. The discussion of the introduction of 'eGov notes cases', the formal rule enforcing the adoption of eGov and how it was routinely violated, the cultural practice of *wasta* and the outsourcing to Tracers are different manifestations of how the pre-bureaucratic, is interlocked with the bureaucratic and the post-bureaucratic in the everyday work at the DCA. Additionally, by attending to the negotiated order and, specifically, the ways in which the enactment of post-bureaucratic eGov is negotiated at different levels; the micro underpinnings and underlying practices

and rationalities that underscore this ‘mock post-bureaucracy pattern’ are unpacked and highlighted.

These findings illuminate a relatively unexplored dimension of post-bureaucratic reforms; namely how transformation plans are negotiated and altered at different levels and the rationalities that underpin such negotiations. The attention to negotiations and alterations at different levels yielding the ‘mock post-bureaucracy’ pattern at the DCA confirms Dalton’s assertion that “[t]he logically conceived plans of one executive level are variously altered by subordinate levels to fit their shifting social relations.” (1959, p. 342). In this context, in addition to the bureaucratic rationality, a cultural rationality in the guise of *wasta* and tribal relations underpinned the negotiated order at the DCA through which these plans were enacted.

In this regard, the thesis also contributes by showing the role of the cultural context, namely a tribal, collectivistic, non-Western culture. The role of non-Western cultural relations in mediating the enactment of post-bureaucratic reforms is understudied in the literature. The findings in this thesis on the ‘mock post-bureaucracy pattern’ hence can be seen as providing novel empirical evidence supporting Reed’s (2011) argument that “the overarching cultural context in which the PBO [post-bureaucratic organisation] is likely to emerge and take root is one in which ‘vocationalism’ and ‘collectivism’ are much weaker [...] the PBO is much likely to extol the virtues of ‘careerism’ and ‘individualism’ as value systems” (2011, p.5). The mock post-bureaucracy pattern is an indication of how Middle Eastern collectivistic cultural relations in the guise of the cultural practice of *wasta*, for instance, undermined the realisation of full potential of eGov as a post-bureaucratic form. In other words, the prevalence and strength of collectivistic culture linked to tribal relations undermined

post-bureaucracy in this context, which endorses Reed's (2011) argument. Such findings are significant especially in drawing attention to organisations in non-Western cultural contexts such as the Far East, Africa, and South America that might share similar cultural values as the Middle East and are increasingly adopting post-bureaucratic reforms in their quests for development and modernisation (see Christensen et al., 2012; Ciborra, 2005).

Technology, street-level discretion, and the mock post-bureaucracy

The discussion of the 'mock post-bureaucracy pattern' also presents significant insights into debates on the role of technology in post-bureaucratic reforms as well as debates on the curtailment of street-level discretion through digitisation. The eGovernment reform agenda reflects the common claim that "[d]igital technologies are implicated in an historic shift dissolving bureaucratic organizations." (Clegg, 2011, p.215). ICTs were thought of as powerful instruments for progressing from traditional bureaucratic work in the public sector to post-bureaucratic citizen or customer-centric modes of work (Bekkers & Homburg, 2007; Dunleavy, Margetts, Bastow, & Tinkler, 2008). Heydebrand (1989), writing on post-bureaucratic forms, described the role of ICTs in this process using the term 'technical rationalisation' saying:

[M]any of the formal rules, bureaucratic procedures, and external controls found in previous organizational forms can be preprogrammed, that is, they can be incorporated into the computer software[...]The formal logical rules of bureaucracy and its rigid communication and filing systems are now embodied, as it were, in computerized systems[...] In other words, technical rationalization of the "robust" kind can be expected to change the social rationalization of an earlier era, namely, bureaucracy. (1989, p.341; original emphasis).

Heydebrand in this quote was theorising the role of technology in the shift from bureaucracy to post-bureaucracy. The role of technology, according to Heydebrand, manifests in replacing social rationalisation (the enforcement of rules by humans) with a technological one (programming formal rules into information systems) thus making an evolutionary move to the post-bureaucratic age. Technology, therefore, is ascribed the power to eliminate the pre-bureaucratic by perfecting the bureaucratic thereby allowing for evolution in organisational forms and practices to a post-bureaucratic or “posthierarchical form of organization” (ibid., p.342). Heydebrand’s argument is used here because it is representative of the dominant managerial assertions that accompany eGovernment reforms. It also illustrates the dominant argument in the literature on street-level bureaucracy where Reddick, for example, argued that “when all decisions are automated, the traditional street-level bureaucrat could entirely be taken out of the process.” (2005, p.41). This argument, despite its widespread, is challenged by the ‘mock post-bureaucracy pattern’ described in the findings of this thesis. Bureaucracy—“far from being superseded” (Clegg, 2011, p.202)—remained resilient especially in terms of hierarchical relations, discretion, and paper-based procedures as indicated by the findings on the ‘eGov notes cases’ and the ‘hierarchal’ manner through which wasta is enacted. Moreover, it could be argued that eGov was enacted and enforced through bureaucracy as the data reported in chapters four and five indicated.

This technical rationalisation argument also seems to overlook the fact that this embedding and programming of rules into computer codes is negotiated; the story of the ‘eGov notes cases’ is a case-in-point. This process of programming and digitising is a social process; therefore, what matters is not the fact that rules can be programmed but rather what becomes programmed and why. Heydebrand’s argument thus would

benefit from an appreciation and attention to negotiations and the negotiated order through which this technical rationalisation is enacted.

Additionally, as highlighted through the 'mock post-bureaucracy pattern', even though after the introduction of a digitised online portal, citizens and employees at the DCA routinely ignored as well as occasionally followed the formal rules that enforced the adoption of this online portal within a local negotiated order. This finding echoes Goffman's assertion that "[i]n every social establishment participants use available artefacts in a manner and for an end not officially intended, thereby modifying the conditions of life programmed for these individuals" (1961, p.187). Unlike Heydebrand's technical rationalisation thesis, the 'mock post-bureaucracy pattern' underscores the unofficial, the unplanned, and the unintended uses of ICTs or lack thereof as the data, in chapter five, on the role of *wasta* after eGov indicate. In this vein, the discussion on the 'mock post-bureaucracy pattern' contributes to debates on the role of technology in post-bureaucratic organising by drawing on the negotiated order construct to indicate the significance of negotiations not only during the construction but also the everyday enactment of technology.

Lastly and along similar lines, the discussion on the 'mock post-bureaucracy pattern' contributes to debates on the elimination of street-level discretion through ICTs in the street-level bureaucracy literature (see Bovens & Zouridis, 2002; Buffat, 2015). The 'mock post-bureaucracy pattern' challenges Reddick's (2005) assertion that "ICTs potentially takes away discretion by using predetermined decision making rules" (2005, p.40). Digitisation at the DCA, while had the potential to curtail street-level discretion, it did not. Instead, as the 'mock post-bureaucracy pattern' indicates, street-level

bureaucrats such as front-line employees and supervisors, exercised discretion in sidestepping the online portal that was poised to curtail their discretion.

In summary, the discussion on the ‘mock post-bureaucracy pattern’ as highlighted, contributes to the debates on bureaucracy versus post-bureaucracy and street-level bureaucracy. These contributions stem from drawing on Strauss’s (1978) notion of the negotiated order to highlight the relevance of negotiations, the non-Western cultural context and the salience of the pre-bureaucratic. This discussion sets the stage for engaging with the debates on organisational hybridity to which we turn next.

7.3 Hybridity at the street-level

In this section, I will mainly focus on Tracer offices as a unique case of hybrid street-level bureaucratic organisations and Tracers as hybrid street-level bureaucrats. Through using Tracer offices as a case of hybridity, the thesis contributes to debates on organisational hybridity in the context of post-bureaucracy, in addition to contributing to the street-level bureaucracy literature. I will conclude this section with a critical reflection on the debate on organisational hybridity to discuss an ingrained epochalism that might have contributed to the overlooking of the pre-bureaucratic. Before I begin this discussion, a prelude delineating how hybridity is defined in this thesis is included.

7.3.1 Defining hybridity: A prelude

Simply put, “hybridity signals the co-existence of things or characteristics otherwise thought to be separate or even mutually exclusive” (Bloomfield & Hayes, 2009, p. 465). Since this discussion is on organisations, the focus, therefore, is on hybridity concerning organisational forms and patterns of practices and interactions.

Scholars of organisations have developed over the years different categories and modes of classifying organisational forms and practices (e.g., pre-bureaucratic, bureaucratic, post-bureaucratic, public, private). Such classifications are 'purifications' (Latour, 1993, p. 10) of what are inherently hybrid complex realities that are deployed for analytical purposes and, of course, not without effects on how reality is rendered, understood and hence acted upon (Bowker & Star, 2000). In this regard, organisational hybridity is understood not in biological terms as marriages of two different types but rather as an inherent process that is made sense of through the use of such categories (Bowker & Star, 2000; Latour, 1993; Pieterse, 2001).

This inherent hybridisation is manifested in the negotiated order through which everyday organisational work is enacted. In this regard, the mock post-bureaucracy pattern discussed earlier is an instance of organisational hybridity. Unlike the dominant view that portrays outcomes of post-bureaucratic reforms as hybridisation of bureaucratic and post-bureaucratic elements (see Clegg & Courpasson, 2004; McSweeney, 2006), the 'mock post-bureaucracy' pattern indicates hybridisation of the pre-bureaucratic, bureaucratic, and the post-bureaucratic that are combined and maintained in practice through a negotiated order. This is a novel contribution as discussed earlier. I will continue to build on this theme in this section; however, using a different case, namely Tracer offices, which are a unique form of 'hybrid' street-level bureaucratic organisations and Tracers as a unique tier of hybrid street-level bureaucrats. Tracer offices as hybrid street-level bureaucratic organisations have not been reported on empirically in the organisation studies literature nor the street-level bureaucracy literature. In what follows, after discussing the hybridity enshrined in the practices of Tracers and Tracer offices, I will discuss the contributions to the debate on

street-level bureaucracy as well as the debate on bureaucracy versus post-bureaucracy and hybridity.

7.3.2 Tracers' hybridity and the enactment of eGovernment

In explaining Tracers' hybridity and its significance in the enactment of eGov at the street-level in this section, I will begin by discussing hybridisation in relation to the form and practices of Tracer offices as street-level organisations. Then, I will discuss hybridity inherent in the role of Tracers at the street-level and reflect on its significance in facilitating the enactment of eGov at the street-level.

Tracer offices, as street-level bureaucratic organisations, are underpinned by hybrid public-private rationalities. For example, while operating as private for-profit enterprises, Tracer offices core operations revolve around offering public services provided by the public bureaucracy. Additionally, such public-private rationalities are interlocked with hybrid pre-bureaucratic, bureaucratic, and post-bureaucratic patterns of work practices. For instance, the bureaucratic at Tracer offices can be seen in the front-end and back-end division of labour, hierarchical forms of authority, and reliance on paper-based operations as discussed in chapter six. Moreover, the bureaucratic, as well as, the character of Tracer offices as street-level organisations delivering public services is affirmed through the unofficial practice of public servants outsourcing cases to Tracer offices.

The post-bureaucratic manifests in Tracer offices' entrepreneurial and innovative customer-centricity, which is also an indication of the private for-profit or market rationalities that underscore Tracer offices work. Additionally, the role of Tracer offices as 'one-stop' shops for government services and the fact that their work can be seen to 'join-up' the public bureaucracy for citizens, long before the introduction of

eGov reforms, are expressions of the post-bureaucratic in the work of Tracer offices. Such entrepreneurial spirit, customer-centric logic and 'joining-up' are deemed post-bureaucratic as they contrast with bureaucratic officialdom, proceduralism, and departmentalism (Alvesson & Thompson, 2004; Bloomfield & Hayes, 2009; du Gay, 2004).

Such private-sector rationalities and post-bureaucratic practices are intermeshed with the pre-bureaucratic in the work of Tracer offices. This manifests through how Tracer offices profit from exploiting loopholes and engaging in *wasta* to process illegal and unsanctioned cases. Given this, everyday street-level work at Tracer offices can be seen as constant hybridisation of the pre-bureaucratic, bureaucratic, and the post-bureaucratic as well as private and public sector rationalities and practices. This hybridity becomes all the more evident in the role of back-end Tracers as a tier of hybrid street-level bureaucrats.

Tracers functioned as a unique form of hybrid street-level bureaucrats. Their hybrid role blurs the lines between the unofficial and the official street-level bureaucrats all while melding pre-bureaucratic, bureaucratic and post-bureaucratic patterns of practice. While Tracers are not employed by the DCA or any other branch of the public bureaucracy, they are nonetheless, recognised as legitimate providers of public services. This legitimisation is enacted bureaucratically through the permits that the DCA gives Tracers and through the fact that their profession and the offices they operate are officially registered and licensed private enterprises. This fact, in addition to the DCA's employees' practice of outsourcing to Tracer offices, discussed earlier, indicates how Tracers combine official and unofficial characteristics as street-level bureaucrats.

The pre-bureaucratic in the role of Tracers is enshrined in how Tracers navigate the public bureaucracy using *wasta* relations with officials as the discussion of the 'indulgency pattern' in the first part showed. The bureaucratic in the role of Tracers is apparent in how official street-level bureaucrats use Tracers to carry out official street-level work in the context of a formal street-level bureaucracy as the outsourcing practice indicated. In this regard, Tracers can be seen to interact with citizens as if they are official staff. Tracers possess detailed knowledge about the public bureaucracy and its regulations hence they can be seen to explain procedures and help citizens fill their forms. In this pattern of practice, Tracers can be seen to work almost as bureaucratic assistants to official staff; yet Tracers are not employed by the DCA or any other branch of the public bureaucracy. Additionally, Tracers appear different than official employees; they do not wear official uniforms or name badges.

The post-bureaucratic manifests in the market or entrepreneurial logic that underpins the Tracer's role; for example, Tracers can be seen as entrepreneurs capitalising on profitable opportunities as they exploit the pre-bureaucratic and bureaucratic aspects of their role to build a brand-name for themselves and ensure a successful and prosperous career as Tracers. This is evident in the fact that many Tracers work as free agents processing cases for different offices and charging them on a case by case basis as discussed in chapter six. The better the Tracers' *wasta* connections and knowledge of bureaucratic regulations the more successful they are and the higher the fees they can charge. Such Tracers are highly sought after by Tracer offices who are keen to promote to their customers that they have 'wasta' connections inside the public bureaucracy and hence can process a wider range of cases in a timely and efficient manner.

The hybridity enshrined in the work of Tracer offices and the role of Tracers is theoretically significant in that it positioned Tracer offices favourably not only to survive but also to play a pivotal role in facilitating the enactment of eGov at the street-level. One of the significant obstacles in the street-level enactment of post-bureaucratic eGov was the presence of large populations that could not use a central feature of eGov; namely the online one-stop portal. Such populations include expatriate workers, who constitute approximately a third of the total population of the country, and large numbers of digitally disadvantaged citizens. Tracer offices' hybridity positioned them favourably to absorb potential resistance from such populations at the street-level by providing access to eGov for such populations and hence lubricating and facilitating this enactment of eGov at the street-level. For expatriate workers, Tracer offices were a favourable choice to access government services because Tracer offices hired front-line employees who spoke the native languages of those workers; a practice that government organisations cannot engage in because official regulations restrict them to hiring only Saudi citizens.

For Tracer offices, being private sector enterprises allowed them to offer special services for digitally disadvantaged populations that official government organisations cannot provide. Such services include, for example, offering to set up citizens' eGov portal accounts, store their login credentials and access the eGov portal on their behalf. An official street-level organisation such as the DCA cannot provide such services due to formal bureaucratic rules prohibiting such practices in addition to constraints on internet access on the DCA's computers as well as pressures on time and resources. Given this, the DCA's street-level bureaucrats outsourced such cases to Tracer offices after the enforcement of eGov.

In conclusion, this discussion of the inherent hybridity in the work of Tracer offices when seen in relation to the ‘mock post-bureaucracy pattern’ of which Tracers are a vital element, indicates how hybridity is inherent and multidimensional. On one dimension, hybridisation of the pre-bureaucratic, bureaucratic, and the post-bureaucratic are evident in the everyday work of the DCA’s official staff. On another dimension, additional layers of hybridisations can be observed in Tracers’ work as discussed earlier. These complex layers of hybridisation represented through the ‘mock post-bureaucracy pattern’ serve to sensitise against deterministic claims whether in relation to transformation plans or in managerialist literature (e.g., Osborne & Gaebler, 1992) that tend to oversimplify the complexity of social life in organisations (see Grint & Woolgar, 1997; Kling, 1991; Knights & McCabe, 2003; Knights & Murray, 1994; McCabe, 2011; McCabe & Russell, 2017).

7.3.3 Tracers as pre-existing hybrids: Insights for the relevant debates

In this sub-section, I will discuss the implications of the arguments on Tracers’ hybridity for the debates in the street-level bureaucracy literature then the bureaucracy versus post-bureaucracy literature. The debate on street-level bureaucracy thus far in all its dimensions revolves around the official street-level bureaucrat working within the boundaries of the formal public bureaucracy. This neglects the role of Tracers as hybrid street-level bureaucrats that constitute an overlooked additional tier of street-level bureaucracy functioning inside and outside the formal bureaucracy.

Fundamental questions such as curtailing discretion and holding street-level bureaucrats accountable that have shaped the literature since its inception 50 years ago (Brodkin, 2012; Lipsky, 1969) ought now to be seen differently and reconsidered. For

instance, if we, hypothetically, find ways to curtail official street-level discretion, then the question that is raised by this thesis is that what about the discretion of the forgotten tier of hybrid street-level bureaucrats in the guise of Tracers. Tracers, as hybrid street-level bureaucrats, control and channel access to the official street-level bureaucracy especially for their “nonvoluntary clients” (Lipsky, 1983, p.54) such as expatriate workers or digitally disadvantaged individuals. This point is all the more critical because Tracers, as hybrid street-level bureaucrats, also exercise discretion and play a pivotal role in the delivery of public services. These findings should push the debate toward reconsidering the feasibility of the idea of curtailing street-level discretion and how relevant it is given the complex and hybrid everyday realities of street-level work. Additionally, these findings should lead to reconsidering the definition of street-level bureaucracy to incorporate in it additional tiers of street-level bureaucracy that thus far have been mostly excluded from this debate.

Another fundamental question that stems from this discussion is why hybrid street-level bureaucrats such as Tracers have escaped the attention of scholars writing in the street-level bureaucracy literature? At the theoretical level, this might be attributed to the lack of studies on street-level bureaucracy in non-Western contexts (see Smart, 2018 for an exception)¹². At the methodological level, the apparent answer is the dearth of ethnographic research in this literature, which favours survey or interview-based methods (see Buffat, 2015). This thesis, therefore, contributes to the street-level bureaucracy literature by pushing the debate into such new directions.

¹² Smart (2018) studied the interplay between government’s attempts to curtail street-level discretion and the local practices of official street-level bureaucrats in Hong Kong.

These insights become all the more important when we consider the fact that actors similar to Tracers exist widely in other parts of the globe such as Spain as well as South and Central America where they might be called ‘dispatchers’ or ‘Gestores’ (see Hobbs & Posting, 2008; Fredriksson, 2014). Such additional tiers of street-level bureaucracy remain understudied and under-theorised, especially in the context of post-bureaucratic reforms. This discussion and the empirical findings in this thesis can be seen to help address this gap in knowledge.

The insights that can be gained from this discussion in relation to the bureaucracy versus post-bureaucracy debate is that it brings to the fore the role of *pre-existing* hybrids such as Tracers in the enactment of post-bureaucracy at the street-level. Thus far I have used the notion of hybridity to frame the work of Tracers in ways that help to explicate the significance of the Tracers’ role in the street-level enactment of eGov. This discussion reminds us of cultural hybrids that emerged to facilitate encounters between different cultures such as in colonial contexts or diaspora communities (Frenkel & Shenhav, 2006; Papastergiadis, 2005; Yousfi, 2014). Individuals, for instance, who were born in mixed-race families or as a result of marriages between colonisers and the colonised constitute such cultural hybrids as they combine different cultures and languages (Bhabha, 1994; Fine & Sirin, 2007). Hence, such “hybrids were conceived of as lubricants in the clashes of culture; they were the negotiators who would secure a future free of xenophobia.” (Papastergiadis, 2015, p. 274). In the enactment of eGov at the street-level and the introduction of bureaucratisation in Saudi long before that, Tracers played the role of such hybrids lubricating street-level enactments be they of bureaucracy or post-bureaucratic eGov.

Additionally, the notion of hybridity in the debate on post-bureaucracy has been mostly used to conceptualise the *outcomes* of post-bureaucratic reforms as the hybridisation of bureaucratic and post-bureaucratic elements. This discussion, nonetheless, directs attention to *pre-existing* hybrids in the guise of Tracers and their role in the enactment of post-bureaucratic reforms instead of reporting on *resultant* hybrids. The findings of this thesis, therefore, add to the debate by helping to move beyond the dominant usage of the notion of hybridity as a phenomenon resulting from a melding of two different types to show that hybridity is pre-existing, inherent, complex and multidimensional.

7.3.4 Epochalism and the 'mock post-bureaucracy pattern.'

In this penultimate section, I will critically reflect on the theorisation of hybridity in the literature on bureaucracy versus post-bureaucracy revealing an ingrained epochalism that might have contributed to the overlook of the continuing relevance of the pre-bureaucratic. One of the distinctive features of the discussion thus far is the finding that it is not only the bureaucratic and the post-bureaucratic but also the pre-bureaucratic that are hybridising and mutually reinforcing instead of displacing each other. This is a significant contribution because the current theorisations of hybridity in the context of post-bureaucracy has largely overlooked the 'pre-bureaucratic'. The question that remains, nonetheless, is that 'why the pre-bureaucratic is overlooked thus far in the debate on bureaucracy versus post-bureaucracy?' Answering this question requires adopting a reflexive stance toward the classifications used in the organisation studies literature on which the definition of hybridity is predicated, how such classifications were constructed, their utility, and how they influence and condition representations of organisational realities (Alvesson & Spicer, 2012; Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2009; Bowker & Star, 2000; Cunliffe, 2003, 2016).

One central theme is identified, namely an older and ingrained epochalism in the field of organisation studies. Epochalism is a logic predicated on assumed discontinuities with the past and a portrayal of the present as witnessing unprecedented circumstances giving rise to exceptional changes that engender the emergence of a new epoch (du Gay, 2003; Savage, 2009). Epochalism hence hinges on:

[T]he deployment of a distinctive narrative conception of temporality which cleanly separates out a past and a present (we used to live in industrial/capitalist/modern society, now we live in post-industrial/disorganized/post-modern/post-Fordist/globalized/detraditionalized/individualized/risk/ network (etc.) society. (Savage, 2009, p. 218).

Discontinuities with the past are, of course, exaggerated as the past informs the present and continuities more so than discontinuities tend to be the norm (du Gay, 2003). The influence of an epochalist narrative manifests in obscuring such continuities and uncritically accepting that which is classified as part of the past is no longer part of the present.

According to Savage (2009), epochalism is ingrained in academic sociological thought especially in the English-speaking world, and I would stress that the field of organisation studies is not an exception.

It is a commonplace that the very self understanding of modernity itself from at least the 18th century onwards depends on the mobilization of idioms of change, dynamism, and transformation [...] The elaboration of the discipline of sociology itself depended on the idea that a new kind of modern social order had emerged which broke from communal bonds [...]. Durkheim, Marx and

especially Weber all discussed the emergence of modern capitalism in terms of the erosion of tradition and habit, and the inherent reflexivity and indeterminacy which thereby comes to govern social relations. (Savage, 2009, p.221).

In the early days of sociology—from which the field of organisation studies emerged—epochalism played a central role as academic writers strove to acquire legitimacy for their work “by claiming to know the ‘new’, so allowing a settlement with other disciplines which knew the ‘traditional’” (Savage, 2009, p.233). In this vein, while du Gay (2003) seems to focus on the effects of epochal narratives in the debate on bureaucracy versus post-bureaucracy; I would argue, building on Savage’s (2009) argument, that epochalism is far more ingrained than what du Gay (2003) seems to argue. For instance, if we follow du Gay’s definition of epochalism as “the use of periodizing scheme in which a logic of dichotomization establishes the available terms of debate in advance” (2003, p.664); then, by that logic and going back to Weber, we can observe a central epochal dichotomy; namely, the pre-bureaucratic-bureaucratic.

While the contemporary bureaucratic/post-bureaucratic epochal dichotomy has received its fair share of criticism (du Gay 2003 is an example of one), it is the earlier pre-bureaucratic-bureaucratic dichotomy that has largely been forgotten. Hence its effects had become ingrained; especially in the literature on bureaucracy versus post-bureaucracy. The assumption that an epochal shift has taken place from a pre-bureaucratic epoch to a bureaucratic one is rarely challenged in this literature. The discussion of the ‘mock post-bureaucracy’ pattern and hybridity thus far contributes to this debate by challenging the bureaucratic/post-bureaucratic epochal dichotomy through reviving and bringing to the fore the earlier pre-bureaucratic-bureaucratic debate that Weber’s work was focused on. The pre-bureaucratic, drawing on the

findings of this thesis and its literature review, seem to have never been overcome; hence, the arrival of bureaucracy and its dominance, not only post-bureaucracy, ought to be questioned.

In this regard, these findings show that the debate on bureaucracy versus post-bureaucracy is predicated on an older and ingrained epochalism, which continues to be overlooked. Even writers such as du Gay (2003) who criticised the epochalism in this debate, seem to fall short of acknowledging the much older and ingrained epochalism in organisation studies that seems to take the arrival of a bureaucratic era for granted. Indeed, du Gay (2003) seems to unintentionally and implicitly uphold such epochalism by defending the epochalist argument that bureaucracy is an organisational form of modernity and hence constitutes a break from what is pre-modern/pre-bureaucratic, which he viewed unfavourably (see also Kallinikos, 2004). The fact that bureaucracy is associated with modernity does not necessitate that the pre-bureaucratic becomes an element of the past. As Weber (1978) argued, the pre-bureaucratic remains albeit might sometimes be suppressed by the pressure of bureaucratisation, which, as Gouldner (1954) showed, does not always succeed in suppressing the pre-bureaucratic.

The discussion thus far on hybridity and ‘mock post-bureaucracy’ can be seen to push the debate to challenge such epochalism and reconsider the ongoing relevance of the pre-bureaucratic. In doing so, the thesis can be seen to help extend the critique of epochalism in this debate beyond its current focus on the dichotomy of bureaucracy versus post-bureaucracy. This critique of epochalism triggers a questioning of the utility of the classifications we use in our descriptions of organisations. If the pre-bureaucratic is still relevant despite the bureaucratic, and the bureaucratic is still relevant despite the post-bureaucratic; then what utility do these classifications provide? A typical answer

is that they help us classify, understand, and make sense; they are ideal types that function as sensemaking devices (Weick, 1995). Nonetheless, this comes at the expense of obscuring the inherently hybrid, complex, ebb and flow of everyday work. Everyday work stops being hybrid as we subject it to our classification practices.

Lastly, while, it can be argued based on the findings of this thesis that the relevance of the pre-bureaucratic might be confined to non-Western cultural contexts where such pre-bureaucratic practices proliferate; this argument, nonetheless, is short-sighted. The fact that the pre-bureaucratic is found in a non-Western context does not necessarily overrule the possibility that there could be different expressions of the pre-bureaucratic in developed Western contexts. Confining the pre-bureaucratic to non-Western contexts implicitly reasserts the epochalist logic criticised earlier. Moreover, as the literature review chapter highlighted, the pre-bureaucratic is indeed present in the Western context. Consider, for instance, studies such as Casey's (2004) "Bureaucracy Re-Enchanted" where she stated that "[e]mployees spiritually questioning the modus operandi of contemporary production organizations may use their dissident spiritualizing practices and 'charisma' toward new demand-setting in organizational life." (2004, p.77). In this vein, the pre-bureaucratic manifests in how workers draw on spiritual practices, instead of the formal bureaucratic rationality, to guide their performances of everyday work. Additionally, the organisation studies literature includes studies that report on pre-bureaucratic practices such as favouritism in Western organisations (see for example Castilla & Rissing, 2019; Lachmann, 2011). Moreover, studies on 'organisational misbehaviour' (Ackroyd & Thompson, 1999; Knights & McCabe, 2000a) are widespread and can also be seen as manifestations of the pre-bureaucratic in modern Western organisations. This is in addition to the street-level

bureaucracy literature, which emerged from Western contexts and it is a salient expression of the pre-bureaucratic.

Despite the continuing relevance of the pre-bureaucratic in Western organisations, it remains largely absent from theorisations and empirical investigations of post-bureaucracy in those settings. This thesis, by focusing on a non-Western cultural context and highlighting the significance of the pre-bureaucratic, can be seen to help inform future studies on post-bureaucracy even in Western contexts. This is accomplished through extending the critique of epochalism in the literature beyond its current state thus calling for greater reflexivity and rethinking of the debate to reconsider the continuing relevance of the pre-bureaucratic.

7.4 Summary

The research questions of the thesis focused on exploring the enactment of eGov at the street-level with the aim of drawing insights to advance the different debates on bureaucracy versus post-bureaucracy and street-level bureaucracy. This chapter, drawing on the findings reported in the previous two chapters, addressed these questions through three interrelated broad lines of arguments presented in the three main sections of this chapter. The first line of argument showed, drawing on Strauss's (1978) notion of the negotiated order, that everyday street-level work is imbued with cultural relations such as the practice of 'wasta' indicating the continuing relevance of the 'pre-bureaucratic' in the guise of what Gouldner described as the 'indulgency pattern'. Building on this argument, the second section discussed the enactment of eGov at the street-level highlighting how it can be best seen as following a 'mock post-bureaucracy pattern'. The 'mock post-bureaucracy pattern' highlights how pre-bureaucratic cultural

practices suffuse the enactment of post-bureaucratic eGov at the street-level. Relevant insights and contributions to the literature were discussed in each of the sections.

The third section built on the themes presented in the previous two sections to discuss the pivotal role of Tracers as 'hybrid street-level bureaucrats' in facilitating the enactment of eGov at the street-level. The discussion of Tracers is also used to demonstrate the inherent hybridity in everyday street-level work. This discussion of hybridity was followed by a discussion of a salient, yet overlooked, epochalism in the literature on bureaucracy versus post-bureaucracy that seems to have resulted in the overlooking of the pre-bureaucracy-bureaucracy epochal dichotomy in favour of attending to and challenging the bureaucracy-post-bureaucracy epochal dichotomy. Several theoretical contributions were drawn out from this discussion throughout the chapter. These contributions will be further explicated and delineated in the following conclusion chapter along with the empirical and methodological contributions of the thesis.

8 Conclusion

In this concluding chapter, I will begin first, by providing a summary of the key arguments discussed in each chapter. Then, I will discuss the key theoretical, empirical and methodological contributions of the thesis and I will conclude the chapter with a discussion of the limitations and future research ideas stemming from the findings of the thesis.

8.1 Summary of the thesis

The research questions of the thesis coalesced around exploring the enactment of post-bureaucratic reform under the label of eGov at the Street-level in a Middle Eastern cultural context; specifically, Saudi Arabia. This is coupled with the aim of advancing the debate on bureaucracy versus post-bureaucracy as well as the debate on street-level bureaucracy. The distinctiveness of the Middle Eastern cultural context stemmed from the salience of pre-bureaucratic practices such as the cultural practice of ‘wasta’, which imbued everyday work in this setting, as well as the widespread use of Tracers who are best seen as a structural manifestation of wasta. Wasta and the use of Tracers are characteristics of street-level bureaucracy in a Middle Eastern context as they are enacted during the delivery of public services. Hence, the focus was drawn around the nexus of post-bureaucracy and street-level bureaucracy, where pre-bureaucratic practices proliferate.

With this focus, the literature review chapter, drawing on the work of Weber (1978), highlighted how the pre-bureaucratic was mostly overlooked in the debate on

bureaucracy versus post-bureaucracy despite its continuing relevance even in Western organisational settings. Classic studies such as Gouldner (1954) and Strauss et al., (1963) were drawn on to indicate the significance of cultural relations in undermining bureaucratic rationalities and contributing to the endurance of the pre-bureaucratic. To address this gap in the literature, the thesis drew on a framework that comprised of first, focusing on the street-level in studying the enactment of eGov. Second, drawing on Weber's work to define the pre-bureaucratic. Third, using Gouldner's classifications of pre-bureaucratic patterns of work such as the 'indulgency pattern' and 'mock bureaucracy'. Fourth, drawing on Strauss's (1978) notion of the 'negotiated order' to add theoretical depth and understanding of how such pre-bureaucratic patterns were enacted in practice and maintained despite formalisation and bureaucratic regulations.

Chapter three discussed the interpretive ethnographic approach adopted for this inquiry. Ethnography was explained as a valuable approach to elucidate the pre-bureaucratic in everyday organisational life. This is because an ethnographic sensibility goes beyond the impressions of formality to explore the "often seething, ebb and flow of human interaction, bargaining, and adjustment" (Strauss, 1964, p. 15).

In this spirit, ethnographic shadowing emerged as a central data collection method that greatly helped in terms of collecting "naturally occurring data" (Silverman, 2006, p. 379). The significance of shadowing stemmed from observing the everyday interactions and practices of street-level bureaucrats, Tracers, and citizens as they happened thus facilitating recording rich field notes. The chapter also described the Department of Citizens' Affairs (DCA), the focal empirical site. In addition to the DCA, fieldwork was also conducted at nine Tracer offices. The approach to data analysis was

also delineated in chapter three. The chapter also offered a methodological contribution, which I will discuss later in this chapter.

Chapter four presented the cultural context of the setting as well as the rationalities underpinning eGov reform. The key policies and how eGov was introduced and enacted at the policy-making level was presented to help the reader interpret and better understand the ethnographic material presented in chapters five and six. Chapter five sought to explore the street-level enactment of eGov at the DCA. Hence, drawing on ethnographic findings, the chapter described the DCA's core service, which is the provision of different types of public documents. It then juxtaposed the older document ordering service model, which relied on paper-based procedures, and the redesigned model under the eGov reform. The chapter then highlighted how the enactment of the redesigned model was negotiated at the DCA resulting in a breed of new bureaucratic cases called the 'eGov notes cases', which were legitimised by a security rationality at the DCA. A formal policy of segregating the paper-based and the electronic-based channels that stemmed from this enactment of eGov was seen to maintain the bureaucratic—and consequently the pre-bureaucratic—at the DCA despite and along with the post-bureaucratic.

The chapter also sought to explore how the pre-bureaucratic cultural practice of *wasta* is enacted at the street-level and how it endures through eGov. It was highlighted through ethnographic vignettes how citizens thought that *wasta* is faster and cheaper than eGov; hence they engaged in *wasta* to avoid eGov, which was supposed to eliminate *wasta*. The penultimate section of the chapter was dedicated to revealing ethnographic findings on how *wasta* is enacted in a bureaucratic setting; specifically, how the tensions between the formal policy and the rule-breaking enshrined in the

practice of wasta were handled through a negotiated order in the guise of the ‘note system’. The note system was a local negotiated “authorized-but-not-quite-official system” (Goffman, 1961, p.175). The note system authorised rule breaking necessary to engage in wasta while allowing for holding employees accountable in case of legal issues; it is a typical illustration of the notion of the negotiated order (Strauss, 1978). The note system also illustrated how the pre-bureaucratic was enacted through bureaucratic means thus indicating how the pre-bureaucratic and the bureaucratic melded together in this street-level bureaucracy.

Chapter six explored the role of Tracers at the street-level, the relations between Tracers and official street-level bureaucrats, and how Tracers endured through eGov. The chapter hence was dedicated to extending an empirical contribution through providing a ‘thick description’ (Geertz, 1973) of the work of Tracers, whom I sought to conceptualise as ‘hybrid street-level bureaucrats’ entirely unexplored either in the street-level bureaucracy literature or in the organisation studies literature. The chapter highlighted the vital role of Tracers in the provision of public services and how official street-level bureaucrats relied on them to ameliorate street-level work conditions.

While, eGov was poised to eradicate or dis-intermediate Tracers through digitisation, I highlighted that this did not materialise. To the contrary, Tracers endured through eGov, not only surviving but also thriving as they played a vital role in facilitating and making eGov work at the street-level. Central to the role of Tracers in the street-level enactment of eGov was an unofficial practice of outsourcing cases to Tracers; such unofficial practice is an instance of a negotiated order among official street-level bureaucrats. Official street-level bureaucrats outsourced to Tracers before eGov to reduce their workload and continued to do so after eGov referring citizens who

sought to avoid eGov as well as those who were not able to use technology effectively. These referrals constituted a steady revenue stream for Tracers. Additionally, I also sought to highlight a distinctive pre-bureaucratic ‘indulgency pattern’ (Gouldner, 1954) characterising interactions between Tracers and official street-level bureaucrats. This indulgency pattern was a central underpinning of the practice of outsourcing to Tracers.

In the discussion chapter, drawing on Strauss’s (1978) negotiated order construct as well as the work of Gouldner (1954), I sought to highlight how the debate on bureaucracy versus post-bureaucracy can be advanced through bringing the pre-bureaucratic back in (Weber, 1978). I also discussed how the street-level bureaucracy literature could benefit from considering the role of Tracers. The central theme in this discussion is the assertion that eGov is enacted at the street-level through a negotiated order that indicated a melding of pre-bureaucratic, bureaucratic, as well as post-bureaucratic rationalities and practices.

In this second part of the discussion chapter, I proposed, drawing on Gouldner (1954), that this enactment of eGov is best understood as following a ‘mock *post-bureaucracy*’ pattern given how the intentions of eGov are undermined through the practice of *wasta* and the use of Tracers. Additionally, the chapter also highlighted the inherent hybridity enshrined in the organisational form of Tracer offices as well as the practice of Tracers thus making a case for understanding Tracers as hybrid street-level bureaucrats. These ideas come in response the second research question regarding drawing insights to advance the debate on bureaucracy versus post-bureaucracy as well as street-level bureaucracy. In what follows I will summarise the contributions to knowledge derived from this thesis.

8.2 Contributions of the thesis

Based on these findings, the thesis contributes, first, to the debate on the shift from bureaucracy to post-bureaucracy. Second, the thesis contributes to the debates on street-level bureaucracy and eGov. The thesis also extends an empirical contribution, as well as, a methodological contribution. I will discuss these contributions, respectively in what follows.

8.2.1 Contributions to the debate on bureaucracy versus post-bureaucracy

The thesis contributes to the debate on bureaucracy versus post-bureaucracy in five interrelated ways. First, by demonstrating the continuing relevance of the pre-bureaucratic. This contribution is predicated on the neglect of the pre-bureaucratic in this debate. The continuing relevance of the pre-bureaucratic was highlighted empirically and conceptualised in the discussion chapter in the guise of the ‘mock post-bureaucracy’ pattern. The pre-bureaucratic was highlighted specifically in terms of how the cultural practice of *wasta* and the role of Tracers that underpin this mock post-bureaucracy pattern undermined the intentions of post-bureaucracy in the guise of eGov as well as became an integral aspect of its enactment.

Second, the thesis contributes to the debate by showing the significance of the local cultural context in the enactment of post-bureaucratic reforms. The literature on bureaucracy versus post-bureaucracy has thus far focused on the Global North and Western contexts overlooking other contexts; therefore, it is limited in this regard. The thesis enriches the debate and extends its relevance beyond the Global North by studying the enactment of a post-bureaucratic reform in a Middle Eastern cultural context. The findings push the debate to consider how, for instance, the cultural values of local, especially non-western, contexts might influence how post-bureaucracy is

adopted and enacted and the patterns that its enactment follows. Moreover, by discussing cultural practices such as *wasta* and the use of Tracers, the thesis draws attention to other cultural contexts beyond the Middle East such as China, South America or Africa that share similar cultural practices (e.g., *guanxi* in China or *jeitinho* in Brazil) and are increasingly adopting post-bureaucratic reforms (Christensen et al., 2012). Additionally, by focusing on the Middle Eastern cultural context and revealing the pre-bureaucratic, the thesis also helps to trigger debates on the continuing relevance of the pre-bureaucratic even in Global North contexts, where the pre-bureaucratic continues to be overlooked. This advancement of understanding post-bureaucratic reforms in the Global North through examining them in the Global South echoes Clegg's assertion that "consideration of something from an unfamiliar culture can often make apparent what is opaque, even when it is under our noses." (1990, p.19).

Third, the thesis contributes to this debate by highlighting the significance of the role of Tracers, as unofficial bureaucrats working outside the boundaries of the formal bureaucracy, yet fundamental to how it functions. The debate on bureaucracy versus post-bureaucracy has been focused thus far on the formal organisation and has failed to incorporate what is outside of it such as Tracers. Tracers—even though they are not part of the formal bureaucracy—are vital to the enactment of post-bureaucratic eGov in this context. They facilitate its enactment at the street-level by enabling digitally disadvantaged populations to gain access to electronic services that, otherwise, might thwart the success of eGov; this was accomplished through a negotiated order through which official employees outsourced such cases to Tracers. At the same time, Tracers and the unofficial practice of outsourcing can be seen to also undermine the intentions of the eGov reform program by maintaining the pre-bureaucratic, as well as, the bureaucratic enshrined in the work of Tracers.

These rich dynamics and their effects on eGov could have been omitted by a limited focus on the formal organisation. This contribution of the thesis points to the importance of attending to what Star (1999) called an ‘ethnography of infrastructure’. Leigh Star’s work directs researchers to ethnographically represent the ‘invisible’ and hidden infrastructural elements that go unnoticed but without which organisations, and specifically a technological change such as eGov, cannot function. This thesis shows the significance of such sensitivity to infrastructure by moving beyond the boundary of the formal organisation to reveal the vital role of Tracers (e.g., in providing access to eGov for digitally disadvantaged clients). Tracers are a fundamental element of the ‘street-level’ infrastructure that helps citizens and businesses to operate bureaucracy as well as allows for the enactment of post-bureaucracy in the guise of eGov in this context. Omitting infrastructure, specifically in the guise of the Tracer system, by narrowly focusing on the formal organisation impedes our understanding of the interplay between technology and organising in the process of organisational change (Star & Ruhleder, 1996).

Fourth, the notion of the ‘mock post-bureaucracy’ pattern contributes to debates on the role of technology in post-bureaucratic reforms. Technology has been presented in a deterministic way, as a major driver and enabler of post-bureaucratic reforms (see Bannister & Connolly, 2012; Heydebrand, 1989; Meijer, 2008; Silcock, 2001). Drawing on Strauss’s (1978) notion of the negotiated order however, the thesis challenges such determinism. Specifically, the thesis contributed by showing that the enactment of technology in the course of eGov reforms is negotiated and incorporated into negotiated orders that undermine its transformational potential.

The negotiated order through which eGov is enacted at the street-level in this context draws attention to the tension between ‘plans’ and ‘situated actions’ explored in the work of Suchman (1987; 2007). Suchman pointed to the complex local agencies, interpretations, and interactions between users and technological artefacts. At Suchman’s level of analysis, the intentions of users of technology and designers become imbricated and interwoven together in a flow of situated actions, in many ways, yielding what Strauss termed a ‘negotiated order’ through which technological change is enacted. The thesis draws attention to such situated actions and negotiated orders through discussing, for example, the ‘note system’ through which street-level bureaucrats give exceptions to digitally disadvantage citizens sparing them the difficulty of using technology, as well as, through the practice of outsourcing such cases to Tracers to enact the eGov system for such citizens. Another example relates to the ‘security rationality’ that diverted the formal plan of eGov transformation at the DCA to account for the security concerns of the DCA’s management (see the discussion on ‘eGov notes cases’ in chapter five).

Such situated actions and negotiated orders highlight the indeterminate and paradoxical outcomes of technological change (see Suchman, 1987;2007). This is a timely contribution as it counterweights the power ascribed to technological solutions, such as digitisation, by pointing toward the complexity of situated actions as well as the ‘infrastructure’ (Star, 1999) through which technology is enacted.

Lastly, these contributions and insights can help to trigger a rethinking of the classifications we use to describe organisations, their utility, their epochal character, and how they have come to shape how we think and write about organisations. The thesis has contributed to the debate on bureaucracy versus post-bureaucracy through

recovering the pre-bureaucratic. Nonetheless, this contribution has a more fundamental significance to the literature on Management and Organisation Studies than simply pointing to an overlooked element in the debate. It helps to challenge the epochalism that underpins the classifications of bureaucracy and post-bureaucracy. Epochalism, as Savage (2009) stressed, is predicated on a logic of discontinuity from the past and progress into the future. Recovering and talking about the continuing relevance of the pre-bureaucratic helps us to challenge epochalism by allowing us to pause, ponder, and ask the question: *'have we ever been bureaucratic, let alone, 'post-bureaucratic'?*

This question echoes Bruno Latour's (1993) provocative title 'We Have Never Been Modern'. In this book, Latour succinctly argued that our presumed 'modernity' or in other words, 'bureaucracy' is an outcome of our classification systems (Bowker & Star, 2000) or what Law (1994) called 'modes of ordering'. These classification systems impose a fictional order on disorder (or a different order), thus obscuring the inherent hybridity of everyday organisational lives. Hence, we have never been modern/bureaucratic. The thesis exemplifies such assertion through stressing the continuing relevance of the past in the guise of the pre-bureaucratic. The contribution of this thesis, drawing on the work of Geoffrey Bowker and Susan Leigh Star (2000) on classification systems, is to reveal "what is left in the dark by our [current] classification" (ibid., p.321), namely the 'pre-bureaucratic' and it has challenged the epochalist character enshrined in such classifications. This is, of course, not a call to abandon classifications, but to question them, engage with them reflexively, and seek more penetrating insights that classifications often preclude.

8.2.2 Contributions to the street-level bureaucracy literature

The thesis contributes to the street-level bureaucracy literature in four ways. First, it highlights how exercises of discretion at the street-level are underpinned by cultural relations, especially non-western, instead of entirely functional aims. The predominant view in the literature on street-level bureaucracy is that street-level bureaucrats exercise discretion to reduce pressures stemming from high workload (see Barnes & Henly, 2018) or that they exercise discretion to further their interests such as engaging in corrupt activities (Lipsky, 1983, 2010; Smart, 2018). By discussing the cultural practice of *wasta*, the thesis shows that the exercises of discretion at the street-level can be based on and legitimised by cultural rationalities, social customs and local values. While studies such as (Fineman, 1998; Maynard-Moody & Musheno, 2000) are exceptions in that they moved beyond the dominant view in the literature by highlighting the role of emotions in underpinning exercises of discretion; they nonetheless focused on Western organisations located in the UK and the US and did not attend to broader cultural relations. The thesis's contribution thus stems from bringing to the fore how local cultural relations, specifically in non-Western contexts, suffuse exercises of street-level discretion; hence this thesis can be seen to help push the debate into such new direction.

Second, the thesis draws on the notion of the negotiated order to elucidate how exercises of discretion, especially involving rule-breaking, are enacted in practice and are unofficially sanctioned. The notion of discretion is a central theme in the street-level bureaucracy literature; however, how discretion is legitimised and enacted in practice is under-theorised in the literature. The discussion of the note system (described in chapter five) as a negotiated order through which exercises of discretion are enacted and legitimised in practice; adds vital theoretical insights into this process.

Third, the thesis contributes to the debate on the role of eGov reforms, specifically digitisation, in curtailing street-level discretion (Buffat, 2015; Busch & Henriksen, 2018). The thesis showed how eGov reforms were enacted at the street-level through a negotiated order that allowed street-level bureaucrats to circumvent the eGov portal through writing exception notes thereby continuing to exercise discretion. This is a novel contribution because the debate thus far has focused on how digitisation either curtails discretion (Bovens & Zouridis, 2002; Reddick, 2005); or creates more opportunities and new ways for street-level bureaucrats to exercise discretion (Jorna & Wagenaar, 2007; Schuppan, 2015). It has not considered how street-level bureaucrats can sidestep digital solutions that were supposed to curtail their discretion thus maintaining the older status quo.

Fourth, the most significant contribution to the literature on street-level bureaucracy stems from the discussion of Tracers. Tracers, as highlighted in chapter six, are a distinctive tier of street-level bureaucrats constituting an additional layer of street-level bureaucracy beside the formal street-level bureaucracy. Tracers are central actors in the provision of public services at the street-level who exercise discretion and channel access to the formal street-level bureaucracy; hence they fit the description of street-level bureaucrats. Tracers, however, are absent in the literature on street-level bureaucracy. The literature on street-level bureaucracy is limited by its narrow focus on the formal bureaucracy and official street-level bureaucrats, and hence it has overlooked the role of Tracers as 'hybrid' street-level bureaucrats constituting an additional layer of street-level bureaucracy. The significance of this contribution stems from the wider implications it has for the central questions in this literature. All the questions that the literature has focused on are geared toward the formal street-level bureaucracy. These questions, in light of this contribution, need to be reconsidered to incorporate what is

outside the formal bureaucracy, namely unofficial street-level bureaucrats such as Tracers and similar actors that exist widely throughout the Global South such as ‘Gestores’, ‘Dispatchers’, or ‘coyotes’ (see Fredriksson, 2009; Hobbs & Postings, 2008; Spener, 2009).

8.2.3 Bridging the gap between the street-level bureaucracy and bureaucracy versus post-bureaucracy debates

The thesis contributes to two different, yet interrelated fields of inquiry, namely organisation studies from which the debate on bureaucracy versus post-bureaucracy emerged and the street-level bureaucracy literature, which evolved separately within studies of political science and public administration. In doing so, the thesis is a step toward bridging the gap between these two separate debates. Both debates are concerned with the changing nature of organisations; yet the ‘modern’ (Latour, 1993) academic structure of departmentalising and classifying academic research might have contributed to widening the gap between these two debates. This need not be the case for as the thesis has shown, there is great overlap between these two debates. For instance, the issues that the street-level bureaucracy literature is concerned with such as how street-level discretion leads to favouritism and unequal distribution of resources are indicative of the pre-bureaucratic that the institution of bureaucracy sought to eradicate as ascertained in the field of organisation studies. Moreover, the diversity of perspectives in organisation studies, specifically, the notion of organisational hybridity, are largely missing in the street-level bureaucracy literature and hence they advance this debate further. The discussion in the thesis, specifically the notion of Tracers as ‘hybrid street-level bureaucrats’, is an example of how the gap between these two debates can be bridged.

8.2.4 Empirical contribution

In addition to these theoretical contributions, the thesis also extends an empirical contribution. The thesis's empirical contribution stems from the detailed account of the work of Tracers, who thus far have not been studied empirically. Tracers exist throughout the Middle East, and as highlighted in chapter six, they play a pivotal role as street-level bureaucrats in the provision of public services in this cultural context. The fact that they have never been discussed before indicates a gap in knowledge specifically in studies of street-level bureaucracy as well as the debate on bureaucracy versus post-bureaucracy. Indeed, as I highlighted earlier in relation to the street-level bureaucracy literature, by bringing Tracers into the debate, fundamental questions in that literature must be reconsidered. This empirical contribution is significant in that it has the potential to trigger similar fundamental rethinking in other relevant debates. Additionally, this empirical contribution is vital because actors similar to Tracers exist widely throughout the Global South (e.g., Brazil, Latin America, Africa) and even European countries such as Spain where they are called 'Gesotres' (Hobbs & Postings, 2008), but thus far have not been studied in depth in the relevant scholarly literature.

8.2.5 Methodological contribution

The thesis also provides a contribution to the literature on research methods through presenting a "confessional tale" (Van Maanen, 2011b, p. 73) of my experience engaging in *wasta* during the fieldwork. It contributes to the literature on qualitative fieldwork through highlighting how *wasta* works during the fieldwork process thus helping future researchers navigate the cultural as well as the ethical complexities of fieldwork in the Middle East. Literature on qualitative fieldwork in the Middle East is scarce; hence little is known about how cultural relations suffuse access negotiations and interactions between researchers and participants.

While the literature on research methods discusses informal relations and research access strategies, the treatment of such issues is nonetheless limited by a narrow focus on Western cultural settings. Additionally, what is meant by informal relations during the process of fieldwork is rarely unpacked and illustrated in practice; especially in non-Western and underrepresented cultural contexts such as the Middle East. This gap is addressed through the discussion of the different ways in which *wasta* was exercised during the fieldwork and the ethical concerns that arose and how they were dealt with. The significance and relevance of this contribution to the literature on methods extends even beyond Middle Eastern contexts to other non-Western contexts where practices similar to *wasta* exist. Examples of such practices include *Guanxi* in China (Xin & Pearce, 1996) as well as *Jeitinho* in Brazil (Duarte, 2006) to name but a few. The role of such cultural practices during qualitative fieldwork is rarely discussed in the literature on research methods. Given this, the methodological contribution of this thesis can also be seen to help encourage reflexivity, specifically in relation to how researchers navigate complex cultural relations in different and less explored contexts.

8.3 Limitations and Future Research

In this section, I will conclude the thesis by discussing its limitations and chart avenues for future research based on its findings. The thesis's limitations manifest in four main ways. First, a limitation of the thesis stems from its focus on the street-level. While the street-level was identified as a less explored context in terms of studying the enactment of eGov, it nonetheless does not tell the whole story. Arguably, there are wider and interesting dynamics and relations to be explored and studied at other levels. For example, the thesis has focused on the notion of the negotiated order highlighting how the enactment of eGov was negotiated at the DCA, which is a street-level

bureaucracy. Given this, the thesis is limited in that it has not extensively explored the processes of negotiations relating to the adoption of eGov at other levels such as the executive levels of government.

Negotiations are a central element of social life; especially in relation to influential and far-reaching projects of reform such as eGov. In view of this, future research can explore the negotiations through which a project such as eGov is introduced and adopted at different levels; especially the executive level. Moreover, future research can be conducted to chart the trajectory of such negotiations, their antecedents and outcomes. Exploring these questions could advance debates on the adoption and enactments of post-bureaucratic reforms by revealing the micro-processes through which post-bureaucratic innovations such as eGov are altered, adjusted, and tweaked at different levels and for different reasons leading to different and, at times, unexpected enactments. Moreover, exploring eGov beyond the street-level could help to reveal the role of global actors such as international management consultancies or actors such as the United Nations (UN) and their role in the construction, dissemination, adoption, and enactment of such reforms at the different levels.

Second, the thesis is limited by its narrow focus on eGov as a form of post-bureaucratic reform. While eGov was the main variant of the post-bureaucracy discourse during the writing of this thesis in the Saudi public sector context, different forms of post-bureaucracy are being introduced in Saudi that are worth investigating. For example, privatisation of some branches of the public bureaucracy that could instigate new waves of hybridisations of public and private rationalities has been reported recently to gain momentum in Saudi Arabia (Kerr, 2018). Given this, future

research could explore how post-bureaucratic forms other than eGov are enacted in the Saudi context.

Third, the thesis is limited by the scope of the fieldwork and the time spent in the field. While the fieldwork was carried out in three phases over one year, it remains limited as new policies, changes and new technologies continue to be introduced. Moreover, given the limited scope of a PhD project, the research is limited by its focus on only one branch of the public bureaucracy. Future longitudinal and multi-sited research projects can be conducted to explore the enactment of post-bureaucratic reforms at different branches, in different locations, and possibly at different organisational levels to enhance understanding of organisational transformations more broadly.

Moreover, a limitation of the thesis also stems from how the local cultural relations impeded the research including female participants. As discussed in chapter three, it is considered inappropriate for a male researcher to interview female participants in private in this cultural context. While this issue could not have been remedied given the limited funding and duration of a PhD project; it certainly can be remedied in future research with the help of female co-researchers or through employing female research assistants who can conduct interviews and observations among female participants.

Lastly, while the thesis has presented significant contributions in relation to how cultural relations suffuse the enactment of post-bureaucratic reforms; it remains limited in that it has focused only on the Middle Eastern cultural context. Given this, findings are not generalisable to other contexts. Nevertheless, as I discussed earlier, other cultural contexts such as China or South America present opportunities to explore

interesting cultural relations. Practices such as Guanxi in China are similar to wasta; however, they are underpinned by different cultural relations stemming from the uniqueness of the cultural context. Additionally, practices such as Jeitinho in Brazil (see Duarte, 2006) are distinctive manifestations of the pre-bureaucratic in that they are underpinned by desires to circumvent formal policies.

Given this, future research could explore the enactment of post-bureaucratic reforms in such contexts paying attention to how local cultural relations and practices mediate such enactments. The findings in this thesis in terms of showing the continuing relevance of the pre-bureaucratic can help to inform such future research. It is worthwhile exploring for instance, how the ‘pre-bureaucratic’ endures (or not) in other cultural contexts despite the global wave of post-bureaucracy (Christensen et al., 2012) and its wide deployment and propagation by multinational management consultancies (O’Mahoney & Sturdy, 2015; Sturdy, 2004; Sturdy & O’Mahoney, 2018).

9 References

- 6, P. (2004). Joined-Up Government in the Western World in Comparative Perspective: A Preliminary Literature Review and Exploration. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory: J-PART*, 14(1), 103–138.
- Abrahamson, E. (1991). Managerial Fads and Fashions: The Diffusion and Rejection of Innovations. *The Academy of Management Review*, 16(3), 586–612.
- Abrahamson, E. (1996). Management Fashion. *The Academy of Management Review*, 21(1), 254–285.
- Abrahamson, E., & Fairchild, G. (1999). Management Fashion: Lifecycles, Triggers, and Collective Learning Processes. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 44(4), 708–740.
- Abudawood. (2018). Wasta and the National Transformation Program. *Almadina*. Retrieved from <https://www.al-madina.com/article/573651>
- Abu-Lughod, L. (1999). *Veiled Sentiments: Honor and Poetry in a Bedouin Society*. University of California Press.
- Access America: Electronic Government. (2001). Retrieved 24 July 2016, from <http://govinfo.library.unt.edu/npr/initiati/it/index.html>
- Ackroyd, S., & Thompson, P. (1999). *Organizational Misbehaviour*. SAGE.
- Adcroft, A., & Willis, R. (2005). The (un)intended outcome of public sector performance measurement. *International Journal of Public Sector Management*, 18(5), 386–400.

- Adler, P. S. (2009). *The Oxford Handbook of Sociology and Organization Studies: Classical Foundations*. Oxford University Press.
- Alani, D. (2014). *Transition to Knowledge Society in Saudi Arabia*. Retrieved from Ministry of Economic Planning, King Abdallah City for Science and Technology website:
http://publications.kacst.edu.sa/SystemFiles/Books_Pdf/PDF_635518951661650873.pdf
- Al-Dakheel, A. M. (2017). *Al-Eqtsad AlSaudi Qabel wa Ba'aed 2030 (The Saudi economy before and after 2030)*. Dar al Saqi.
- Aldossari, M., & Robertson, M. (2016). The role of wasta in repatriates' perceptions of a breach to the psychological contract: A Saudi Arabian case study. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 27(16), 1854-1873.
- Al-Farsy, F. (1980). King Faisal and the First Five Year Development Plan. In *King Faisal and the Modernisation of Saudi Arabia* (pp. 58–74). Croom Helm Ltd.
- Al-Farsy, F. (1990). *Modernity and Tradition: The Saudi Equation* (1 edition). London; New York, NY, USA: Routledge.
- Al-Filali, I. Y. (2006). *EGovernment* (No. 9; pp. 1–112). Retrieved from King Abdulaziz University website:
https://www.kau.edu.sa/Files/862/Files/147636_%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%B5%D8%AF%D8%A7%D8%B1%209%20%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AD%D9%83%D9%88%D9%85%D8%A9%20%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%83%D8%AA%D8%B1%D9%88%D9%86%D9%8A%D8%A9.pdf
- Al-Filali, I. Y., & Gallarotti, G. M. (2012). Smart Development Saudi Arabia's Quest for a Knowledge Economy. *International Studies*, 49(1–2), 47–76.

- Alghamdi, F. (2011, 15). The eGovernment: A farwell to wasta. *Alriyadh*. Retrieved from <http://www.alriyadh.com/633702>
- Algumzi, A. A. (2017). *The Impact of Islamic Culture on Business Ethics: Saudi Arabia and the Practice of Wasta* (Unpublished dissertation, Lancaster University).
- Alharbi, S. H. (2013). *Employees' perceptions of fairness in practice of performance appraisal* (Unpublished dissertation, University of Hull).
- Al-Hegelan, A., & Palmer, M. (1985). Bureaucracy and Development in Saudi Arabia. *Middle East Journal*, 39(1), 48–68.
- Ali, R. (2015). Rethinking representation: Negotiating positionality, power and space in the field. *Gender, Place & Culture*, 22(6), 783–800.
- Al-Jassem, D. (2010, July 17). E-governance may render muaqibs redundant. *Arab News*. Retrieved from <http://www.arabnews.com/node/350476>
- Al-Kibsi, G., Khan, J., Mischke, J., Hassan, N., Woetzel, J., & Isherwood, T. (2015). *SAUDI ARABIA BEYOND OIL: THE INVESTMENT AND PRODUCTIVITY TRANSFORMATION*. Retrieved from McKinsey Global Institute-McKinsey and Company website:
https://www.mckinsey.com/~/media/McKinsey/Global%20Themes/Employment%20and%20Growth/Moving%20Saudi%20Arabias%20economy%20beyond%20oil/MGI%20Saudi%20Arabia_Full%20report_December%202015.ashx
- Alnimer, M. (2012). EGovernment eliminates wasta. *Alriyadh*. Retrieved from <http://www.alriyadh.com/777845>
- Al-Ramahi, A. (2008). Wasta in Jordan: A Distinct Feature of (And Benefit for) Middle Eastern Society. *Arab Law Quarterly*, 22(1), 35–62.

- Al-Sadhan, A. (1980). The Modernisation of the Saudi Bureaucracy. In *King Faisal and the Modernisation of Saudi Arabia* (pp. 75–88). Croom Helm Ltd.
- Al-Said, A. (2006). The transition from a tribal society to a nation-state. In W. Chai (Ed.), *Saudi Arabia: A Modern Reader*. University Press.
- Al-Shehri, H. (2013, July 16). Some government organizations are lagging behind and the age of ‘wasta’ is disappearing. *Al-Eqessadia Newspaper*. Retrieved from http://www.aleqt.com/2013/07/16/article_770707.html
- Alvesson, M., & Spicer, A. (2012). A Stupidity-Based Theory of Organizations. *Journal Of Management Studies*, 49(7), 1194–1220.
- Alvesson, Mats, & Sköldbberg, K. (2000). *Reflexive Methodology: New Vistas for Qualitative Research*. SAGE.
- Alvesson, Mats, & Thompson, P. (2004). Post-Bureaucracy? In S. Ackroyd, R. Batt, P. Thompson, & P. Tolbert (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Work and Organization* (pp. 485–507). Oxford University Press.
- At-Twajiri, M. I., & Al-Muhaiza, I. A. (1996). Hofstede’s cultural dimensions in the GCC countries: An empirical investigation. *International Journal of Value-Based Management*, 9(2), 121–131.
- Amado, G., & Vinagre Brasil, H. (1991). Organizational Behaviors and Cultural Context: The Brazilian “Jeitinho”. *International Studies of Management & Organization*, 21(3), 38–61.
- Anthony, J. D. (2006). Saudi Arabia: From tribal society to nation-state. In W. Chai (Ed.), *Saudi Arabia: A Modern Reader*. University Press.
- Askim, J., Fimreite, A. L., Moseley, A., & Pedersen, L. H. (2011). One-Stop Shops for Social Welfare: The Adaptation of an Organizational Form in Three Countries. *Public Administration*, 89(4), 1451–1468.

- Aucoin, P. (1990). Administrative Reform in Public Management: Paradigms, Principles, Paradoxes and Pendulums. *Governance*, 3(2), 115–137.
- Avgerou, C. (2001). The significance of context in information systems and organizational change. *Information Systems Journal*, 11(1), 43–63.
- Bannister, F. (2005). E-government and administrative power: The one-stop-shop meets the turf war. *Electronic Government, an International Journal*, 2(2), 160–176.
- Bannister, F., & Connolly, R. (2012). Forward to the past: Lessons for the future of e-government from the story so far. *Information Polity*, 17(3, 4), 211–226.
- Bannister, F., & Grönlund, Å. (2017). Information Technology and Government Research: A Brief History. *Proceedings of the 50th Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences (HICSS)*, 2943-2952.
- Barbalet, J. (2008). *Weber, Passion and Profits: 'The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism' in Context*. Cambridge University Press.
- Barker, J. R. (1993). Tightening the Iron Cage: Concertive Control in Self-Managing Teams. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 38(3), 408–437.
- Barley, S. R. (1986). Technology as an Occasion for Structuring: Evidence from Observations of CT Scanners and the Social Order of Radiology Departments. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 31(1), 78–108.
- Barley, S. R., & Kunda, G. (2001). Bringing Work Back In. *Organization Science*, 12(1), 76–95.
- Barnes, C. Y., & Henly, J. R. (2018). “They Are Underpaid and Understaffed”: How Clients Interpret Encounters with Street-Level Bureaucrats. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 28(2), 165–181.

- Barnett, A., Yandle, B., & Naufal, G. (2013). Regulation, trust, and cronyism in Middle Eastern societies: The simple economics of “wasta”. *The Journal of Socio-Economics*, 44, 41–46.
- Bartels, K. P. R. (2009). The Disregard for Weber’s Herrschaft. *Administrative Theory & Praxis*, 31(4), 447–478.
- Bartels, K. P. r. (2013). Public Encounters: The History and Future of Face-to-Face Contact Between Public Professionals and Citizens. *Public Administration*, 91(2), 469–483.
- Bauman, Z. (1989). *Modernity and the Holocaust*. Cornell University Press.
- Bechky, B. A. (2006). Talking About Machines, Thick Description, and Knowledge Work. *Organization Studies*, 27(12), 1757–1768.
- Bechky, B. A. (2011). Making Organizational Theory Work: Institutions, Occupations, and Negotiated Orders. *Organization Science*, 22(5), 1157–1167.
- Becker, H. S., Geer, B., Hughes, E. C., & Strauss, A. L. (1961). *Boys in white: Student culture in medical school*. New Brunswick (N.J.); London: Transaction Books.
- Bekkers, V., & Homburg, V. (2007). The Myths of E-Government: Looking Beyond the Assumptions of a New and Better Government. *The Information Society*, 23(5), 373–382.
- Bélangier, F., & Carter, L. (2012). Digitizing Government Interactions with Constituents: An Historical Review of E-Government Research in Information Systems. *Journal of the Association for Information Systems*, 13(5), 363–394.
- Bell, E., Bryman, A., & Harley, B. (2018). *Business Research Methods*. Oxford University Press.
- Beniger, J. (2009). *The Control Revolution: Technological and Economic Origins of the Information Society*. Harvard University Press.

- Beniger, J. R. (1986). *The control revolution: Technological and economic origins of the information society*. Harvard University Press.
- Bennet, J. (2016, April 25). Saudi Arabia: Sweeping Reforms Ready Kingdom for Life After Oil -- Barron's Blog. *Dow Jones Institutional News; New York*. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/2017626502/citation/FF49C22274424113PQ/1>
- Bennis, W. G. (1965). Beyond bureaucracy. *Trans-Action*, 2(5), 31–35.
- Bennis, W. G. (1966). Organizational Revitalization. *California Management Review (Pre-1986); Berkeley*, 9(000001), 51-60.
- Bennis, W. G. (1967). The Coming Death of Bureaucracy. *Management Review; Saranac Lake, N.Y., Etc.*, 56(3), 19–24.
- Bennis, W. G. (1973). *Beyond bureaucracy: Essays on the development and evolution of human organization*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Berger, P. L., & Luckmann, T. (1967). *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*. Penguin UK.
- Bernard, H. R. (2017). *Research Methods in Anthropology: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*. Rowman & Littlefield.
- Bhabha, H. K. (1994). *The Location of Culture*. Routledge.
- Bishop, S., & Waring, J. (2016). Becoming hybrid: The negotiated order on the front line of public–private partnerships. *Human Relations*, 69(10), 1937–1958.
- Blalock, H. M. (1969). *Theory construction; from verbal to mathematical formulations*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall.
- Blau, P. (1955). *The Dynamics of Bureaucracy: A Study of Interpersonal Relations in Two Government Agencies*. University of Chicago Press.

- Blau, P. (1956). *Bureaucracy in modern society*. New York, NY, US: Crown Publishing Group/Random House.
- Blau, P. (1963). *The dynamics of bureaucracy; a study of interpersonal relations in two Government agencies*. (Rev. [2d] ed.). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Blau, P. M., & Scott, W. R. (1962). *Formal organizations*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Bloomfield, B. P., & Hayes, N. (2009). Power and Organizational Transformation through Technology: Hybrids of Electronic Government. *Organization Studies*, 30(5), 461–487.
- Blunt, A. (1881). *A Pilgrimage to Nejd, The cradle fo the Arab Race*. London: John Murray, Albermarle street.
- Blunt, A., & Blunt, W. S. (1968). *Bedouin tribes of the Euphrates*. London: Cass: Routledge.
- Boin, A., James, O., & Lodge, M. (2006). The New Public Management ‘Revolution’ in Political Control of the Public Sector: Promises and Outcomes in Three European Prison Systems. *Public Policy and Administration*, 21(2), 81–100.
- Bondy, C. (2013). How did I get here? The social process of accessing field sites. *Qualitative Research*, 13(5), 578–590.
- Bosk, C. L., & De Vries, R. G. (2004). Bureaucracies of Mass Deception: Institutional Review Boards and the Ethics of Ethnographic Research. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 595(1), 249–263.
- Bovens, M., & Zouridis, S. (2002). From Street-Level to System-Level Bureaucracies: How Information and Communication Technology is Transforming

- Administrative Discretion and Constitutional Control. *Public Administration Review*, 62(2), 174–184.
- Bowen, W. H. (2008). *The History of Saudi Arabia*. Greenwood Publishing Group.
- Bowker, G. C., & Star, S. L. (2000). *Sorting Things Out: Classification and Its Consequences*. MIT Press.
- Brandstaetter, T., Bamber, D., & Weir, D. (2016). 'Wasta': Triadic Trust in Jordanian Business. In Mohamed A. Ramady (Ed.), *The Political Economy of Wasta: Use and Abuse of Social Capital Networking* (pp. 65–78).
- Bray, B., & Darlow, M. (2012). *Ibn Saud: The Desert Warrior Who Created the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia*. Skyhorse Publishing.
- Brewer, J. (2000). *Ethnography*. McGraw-Hill Education (UK).
- Bridgman, T., & Willmott, H. (2006). Institutions and Technology: Frameworks for Understanding Organizational Change—The Case of a Major ICT Outsourcing Contract. *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 42(1), 110–126.
- Brodkin, E. Z. (2007). Bureaucracy Redux: Management Reformism and the Welfare State. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 17(1), 1–17.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/jopart/muj019>
- Brodkin, E. Z. (2012). Reflections on Street-Level Bureaucracy: Past, Present, and Future. *Public Administration Review*, 72(6), 940–949.
- Brodkin, E. Z., & Majmundar, M. (2010). Administrative Exclusion: Organizations and the Hidden Costs of Welfare Claiming. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 20(4), 827–848.
- Brunsson, N., & Sahlin-Andersson, K. (2000). Constructing Organizations: The Example of Public Sector Reform. *Organization Studies*, 21(4), 721–746.
- Bryman, A. (2012). *Social Research Methods*. OUP Oxford.

- Buffat, A. (2015). Street-Level Bureaucracy and E-Government. *Public Management Review*, 17(1), 149–161.
- Bukhari, F., & Denman, B. (2013). Student scholarships in Saudi Arabia: Implications and Opportunities for Overseas Engagement. In L. Smith & A. Abouammoh (Eds.), *Higher Education in Saudi Arabia: Achievements, Challenges and Opportunities*. Springer Science & Business Media.
- Busch, P. A., & Henriksen, H. Z. (2018). Digital discretion: A systematic literature review of ICT and street-level discretion. *Information Polity*, 23(1), 3–28.
- Caldwell, B. (2015). *Beyond Positivism*. Routledge.
- Cannella, G. S. (2015). Qualitative Research as Living Within/Transforming Complex Power Relations. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 21(7), 594–598.
- Carey, G., & Crammond, B. (2015). What Works in Joined-Up Government? An Evidence Synthesis. *International Journal of Public Administration*, 38(13–14), 1020–1029.
- Casey, C. (2004). Bureaucracy Re-Enchanted? Spirit, Experts and Authority in Organizations. *Organization*, 11(1), 59–79.
- Castells, M. (1997). *Power of Identity: The Information Age: Economy, Society, and Culture*. Cambridge, MA, USA: Blackwell Publishers, Inc.
- Castells, M. (2010). *The rise of the network society* (2nd ed., with a new pref). Chichester, West Sussex; Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Castells, M. (2011). *The Rise of the Network Society*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Castilla, E. J., & Rissing, B. A. (2019). Best in Class: The Returns on Application Endorsements in Higher Education. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 64 (1), 230-270.

- Castro, A., & Ansari, S. (2017). Contextual “Readiness” for Institutional Work. A Study of the Fight Against Corruption in Brazil. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 26(4), 351–365.
- Chai, W. (2006). *Saudi Arabia: A Modern Reader*. University Press.
- Champion, D. (2003). *The Paradoxical Kingdom: Saudi Arabia and the Momentum of Reform*. C. Hurst & Co. Publishers.
- Chen, C. C., Chen, Y.-R., & Xin, K. (2004). Guanxi Practices and Trust in Management: A Procedural Justice Perspective. *Organization Science*, 15(2), 200–209.
- Chen, C. C., Gaspar, J. P., Friedman, R., Newburry, W., Nippa, M. C., Xin, K., & Parente, R. (2017). Paradoxical Relationships Between Cultural Norms of Particularism and Attitudes Toward Relational Favoritism: A Cultural Reflectivity Perspective. *Journal of Business Ethics: JBE; Dordrecht*, 145(1), 63–79.
- Chen, X.-P., & Chen, C. C. (2004). On the Intricacies of the Chinese Guanxi: A Process Model of Guanxi Development. *Asia Pacific Journal of Management*, 21(3), 305–324.
- Christensen, T. (2012). Post-NPM and changing public governance. *Meiji Journal of Political Science and Economics*, 1(1), 1–11.
- Christensen, T., Dong, L., Painter, M., & Walker, R. M. (2012). Imitating the West? Evidence on Administrative Reform from the Upper Echelons of Chinese Provincial Government. *Public Administration Review*, 72(6), 798–806.
- Christensen, T., & Laegreid, P. (2007). The whole-of-government approach to public sector reform. *Public Administration Review*, 67(6), 1059–1066.

- Christensen, T., & Lægreid, P. (2010). Complexity and Hybrid Public Administration—Theoretical and Empirical Challenges. *Public Organization Review, 11*(4), 407–423.
- Ciborra, C. (2005). Interpreting e-government and development; Efficiency, transparency or governance at a distance? *Information Technology & People, 18*(3), 260–279.
- Ciborra, C., & Navarra, D. D. (2005). Good governance, development theory, and aid policy: Risks and challenges of e-government in Jordan. *Information Technology for Development, 11*(2), 141–159.
- Clark, T., & Salaman, G. (1998). Telling Tales: Management Gurus' Narratives and the Construction of Managerial Identity. *Journal of Management Studies, 35*(2), 137–161.
- Claver, E., Llopis, J., Gasco, J. L., Molina, H., & Conca, F. J. (1999). Public administration: From bureaucratic culture to citizen-oriented culture. *The International Journal of Public Sector Management, 12*(5), 455–464.
- Clegg, Stewart R. (1990). *Modern Organizations: Organization Studies in the Postmodern World*. SAGE.
- Clegg, Stewart R.. (1994). Weber and Foucault: Social Theory for the Study of Organizations. *Organization, 1*(1), 149–178.
- Clegg, Stewart R., & Courpasson, D. (2004). Political Hybrids: Tocquevillean Views on Project Organizations. *Journal of Management Studies, 41*(4), 525–547.
- Clegg, Stewart R., & Lounsbury, M. (2009). Weber: Sintering the Iron Cage Translation, Domination, and Rationality. In P. S. Adler (Ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Sociology and Organization Studies: Classical Foundations*. Oxford University Press.

- Clegg, Stewart R. (2005). Puritans, Visionaries and Survivors. *Organization Studies*, 26(4), 527–545.
- Clegg, Stewart R. (2009). Bureaucracy, the Holocaust and Techniques of Power at Work. *Management Revue*, 20(4), 326–347.
- Clegg, Stewart R. (2011). Under Reconstruction: Modern Bureaucracies. In M. Harris, H. Höpfl, & S. R. Clegg (Eds.), *Managing Modernity: Beyond Bureaucracy?* Oxford University Press.
- Clifford, J., & Marcus, G. E. (1986). *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*. University of California Press.
- Clinton, W. J. (1999, December 17). *Memorandum for the Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies on Electronic Government*. Retrieved from <https://govinfo.library.unt.edu/npr/library/direct/memos/elegovnmnt.html>
- Cobban, H. (2006). Ties with tribal regions. In W. Chai (Ed.), *Saudi Arabia: A Modern Reader*. University Press.
- Cole, D. P. (2003). Where Have the Bedouin Gone? *Anthropological Quarterly*, 76(2), 235–267.
- Cole, M., & Fenwick, J. (2003). UK Local Government: The Impact of Modernization on Departmentalism. *International Review of Administrative Sciences*, 69(2), 259–270.
- Cooke, M. (2014). *Tribal Modern: Branding New Nations in the Arab Gulf*. University of California Press.
- Cordella, A. (2007). E-government: Towards the e-bureaucratic form? *Journal of Information Technology*, 22(3), 265–274.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.jit.2000105>

- Cordella, A., & Iannacci, F. (2010). Information systems in the public sector: The e-Government enactment framework. *The Journal of Strategic Information Systems, 19*(1), 52–66.
- Cordesman, A. H. (2003). *Saudi Arabia Enters the Twenty-first Century: The political, foreign policy, economic, and energy dimensions*. Greenwood Publishing Group.
- Courpasson, D., & Reed, M. (2004). Introduction: Bureaucracy in the Age of Enterprise. *Organization, 11*(1), 5–12.
- Crabtree, B. F., & Miller, W. L. (1992). *Doing qualitative research*. Sage Publications.
- Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. SAGE Publications.
- Crone, P. (2015). *Pre-Industrial Societies: Anatomy of the Pre-Modern World* (2 edition). London: Oneworld Publications.
- Crozier, M. (1964). *The bureaucratic phenomenon*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Cunliffe, A. L. (2003a). Intersubjective Voices: The Role of the “Theorist”. *Administrative Theory & Praxis, 25*(4), 481–498.
- Cunliffe, A. L. (2003b). Reflexive Inquiry in Organizational Research: Questions and Possibilities. *Human Relations, 56*(8), 983–1003.
- Cunliffe, A. L. (2008). Orientations to Social Constructionism: Relationally Responsive Social Constructionism and its Implications for Knowledge and Learning. *Management Learning, 39*(2), 123–139.
- Cunliffe, A. L. (2010). Retelling Tales of the Field: In Search of Organizational Ethnography 20 Years On. *Organizational Research Methods, 13*(2), 224–239.

- Cunliffe, A. L. (2011). Crafting Qualitative Research: Morgan and Smircich 30 Years On. *Organizational Research Methods*, 14(4), 647–673.
- Cunliffe, A. L. (2016). “On Becoming a Critically Reflexive Practitioner” Redux: What Does It Mean to Be Reflexive? *Journal of Management Education*, 40(6), 740–746.
- Cunliffe, A. L., & Karunanayake, G. (2013). Working Within Hyphen-Spaces in Ethnographic Research: Implications for Research Identities and Practice. *Organizational Research Methods*, 16(3), 364–392.
- Cunliffe, A. L., & Locke, K. (2016). Subjectivity, difference and method. *Qualitative Research in Organizations and Management: An International Journal*, 11(2).
- Cunningham, R. B., Sarayrah, Y. K., & Sarayrah, Y. E. (1994). TAMING ‘WASTA’ TO ACHIEVE DEVELOPMENT. *Arab Studies Quarterly*, 16(3), 29–41.
- Cunningham, R., & Sarayrah, Y. K. (1993). *Wasta: The hidden force in Middle Eastern society*. Praeger.
- Czarniawska, B. (2014). Why I think shadowing is the best field technique in management and organization studies. *Qualitative Research in Organizations and Management: An International Journal*, 9(1), 90–93.
- Czarniawska, B., & Sevón, G. (2005). *Global ideas: How ideas, objects and practices travel in a global economy*. Liber & Copenhagen Business School Press.
- d’Iribarne, P. (1994). The Honour Principle in the ‘Bureaucratic Phenomenon’. *Organization Studies*, 15(1), 81–97.
- Dalton, M. (1959). *Men Who Manage: Fusions of Feeling and Theory in Administration*. Transaction Publishers.
- Davies, J. S. (2009). The Limits of Joined-up Government: Towards a Political Analysis. *Public Administration*, 87(1), 80–96.

- Day, R., & Day, J. V. (1977). A Review of the Current State of Negotiated Order Theory: An Appreciation and a Critique. *The Sociological Quarterly*, 18(1), 126–142.
- Delany, W. (1963). The Development and Decline of Patrimonial and Bureaucratic Administrations. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 7(4), 458–501.
- Deming, W. E. (1986). *Out of the Crisis*. MIT Press.
- Denis, J.-L., Ferlie, E., & Van Gestel, N. (2015). Understanding Hybridity in Public Organizations. *Public Administration*, 93(2), 273–289.
- Dixon, J., Bhuiyan, S., & Üstüner, Y. (2018). Public Administration in the Middle East and North Africa. *International Journal of Public Administration*, 41(10), 759–764.
- Downe, J., & Martin, S. (2006). Joined up policy in practice? The coherence and impacts of the local government modernisation agenda. *Local Government Studies*, 32(4), 465–488.
- du Gay, P. (1994). Making up Managers: Bureaucracy, Enterprise and the Liberal Art of Separation. *The British Journal of Sociology*, 45(4), 655–674.
- du Gay, P. (1999). Is Bauman's bureau Weber's bureau? A comment*. *The British Journal of Sociology*, 50(4), 575–587.
- du Gay, P. (2000). *In Praise of Bureaucracy: Weber - Organization - Ethics*. London; Thousand Oaks, Calif: Sage Publications Ltd.
- du Gay, P. (2003). The Tyranny of the Epochal: Change, Epochalism and Organizational Reform. *Organization*, 10(4), 663–684.
- du Gay, P. (2004). Against 'Enterprise' (but not against 'enterprise', for that would make no sense). *Organization*, 11(1), 37–57.

- du Gay, P. (2005). Bureaucracy and Liberty: State, Authority, and Freedom. In P. du Gay (Ed.), *The Values of Bureaucracy*. Oxford University Press.
- du Gay, P. (2006). Machinery of government and standards in public service: Teaching new dogs old tricks. *Economy and Society*, 35(1), 148–167.
- du Gay, P., & Salaman, G. (1992). The Cult[ure] of the Customer. *Journal of Management Studies*, 29(5), 615–633.
- Duarte, F. (2006). Exploring the interpersonal transaction of the Brazilian jeitinho in bureaucratic contexts. *Organization*, 13(4), 509–527.
- Dunbar, R. L. M. (1983). Toward an Applied Administrative Science. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 28(1), 129–144.
- Dunleavy, P., & Hood, C. (1994). From old public administration to new public management. *Public Money & Management*, 14(3), 9–16.
- Dunleavy, P., Margetts, H., Bastow, S., & Tinkler, J. (2006). New Public Management Is Dead—Long Live Digital-Era Governance. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 16(3), 467–494.
- Dunleavy, P., Margetts, H., Bastow, S., & Tinkler, J. (2008). *Digital Era Governance: IT Corporations, the State, and e-Government*. OUP Oxford.
- Dyer, S., & Demeritt, D. (2009). Un-ethical review? Why it is wrong to apply the medical model of research governance to human geography. *Progress in Human Geography*, 33(1), 46–64.
- Easterby-Smith, M., Thorpe, R., & Jackson, P. R. (2012). *Management Research*. SAGE.
- E-government National program. (2006). *The e-Government First Action Plan*. Retrieved from

https://www.yesser.gov.sa/EN/MechanismsandRegulations/strategy/Pages/implementation_plan_first.aspx#

- Emanuel, M. (1977). The Tribe as a Unit of Subsistence: Nomadic Pastoralism in the Middle East. *American Anthropologist*, 79(2), 343–363.
- Evans, T. (2011). Professionals, Managers and Discretion: Critiquing Street-Level Bureaucracy. *The British Journal of Social Work*, 41(2), 368–386.
- Evans, T. (2015). ‘Street-level bureaucracy, management and the corrupted world of service’. *European Journal of Social Work*, 0(0), 1–14.
- Evans, T., & Harris, J. (2004). Street-Level Bureaucracy, Social Work and the (Exaggerated) Death of Discretion. *British Journal of Social Work*, 34(6), 871–895.
- Farh, J.-L., Tsui, A. S., Xin, K., & Cheng, B.-S. (1998). The Influence of Relational Demography and Guanxi: The Chinese Case. *Organization Science*, 9(4), 471–488.
- Farrell, C., & Morris, J. (2003). The ‘Neo-Bureaucratic’ State: Professionals, Managers and Professional Managers in Schools, General Practices and Social Work. *Organization*, 10(1), 129–156.
- Feldman, M. S., Bell, J., & Berger, M. T. (2004). *Gaining Access: A Practical and Theoretical Guide for Qualitative Researchers*. Rowman Altamira.
- Fetterman, D. M. (2010). *Ethnography: Step-by-Step*. SAGE.
- Fine, G. A. (1984). Negotiated Orders and Organizational Cultures. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 10, 239–262.
- Fine, G. A. (2003). Towards a Peopled Ethnography: Developing Theory from Group Life. *Ethnography*, 4(1), 41–60.

- Fine, G. A., & Hallett, T. (2014). Group Cultures and the Everyday Life of Organizations: Interaction Orders and Meso-Analysis. *Organization Studies*, 35(12), 1773–1792.
- Fine, M., & Sirin, S. R. (2007). Theorizing Hyphenated Selves: Researching Youth Development in and across Contentious Political Contexts. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, 1(1), 16–38.
- Fineman, S. (1998). Street-level Bureaucrats and the Social Construction of Environmental Control. *Organization Studies*, 19(6), 953–974.
- Fossestøl, K., Breit, E., Andreassen, T. A., & Klemsdal, L. (2015). Managing Institutional Complexity in Public Sector Reform: Hybridization in Front-Line Service Organizations. *Public Administration*, 93(2), 290–306.
- Fountain, J. E. (2001). *Building the virtual state: Information technology and institutional change*. Brookings Institution Press.
- Fredriksson, A. (2009). *Dispatchers*. Seminar paper 758, Stockholm University, Institute for International Economic Studies.
- Fredriksson, A. (2014). Bureaucracy intermediaries, corruption and red tape. *Journal of Development Economics*, 108, 256–273.
- Frenkel, M., & Shenhav, Y. (2006). From Binarism Back to Hybridity: A Postcolonial Reading of Management and Organization Studies. *Organization Studies*, 27(6), 855–876.
- Garvey, B. (1991). Patrimonial economics and informal bureaucracies: Public administration and social reality in the least developed countries of the 1990s: a review article. *Public Administration & Development (1986-1998)*, 11(6), 591–600.

- Geertz, C. (1973). *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*. New York: Basic Books.
- Gellman, R. (1996). Disintermediation and the internet. *Government Information Quarterly*, 13(1), 1–8.
- Giddens, A. (1971). *Capitalism and Modern Social Theory: An Analysis of the Writings of Marx, Durkheim and Max Weber*. Cambridge University Press.
- Gill, R. (2011). The shadow in organizational ethnography: Moving beyond shadowing to spect-acting. *Qualitative Research in Organizations and Management: An International Journal*, 6(2), 115–133.
- Gioia, D. A., & Chittipeddi, K. (1991). Sensemaking and Sensegiving in Strategic Change Initiation. *Strategic Management Journal*, 12(6), 433–448.
- Gioia, D. A., Corley, K. G., & Hamilton, A. L. (2013). Seeking Qualitative Rigor in Inductive Research: Notes on the Gioia Methodology. *Organizational Research Methods*, 16(1), 15–31.
- Giroux, H. (2006). ‘It Was Such a Handy Term’: Management Fashions and Pragmatic Ambiguity*. *Journal of Management Studies*, 43(6), 1227–1260.
- Goffman, E. (1959). *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. Doubleday.
- Goffman, E. (1961). *Asylums: Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates* (1st edition). New York, NY: Anchor Books / Doubleday.
- Goffman, E. (1983). The Interaction Order: American Sociological Association, 1982 Presidential Address. *American Sociological Review*, 48(1), 1–17.
- Gold, G. D., & Naufal, G. S. (2012). Wasta: The Other Invisible Hand: A Case Study of University Students in the Gulf. *Journal of Arabian Studies*, 2(1), 59–73.
- Goodwin, I., & Spittle, S. (2002). The European Union and the information society: Discourse, power and policy. *New Media & Society*, 4(2), 225–249.

- Gore, A. (1997). *Access America: Reengineering Through Information Technology*.
Retrieved from
<http://govinfo.library.unt.edu/npr/library/announc/access/acessrpt.html>
- Gouldner, A. W. (1954). *Patterns of industrial bureaucracy*. New York, NY, US: Free Press.
- Gouldner, A.W. (1960) The Norm of Reciprocity: A Preliminary Statement. *American Sociological Review*, 25(2), 161–178.
- Graeme, S. (2005). Bureaucracy and Beyond: Managers and Leaders in the ‘Post-Bureaucratic’ Organization. In P. Du Gay (Ed.), *The Values of Bureaucracy* (pp. 141–164). Oxford University Press.
- Graham, M. (2002). Emotional Bureaucracies: Emotions, Civil Servants, and Immigrants in the Swedish Welfare State. *Ethos*, 30(3), 199–226.
- Grant, A. (2017). “I Don’t Want You Sitting Next to Me”: The Macro, Meso, and Micro of Gaining and Maintaining Access to Government Organizations During Ethnographic Fieldwork. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 16(1), 1-16.
- Grint, K., & Woolgar, S. (1997). *The machine at work: Technology, work, and organization*. Cambridge, Mass: Polity Press.
- Haedicke, M. A., & Hallett, T. (2016). How to Look Two Ways at Once: Research Strategies for Inhabited Institutionalism. In K. D. Elsbach & R. M. Kramer (Eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Organizational Research: Innovative Pathways and Methods*. Routledge.
- Hales, C. (2002). ‘Bureaucracy-lite’ and Continuities in Managerial Work. *British Journal of Management*, 13(1), 51–66.

- Hallett, T. (2010). The Myth Incarnate: Recoupling Processes, Turmoil, and Inhabited Institutions in an Urban Elementary School. *American Sociological Review*, 75(1), 52–74.
- Hallett, T., Shulman, D., & Fine, G. A. (2009). Peopling Organizations: The Promise of Classic Symbolic Interactionism for an Inhabited Institutionalism. In P. S. Adler (Ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Sociology and Organization Studies*. Oxford University Press.
- Hammer, M., & Champy, J. (1993). *Reengineering the Corporation: A Manifesto for Business Revolution*. Harper Business.
- Hammersley, M., & Atkinson, P. (2007). *Ethnography: Principles in Practice*. Routledge.
- Hansen, H.-T., Lundberg, K., & Syltevik, L. J. (2018). Digitalization, Street-Level Bureaucracy and Welfare Users' Experiences. *Social Policy & Administration*, 52(1), 67–90.
- Harbi, S. A., Thursfield, D., & Bright, D. (2017). Culture, Wasta and perceptions of performance appraisal in Saudi Arabia. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 28(19), 2792–2810.
- Hardy, C., Phillips, N., & Clegg, S. (2001). Reflexivity in Organization and Management Theory: A Study of the Production of the Research 'Subject'. *Human Relations*, 54(5), 531–560.
- Harris, M. (2006). Technology, innovation and post-bureaucracy: The case of the British Library. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, 19(1), 80–92.
- Harris, M. (2008). Digital technology and governance in transition: The case of the British Library. *Human Relations*, 61(5), 741–758.

- Harris, M. (2011). Network Governance and the Politics of Organizational Resistance in the UK Health Care: The National Program for Information Technology. In M. Harris, H. Höpfl, & S. R. Clegg (Eds.), *Managing Modernity: Beyond Bureaucracy?* (pp. 105–129). Oxford University Press.
- Hassan, S., & Gil-Garcia, J. R. (2008). Institutional theory and e-government research. In G. David Garson, & M. Khosrow-Pour (Eds.) *Handbook of Research on Public Information Technology*. (pp. 349-360). IGI Global.
- Hatrash, H. (2006, November 22). ‘Muaqibs’ Offer Path of Least Resistance to Business Licenses. *Arab News*. Retrieved from <http://www.arabnews.com/node/291432>
- Hayes, D. (2005). Gaining Access to Data Sources in Statutory Social Work Agencies: The Long and Winding Road. *The British Journal of Social Work*, 35(7), 1193–1202.
- Hayes, D., & Devaney, J. (2004). Accessing Social Work Case Files for Research Purposes: Some Issues and Problems. *Qualitative Social Work*, 3(3), 313–333.
- Hayes, N., Introna, L., & Petrakaki, D. (2014). Imbrications of institutional logics: The case of an e-government initiative in Greece. *New Technology, Work and Employment*, 29(2), 124–138.
- Hayes, N., & Westrup, C. (2012). Context and the processes of ICT for development. *Information and Organization*, 22(1), 23–36.
- Haynes, K. (2012). Reflexivity in Qualitative Research. In G. Symon & C. Cassell (Eds.), *Qualitative Organizational Research: Core Methods and Current Challenges*. SAGE.

- Hazlett, S., & Hill, F. (2003). E-government: The realities of using IT to transform the public sector. *Managing Service Quality: An International Journal*, 13(6), 445–452
- Heckscher, C. (1994). Defining the Post-Bureaucratic Type. In C. C. Heckscher & A. Donnellon (Eds.), *The Post-bureaucratic organization: New perspectives on organizational change*. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications.
- Heckscher, C. (2015). From Bureaucracy to Networks. In S. Edgell, H. Gottfried, & E. Granter, *The SAGE Handbook of the Sociology of Work and Employment* (pp. 245–258).
- Heeks, R. (2005). E-Government as a Carrier of Context. *Journal of Public Policy*, 25(1), 51–74.
- Heeks, R., & Stanforth, C. (2015). Technological change in developing countries: Opening the black box of process using actor–network theory. *Development Studies Research*, 2(1), 33–50.
- Henman, P. (2010). *Governing Electronically*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Hertog, S. (2007). Shaping The Saudi State: Human Agency’s Shifting Role In Rentier-State Formation. *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 39(04), 539-563.
- Hertog, S. (2008). Two-level negotiations in a fragmented system: Saudi Arabia’s WTO accession. *Review of International Political Economy*, 15(4), 650–679.
- Hertog, S. (2010). The sociology of the Gulf rentier systems: Societies of intermediaries. *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 52(2), 282–318.
- Hertog, S. (2011). *Princes, Brokers, and Bureaucrats: Oil and the State in Saudi Arabia*. Cornell University Press.

- Hertog, S. (2012). Good, bad or both? The impact of oil on the Saudi political economy. In M. Kamrava (Ed.), *Business Politics in the Middle East* (pp. 221–250). Retrieved from <http://www.hurstpub.co.uk/>
- Hertog, S. (2016). The oil-driven nation-building of the Gulf states after World War II. In J. E. Peterson (Ed.), *The Emergence of the Gulf States: Studies in Modern History* (pp. 323–352). Bloomsbury Academic.
- Heydebrand, W. V. (1989). New Organizational Forms. *Work and Occupations*, 16(3), 323–357.
- Hibbert, P., Sillince, J., Diefenbach, T., & Cunliffe, A. L. (2014). Relationally Reflexive Practice: A Generative Approach to Theory Development in Qualitative Research. *Organizational Research Methods*, 17(3), 278–298.
- Hobbs, G., & Postings, H. (2008). *Live & Work in Spain*. Crimson Publishing.
- Hodgson, D., & Briand, L. (2013). Controlling the uncontrollable: ‘Agile’ teams and illusions of autonomy in creative work. *Work, Employment and Society*, 27(2), 308–325.
- Hodgson, D. E. (2004). Project Work: The Legacy of Bureaucratic Control in the Post-Bureaucratic Organization. *Organization*, 11(1), 81–100.
- Hoggett, P. (1996). New Modes of Control in the Public Service. *Public Administration*, 74(1), 9–32.
- Holden, S., Norris, D. F., & Fletcher, P. D. (2003). Electronic Government at the Local Level. *Public Performance & Management Review*, 26(4), 325–344.
- Homburg, V. (2008). *Understanding E-Government: Information Systems in Public Administration*. Routledge.
- Hood, C. (1991). A Public Management for All Seasons? *Public Administration*, 69(1), 3–19.

- Hood, C. (1995a). Contemporary public management: A new global paradigm? *Public Policy and Administration*, 10(2), 104–117.
- Hood, C. (1995b). The “new public management” in the 1980s: Variations on a theme. *Accounting, Organizations and Society*, 20(2–3), 93–109.
- Hood, C. (2000). Paradoxes of public-sector managerialism, old public management and public service bargains. *International Public Management Journal*, 3(1), 1–22.
- Hood, C., & Peters, G. (2004). The Middle Aging of New Public Management: Into the Age of Paradox? *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 14(3), 267–282.
- Hood, C., & Scott, C. (1996). Bureaucratic Regulation and New Public Management in the United Kingdom: Mirror-Image Developments? *Journal of Law and Society*, 23(3), 321–345.
- Hosking, D. M., & McNamee, S. (2006). *The Social Construction of Organization*. Liber and Copenhagen Business School Press.
- Hoyland, R. G. (2001). *ARABIA AND THE ARABS: From the Bronze Age to the coming of Islam*. Routledge.
- Huang Chua, C. E., & Myers, M. D. (2018). Social Control in Information Systems Development: A Negotiated Order Perspective. *Journal of Information Technology*, 33(3), 173–187.
- Hughes, E. C. (1942). The Study of Institutions. *Social Forces*, 20(3), 307–310.
- Humphreys, M. (2005). Getting Personal: Reflexivity and Autoethnographic Vignettes. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 11(6), 840–860.
- Hupe, P. (2015). *Understanding Street-Level Bureaucracy* (M. Hill & A. Buffat, Eds.). Policy Press.

- Hupe, P., & Hill, M. (2007). Street-Level Bureaucracy and Public Accountability. *Public Administration*, 85(2), 279–299.
- Hupe, P., Hill, M., Buffat, A., Hupe, P. L., Hill, M., & Buffat, A. (Eds.). (2015a). Conclusion: The present and future study of street-level bureaucracy. In *Understanding street-level bureaucracy* (1st ed.).
- Hupe, P., Hill, M., Buffat, A., Hupe, P. L., Hill, M., & Buffat, A. (Eds.). (2015b). Introduction: Defining and understanding street-level bureaucracy. In *Understanding street-level bureaucracy* (1st ed.).
- Hwang, K. (1987). Face and Favor: The Chinese Power Game. *American Journal of Sociology*, 92(4), 944–974.
- Ibn Khaldūn, 'Abd al-Rahmān ibn Muhammad. (1958). *The Muqaddimah: An introduction to history; in three volumes. 1*. Princeton University Press.
- Introna, L., Hayes, N., & Petrakaki, D. (2009). The Working Out of Modernization in the Public Sector: The Case of an E-government Initiative in Greece. *International Journal of Public Administration*, 33(1), 11–25.
- Jansson, G., & Erlingsson, G. Ó. (2014). More E-Government, Less Street-Level Bureaucracy? On Legitimacy and the Human Side of Public Administration. *Journal of Information Technology & Politics*, 11(3), 291–308.
- Jones, T. C. (2011). *Desert Kingdom*. Harvard University Press.
- Jorna, F., & Wagenaar, P. (2007). THE IRON CAGE? STRENGTHENED? DISCRETION AND DIGITAL DISCIPLINE. *Public Administration*, 85(1), 189–214.
- Josserand, E., Clegg, S., & Teo, S. (2006). From bureaucratic to post-bureaucratic: The difficulties of transition. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, 19(1), 54–64.

- Kallinikos, J. (2004). The Social Foundations of the Bureaucratic Order. *Organization, 11*(1), 13–36.
- Kallinikos, J. (2006). The institution of bureaucracy: Administration, pluralism, democracy. *Economy and Society, 35*(4), 611–627.
- Kärreman, D., Sveningsson, S., & Alvesson, M. (2002). The Return of the Machine Bureaucracy? - Management Control in the Work Settings of Professionals. *International Studies of Management & Organization, 32*(2), 70–92.
- Katakura, M. (1977). *Bedouin village: A study of a Saudi Arabian people in transition*. University of Tokyo Press.
- Kay, S. (1978). *The Bedouin*. New York: Crane, Russak.
- Kerr, S. (2018, April 25). Saudi Arabia looks to raise \$10bn in privatisation scheme. Retrieved 6 May 2018, from Financial Times website:
<http://www.ft.com/content/9edcae6c-4878-11e8-8ae9-4b5ddcca99b3>
- Kerr, S., Barber, L., & Khalaf, R. (2015, November 29). Saudi Arabia: The wake-up call. Retrieved 26 May 2018, from Financial Times website:
<http://www.ft.com/content/1aa6c886-91d1-11e5-bd82-c1fb87bef7af>
- Kling, R. (1991). Computerization and Social Transformations. *Science, Technology and Human Values, 16*(3), 342–367.
- Knights, D., & McCabe, D. (2000a). `Ain't Misbehavin'? Opportunities for Resistance under New Forms of `Quality' Management. *Sociology, 34*(3), 421–436.
- Knights, D., & McCabe, D. (2000b). Bewitched, bothered and bewildered: The meaning and experience of teamworking for employees in an automobile company. *Human Relations, 53*(11), 1481–1517.

- Knights, D., & McCabe, D. (2003). *Organization and Innovation: Guru Schemes and American Dreams*. McGraw-Hill Education (UK).
- Knights, D., & Murray, F. (1994). *Managers divided: Organisation politics and information technology management*. J. Wiley.
- Kostiner, P. S. K. J. (1991). Transforming dualities: Tribe and state formation in Saudi Arabia. In P. S. K. J. Kostiner (Ed.), *Tribes and State Formation in the Middle East* (First Edition edition). Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Kostiner, P. S. K. J., & Khoury, P. S. (1991). Introduction. In P. S. K. J. Kostiner (Ed.), *Tribes and State Formation in the Middle East* (First Edition edition). Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Khoury, P. S., & Kostiner, J. (Eds.). (1991). *Tribes and State Formation in the Middle East*. University of California Press.
- Kraemer, K. L., & King, J. L. (1986). Computing and Public Organizations. *Public Administration Review*, 46, 488–496.
- Kraemer, K. L., & King, J. L. (2006). Information Technology and Administrative Reform: Will the Time After E-Government Be Different? *Center for Research on Information Technology and Organizations*. Retrieved from <http://escholarship.org/uc/item/2rd511db>
- Kvale, S., & Brinkmann, S. (2008). *InterViews: Learning the Craft of Qualitative Research Interviewing* (Second Edition edition). Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Law, J. (1994). *Organizing modernity*. Oxford, UK ; Cambridge, Mass, USA: Blackwell.

- Lachmann, R. (2011). Coda: American Patrimonialism: The Return of the Repressed. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 636(1), 204–230.
- Lackner, H. (2016). Wasta: Is It Such a Bad Thing? An Anthropological Perspective. In Mohamed A. Ramady (Ed.), *The Political Economy of Wasta: Use and Abuse of Social Capital Networking* (pp. 33–46).
- Lai, J. (2015). “Patrimonial Bureaucracy” and Chinese Law Max Weber’s Legacy and Its Limits. *Modern China*, 41(1), 40–58.
- Lambrou, M. A. (2003). Advancing the one-stop shop e-government paradigm. *Engineering Management Conference, 2003. IEMC '03. Managing Technologically Driven Organizations: The Human Side of Innovation and Change*, 489–493.
- Latour, B. (1993). *We have never been modern*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.
- Latour, B., & Woolgar, S. (1979). *Laboratory Life: The Construction of Scientific Facts*. Princeton University Press.
- Law, J. (1994). *Organizing Modernity*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Law, J. (2004). *After Method: Mess in Social Science Research*. London; New York: Routledge.
- Le Grand, J. (1991). Quasi-Markets and Social Policy. *The Economic Journal*, 101(408), 1256–1267.
- Ledeneva, A. (2008). ‘Blat’ and ‘Guanxi’: Informal Practices in Russia and China. *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 50(1), 118–144.
- Lips, M. (2007). Does Public Administration Have Artefacts? *Info. Pol.*, 12(4), 243–252.

- Lips, M. (2012). E-Government is Dead: Long Live Public Administration 2.0. *Inf. Polity*, 17(3,4), 239–250.
- Lips, M., & Schuppan, T. (2009). Transforming E-Government Knowledge through Public Management Research. *Public Management Review*, 11(6), 739–749.
- Lipsky, M. (1969). *Toward A Theory of Street-Level Bureaucracy* (p. 48) [Institute for Research on Poverty Discussion Papers]. Retrieved from University of Wisconsin-Madison website:
<https://www.irp.wisc.edu/publications/dps/pdfs/dp4869.pdf>
- Lipsky, M. (1983). *Street-Level Bureaucracy: The Dilemmas of the Individual in Public Service*. Russell Sage Foundation.
- Lipsky, M. (2010). *Street-Level Bureaucracy, 30th Ann. Ed.: Dilemmas of the Individual in Public Service*. Russell Sage Foundation.
- Liu, Y., & Liu, X.-Y. (2018). Politics under abusive supervision: The role of Machiavellianism and guanxi. *European Management Journal*, 36(5), 649–659.
- Locke, J., & Lowe, A. (2008). Enterprise resource planning and the post bureaucratic organization: “Formalization” as trust in the system versus “solidarity” as trust in individuals. *Information Technology & People*, 21(4), 375–400.
- Long, D. E. (2005). *Culture and Customs of Saudi Arabia*. Greenwood Press.
- Lynn Jr., L. E. (1998). A critical analysis of the new public management. *International Public Management Journal*, 1(1), 107–123.
- Maines, D. R. (1982). In Search of Mesostructure: ‘Studies in the Negotiated Order’. *Urban Life; Newbury Park, Calif.*, 11(3), 267–279.
- Maisel, S. (2013). The construction of virtual identities: Online tribalism in Saudi Arabia and beyond. In S. Hafez & S. Slyomovics (Eds.), *Anthropology of the*

- Middle East and North Africa: Into the New Millennium*. Indiana University Press.
- Maisel, S. (2014). The New Rise of Tribalism In Saudi Arabia. *Nomadic Peoples*, 18(2), 100–122.
- Maisel, S. (2015). *The Resurgent Tribal Agenda in Saudi Arabia* (Issue Paper No. 5); p. 12). Washington, DC: Arab Gulf States Institute.
- Mann, L. (2014). Wasta! The long-term implications of education expansion and economic liberalisation on politics in Sudan. *Review of African Political Economy*, 41(142), 561–578.
- Manning, P. K. (1977). Rules in Organizational Context: Narcotics Law Enforcement in Two Settings. *The Sociological Quarterly*, 18(1), 44–61.
- Manning, P. K. (2008). Goffman on Organizations. *Organization Studies*, 29(5), 677–699.
- Maravelias, C. (2003). Post-bureaucracy--Control through professional freedom. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, 16(5), 547–566.
- Marshall, C., & Rossman, G. B. (2014). *Designing Qualitative Research*. SAGE Publications.
- Maynard-Moody, S., & Musheno, M. (2000). State Agent or Citizen Agent: Two Narratives of Discretion. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory: J-PART*, 10(2), 329–358.
- Maynard-Moody, S., & Musheno, M. (2015). ‘Playing the rules’: Discretion in social and policy context. In P. Hupe, M. Hill, & A. Buffat (Eds.), *Understanding street-level bureaucracy* (1st ed.). Bristol University Press.
- Maynard-Moody, S., & Portillo, S. (2010). Street-Level Bureaucracy Theory. *The Oxford Handbook of American Bureaucracy*. Oxford University Press.

- Maynard-Moody, S. W., & Musheno, M. C. (2003). *Cops, Teachers, Counselors: Stories from the Front Lines of Public Service*. University of Michigan Press.
- McCabe, D. (2002). 'Waiting for Dead Men's Shoes': Towards a Cultural Understanding of Management Innovation. *Human Relations*, 55(5), 505–536.
- McCabe, D. (2011). Opening Pandora's box: The unintended consequences of Stephen Covey's effectiveness movement. *Management Learning*, 42(2), 183–197.
- McCabe, D. (2014). Light in the Darkness? Managers in the Back Office of a Kafkaesque Bank. *Organization Studies*, 35(2), 255–278.
- McCabe, D. (2015). The Tyranny of Distance: Kafka and the problem of distance in bureaucratic organizations. *Organization*, 22(1), 58–77.
- McCabe, D., & Russell, S. (2017). 'The costumes don't do it for me': Obstacles to the translation of 'new' management ideas. *Management Learning*, 48(5), 566–581.
- McCabe, D., & Wilkinson, A. (1998). 'The Rise and Fall of TQM': The Vision, Meaning and Operation of Change. *Industrial Relations Journal*, 29(1), 18–29.
- McDonald, S. (2005). Studying actions in context: A qualitative shadowing method for organizational research. *Qualitative Research*, 5(4), 455–473.
- McDowall, A. (2015, January 23). Saudi King Abdullah was a cautious reformer. *Reuters*. Retrieved from <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-saudi-succession-abdullah-obituary/saudi-king-abdullah-was-a-cautious-reformer-idUSKBN0KW00720150123>
- McKinlay, A. (1996). *Power, Surveillance and Resistance: Inside the 'factory of the future'*. Retrieved from <https://researchportal.hw.ac.uk/en/publications/power-surveillance-and-resistance-inside-the-factory-of-the-future>

- McKinlay, A. (2002). 'Dead Selves': The Birth of the Modern Career. *Organization*, 9(4), 595–614.
- McKinlay, A. (2012). 'Little Cogs': Bureaucracy and the Career in British Banking, c. 1900–1950. In *Research in the Sociology of Organizations: Vol. 35. Reinventing Hierarchy and Bureaucracy? From the Bureau to Network Organizations* (Vol. 35, pp. 31–57).
- McKinlay, A., & Wilson, R. G. (2006). 'Small acts of cunning': Bureaucracy, inspection and the career, c. 1890–1914. *Critical Perspectives on Accounting*, 17(5), 657–678.
- McSweeney, B. (2006). Are we living in a post-bureaucratic epoch? *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, 19(1), 22–37.
- McSweeney, B. (2017). A Post-Bureaucratic Age? Caricatures, Claims, and Counter-Evidence. In P. Malizia, C. Cannavale, & Maimone (Eds.), *Evolution of the Post-Bureaucratic Organization* (pp. 19–40). IGI Global.
- Meijer, A. J. (2008). E-mail in government: Not post-bureaucratic but late-bureaucratic organizations. *Government Information Quarterly*, 25(3), 429–447.
- Miewald, R. D. (1970). The Greatly Exaggerated Death of Bureaucracy. *California Management Review (Pre-1986)*, 13(000002), 65.
- Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldana, J. (2014). *Qualitative Data Analysis*. SAGE.
- Millington, A., Eberhardt, M., & Wilkinson, B. (2006). Guanxi and supplier search mechanisms in China. *Human Relations*, 59(4), 505–531.
- Ministry of Communication and Information Technology. (2005). *National Communication and Information Technology Plan: Vision for building the*

information society. Ministry of Communication and Information Technology, Saudi Arabia.

Mintzberg, H. (2001). Managing Exceptionally. *Organization Science*, 12(6), 759–771.

Moon, M. J. (2002). The Evolution of E-Government among Municipalities: Rhetoric or Reality? *Public Administration Review*, 62(4), 424–433.

Morse, Y. L. (2019). Elite interviews in the developing world: Finding anchors in weak institutional environments. *Qualitative Research*, 19(3), 277-291.

Munro, E. R. (2008). Research Governance, Ethics and Access: A Case Study Illustrating the New Challenges Facing Social Researchers. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 11(5), 429–439.

Musil, A. (1928). *The manners and customs of the Rwala Bedouins*. New York: AmerGeographical Soc.

Myers, M. D. (2013). *Qualitative Research in Business and Management*. SAGE.

Nahedh, M. (1989). *The Sedentarization of a Bedouin Community in Saudi Arabia*. (Unpublished Dissertation). University of Leeds, Leeds, UK.

National Partnership for Reinventing Government. (1993). *Reengineering Through Information Technology* (No. 8). Retrieved from <https://govinfo.library.unt.edu/npr/library/reports/it.html>

Nevo, J. (1998). Religion and national identity in Saudi Arabia. *Middle Eastern Studies*, 34(3), 34–53.

Newell, S., Robertson, M., & Swan, J. (2001). Management Fads and Fashions. *Organization*, 8(1), 5–15.

Nimir, S. A., & Palmer, M. (1982). Bureaucracy and development in Saudi Arabia: A behavioural analysis. *Public Administration and Development*, 2(2), 93–104.

- Nohria, N., & Berkley, J. D. (1994). The Virtual Organization: Bureaucracy, Technology, and the Implosion of Control. In A. Donnellon & C. Heckscher (Eds.), *The Post-Bureaucratic Organization: New Perspectives on Organizational Change*. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: SAGE Publications.
- Norris, D. F., & Reddick, C. G. (2013). Local E-Government in the United States: Transformation or Incremental Change? *Public Administration Review*, 73(1), 165–175.
- O’Flynn, J., Buick, F., Blackman, D., & Halligan, J. (2011). You Win Some, You Lose Some: Experiments with Joined-Up Government. *International Journal of Public Administration*, 34(4), 244–254.
- O’Mahoney, J., & Sturdy, A. (2015). Power and the diffusion of management ideas: The case of McKinsey & Co. *Management Learning*, 47(3), 247–265.
- Ongaro, E. (2004). Process management in the public sector: The experience of one-stop shops in Italy. *The International Journal of Public Sector Management*, 17(1), 81–107.
- Osborne, D., & Gaebler, T. (1992). *Reinventing government: How the entrepreneurial spirit is transforming the public sector*. Reading, Mass: Addison-Wesley PubCo.
- Ouchi, W. G. (1980). Markets, Bureaucracies, and Clans. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 25(1), 129–141.
- Owens, G. R. (2003). What! Me a spy? Intrigue and reflexivity in Zanzibar. *Ethnography*, 4(1), 122–144.
- Papastergiadis, N. (2005). Hybridity and Ambivalence Places and Flows in Contemporary Art and Culture. *Theory, Culture & Society*, 22(4), 39–64.

- Papastergiadis, N. (2015). Tracing Hybridity in Theory. In P. P. Werbner & T. Modood (Eds.), *Debating Cultural Hybridity: Multicultural Identities and the Politics of Anti-Racism*. Zed Books Ltd.
- Park, S. H., & Luo, Y. (2001). Guanxi and Organizational Dynamics: Organizational Networking in Chinese Firms. *Strategic Management Journal*, 22(5), 455–477.
- Perez, T. S. (2019). In support of situated ethics: Ways of building trust with stigmatised ‘waste pickers’ in Cape Town. *Qualitative Research*, 19 (2), 148-163.
- Perrow, C. (1986). *Complex organizations: A critical essay* (3rd ed). McGraw-Hill.
- Perrow, C. (2005). *Organizing America: Wealth, Power, and the Origins of Corporate Capitalism* (New Ed edition). Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Peters, B. G., & Pierre, J. (1998). Governance Without Government? Rethinking Public Administration. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 8(2), 223–243.
- Peters, T. J., & Waterman, R. H. J. (1982). *In Search of Excellence: Lessons from America's Best-Run Companies*. Harper Collins.
- Petkov, M. P., & Kaoullas, L. G. (2016). Overcoming respondent resistance at elite interviews using an intermediary. *Qualitative Research*, 16(4), 411–429.
- Pettigrew, A. M. (1987). Context and Action In The Transformation Of The Firm. *Journal of Management Studies*, 24(6), 649–670.
- Phillips, D. C. (1990). Postpositivistic Science: Myths and Realities. In E. G. Guba (Ed.), *The Paradigm Dialog* (pp. 31–45). Sage.
- Pieterse, J. N. (2001). Hybridity, So What? The Anti-Hybridity Backlash and the Riddles of Recognition. *Theory, Culture & Society*, 18(2–3), 219–245.

- Plesner, U., Justesen, L., & Glerup, C. (2018). The transformation of work in digitized public sector organizations. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, 31(5), 1176–1190.
- Pollitt, C. (1995). Justification by Works or by Faith? Evaluating the New Public Management. *Evaluation*, 1(2), 133–154.
- Pollitt, C. (2003). Joined-up Government: A Survey. *Political Studies Review*, 1(1), 34–49.
- Pollitt, C. (2006). Performance Management in Practice: A Comparative Study of Executive Agencies. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 16(1), 25–44.
- Pollitt, C., & Bouckaert, G. (2011). *Public Management Reform: A Comparative Analysis - New Public Management, Governance, and the Neo-Weberian State*. OUP Oxford.
- Pors, A. S. (2015). Becoming digital – passages to service in the digitized bureaucracy. *Journal of Organizational Ethnography*, 4(2), 177–192.
- Prasad, P. (1993). Symbolic Processes in the Implementation of Technological Change: A Symbolic Interactionist Study of Work Computerization. *The Academy of Management Journal*, 36(6), 1400–1429.
- Prottas, J. M. (1979). *People processing: The street-level bureaucrat in public service bureaucracies*. Lexington Books.
- Puffer, S. M., McCarthy, D. J., Jaeger, A. M., & Dunlap, D. (2013). The use of favors by emerging market managers: Facilitator or inhibitor of international expansion? *Asia Pacific Journal of Management*, 30(2), 327–349.

- Radoynovska, N. M. (2018). Working within Discretionary Boundaries: Allocative Rules, Exceptions, and the Micro-Foundations of Inequality. *Organization Studies*, 39(9), 1277-1298.
- Rakan, A.-D. (2015). Altamlat Alelktrowniy Thsr Mhnat Alta'qeeb Wa Toqsy Al Mu'aqbeen [E-services are curtailing the businesses of Tracers]. *Alriyadh Newspaper*. Retrieved from <http://www.alriyadh.com/1024615>
- Ramady, M.A., & Mansour, M. (2006). The impact of Saudi Arabia's WTO accession on selected economic sectors and domestic economic reforms. *World Review of Entrepreneurship, Management and Sustainable Development*, 2(3), 189.
- Ramady, Mohamed A. (2010). *The Saudi Arabian Economy: Policies, Achievements, and Challenges*. Springer Science & Business Media.
- Reddick, C. G. (2005). Citizen interaction with e-government: From the streets to servers? *Government Information Quarterly*, 22(1), 38–57.
- Reed, M. (2011). The Post-Bureaucratic Organization and the Control Revolution. In Stewart R. Clegg, M. Harris, & H. Höpfl (Eds.), *Managing Modernity: Beyond Bureaucracy?* (pp. 132–154). Oxford University Press.
- Reed, M. I. (2005). Beyond the Iron Cage? Bureaucracy and Democracy in the Knowledge Economy and Society. In P. Du Gay (Ed.), *The Values of Bureaucracy* (pp. 115–140). Oxford University Press.
- Riessman, C. K. (2005). Exporting ethics: A narrative about narrative research in South India. *Health (London, England: 1997)*, 9(4), 473–490.
- Ritter, H. (1948). Irrational Solidarity Groups: A Socio-Psychological Study in Connection with Ibn Khaldûn. *Oriens*, 1(1), 1–44.
- Ritzer, G. (1983). The “McDonaldization” of Society. *Journal of American Culture*, 6(1), 100–107.

- Rosen, L. (2005). Theorizing from within: Ibn Khaldun and His Political Culture. *Contemporary Sociology*, 34(6), 596–599.
- Rosenn, K. S. (1971). The Jeito: Brazil's Institutional Bypass of the Formal Legal System and Its Developmental Implications. *The American Journal of Comparative Law*, 19(3), 514–549.
- Roy, D. F. (1959). 'Banana Time': Job Satisfaction and Informal Interaction. *Human Organization; Washington, D.C.*, 18(4), 158–168.
- Rubin, H. J., & Rubin, I. S. (2011). *Qualitative Interviewing: The Art of Hearing Data*. SAGE.
- Rudolph, L. I., & Rudolph, S. H. (1979). Authority and Power in Bureaucratic and Patrimonial Administration: A Revisionist Interpretation of Weber on Bureaucracy. *World Politics*, 31(2), 195–227.
- Ryen, A. (2016). Research ethics and qualitative research. In D. Silverman (Ed.), *Qualitative Research*. SAGE.
- Ryen, A. A. (2007). Do western research ethics work in Africa? A discussion about not taking 'the taken-for-granted. *Mosenodi*, 15(1–2), 31–45.
- Savage, M. (2009). Against Epochalism: An Analysis of Conceptions of Change in British Sociology. *Cultural Sociology*, 3(2), 217–238.
- Schiellerup, P. (2008). Stop making sense: The trials and tribulations of qualitative data analysis. *Area*, 40(2), 163–171.
- Schuppan, T. (2015). Service workers on the electronic leash? Street-level bureaucrats in emerging information and communication technology work contexts. In P. L. Hupe, M. Hill, & A. Buffat (Eds.), *Understanding street-level bureaucracy* (p. 18). Bristol University Press.

- Schwandt, T. A. (1998). Three Epistemological Stances for Qualitative Inquiry: Interpretivism, Hermeneutics, and Social Constructionism. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Landscape of Qualitative Research: Theories and Issues* (1 edition). Thousand Oaks, Calif: SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Seibel, W. (2015). Studying Hybrids: Sectors and Mechanisms. *Organization Studies*, 36(6), 697–712.
- Sen, R., & King, R. C. (2003). Revisit the Debate on Intermediation, Disintermediation and Reintermediation due to E-commerce. *Electronic Markets*, 13(2), 153–162.
- Sewell, G. (1998). The Discipline of Teams: The Control of Team-Based Industrial Work through Electronic and Peer Surveillance. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 43(2), 397–428.
- Silcock, R. (2001). What is E-government. *Parliamentary Affairs*, 54(1), 88–101.
- Silverman, D. (2006). *Interpreting Qualitative Data: Methods for Analyzing Talk, Text, and Interaction*. SAGE Publications.
- Silverman, D. (2016). *Qualitative Research*. SAGE Publications.
- Sipior, J. C., Ward, B. T., & Connolly, R. (2010). An Empirical Evaluation of E-Government Inclusion Among the Digitally Disadvantaged in the United States. *Information Resources Management Journal (IRMJ)*, 23(4), 21–39.
- Skelcher, C., & Smith, S. R. (2015). Theorizing Hybridity: Institutional Logics, Complex Organizations, and Actor Identities: The Case of Nonprofits. *Public Administration*, 93(2), 433–448.
- Smart, A. (2018). The Unbearable Discretion of Street-Level Bureaucrats: Corruption and Collusion in Hong Kong. *Current Anthropology*, 59(18), S37-S47.

- Smith, P. B., Torres, C., Leong, C.-H., Budhwar, P., Achoui, M., & Lebedeva, N. (2012). Are indigenous approaches to achieving influence in business organizations distinctive? A comparative study of guanxi, wasta, jeitinho, svyazi and pulling strings. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 23(2), 333–348.
- Snellen, I. (2002). Electronic Governance: Implications for Citizens, Politicians and Public Servants. *International Review of Administrative Sciences*, 68(2), 183–198.
- Sowayan, S. A. (2010). *The Arabian Desert: Its Poetry & Culture Across The Ages An Anthropological Approach*. Arab Network for Research and Publication.
- Spener, D. (2009). *Clandestine Crossings: Migrants and Coyotes on the Texas-Mexico Border* (1st ed.). Cornell University Press.
- Spicer, M. W. (2015). Public Administration in a Disenchanted World Reflections on Max Weber's Value Pluralism and His Views on Politics and Bureaucracy. *Administration & Society*, 47(1), 24–43.
- Star, S. L. (1999). The Ethnography of Infrastructure. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 43(3), 377–391.
- Star, S. L., & Ruhleder, K. (1996). Steps Toward an Ecology of Infrastructure: Design and Access for Large Information Spaces. *Information Systems Research*, 7(1), 111–134.
- Stokes, J., & Clegg, S. (2002). Once upon a time in the bureaucracy: Power and public sector management. *Organization*, 9(2), 225–247.
- Strauss, A. (1964). Healing by negotiation. *Society*, 1(6), 13–15.
- Strauss, A. (1985). Work and the Division of Labor. *The Sociological Quarterly*, 26(1), 1–19.

- Strauss, A. L. (1978). *Negotiations: Varieties, contexts, processes, and social order*. Jossey-Bass.
- Strauss, A. L., Schatzman, L., Ehrlich, D., Bucher, R., & Sabshin, M. (1963). The Hospital and Its Negotiated Order. In E. Freidson (Ed.), *The hospital in modern society*. New York: Free Press of Glencoe.
- Sturdy, A. (2004). The Adoption of Management Ideas and Practices: Theoretical Perspectives and Possibilities. *Management Learning*, 35(2), 155–179.
- Sturdy, A., & O'Mahoney, J. (2018). Explaining national variation in the use of management consulting knowledge: A framework. *Management Learning*, 49(5), 537–558.
- Sturdy, A., Wright, C., & Wylie, N. (2016). Managers as consultants: The hybridity and tensions of neo-bureaucratic management. *Organization*, 23(2), 184–205.
- Suchman, L. (2007). *Human-Machine Reconfigurations: Plans and Situated Actions* (2nd edition). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Suchman, L. A. (1987). *Plans and Situated Actions: The Problem of Human-Machine Communication*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Tawney, R. H. (1926). *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism*. Transaction Publishers.
- Taylor, J. (2011). The intimate insider: Negotiating the ethics of friendship when doing insider research. *Qualitative Research*, 11(1), 3–22.
- Temple, B. (2005). Nice and Tidy: Translation and Representation. *Sociological Research Online*, 10(2), 1–10.
- Terry, M. (1977). The Inevitable Growth of Informality. *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, 15(1), 76–90.
- The Economist. (2016, April 23). Saudi Arabia; The new oil order. *The Economist*; London, 419(8986), n/a.

- The World Bank. (2002). *The e-government handbook for developing countries: A project of InfoDev and the Center for Democracy and Technology* (No. 32045; p. 1). Retrieved from The World Bank website:
<http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/317081468164642250/The-e-government-handbook-for-developing-countries-a-project-of-InfoDev-and-the-Center-for-Democracy-and-Technology>
- Theobald, R. (1982). Patrimonialism. *World Politics*, 34(4), 548–559.
- Thomas, J. (1984). Some Aspects of Negotiated Order, Loose Coupling and Mesostructure in Maximum Security Prisons. *Symbolic Interaction*, 7(2), 213–231.
- Thomas, M. (2003). Bedouin Tribes and the Imperial Intelligence Services in Syria, Iraq and Transjordan in the 1920s. *Journal of Contemporary History*, 38(4), 539–561.
- Thompson, M. C. (2017). ‘Saudi Vision 2030’: A Viable Response to Youth Aspirations and Concerns? *Asian Affairs*, 48(2), 205–221.
- Thompson, V. A. (1965). *Bureaucracy and Innovation*. 10(1), 1–20.
- Tittensor, D. (2016). Doing political ethnography in a difficult climate: A Turkish case study. *Ethnography*, 17(2), 213–228.
- Tlaiss, H., & Kauser, S. (2011). The importance of wasta in the career success of Middle Eastern managers. *Journal of European Industrial Training*, 35(5), 467–486.
- Torin Monahan, & Jill A. Fisher. (2015). Strategies for Obtaining Access to Secretive or Guarded Organizations. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 44(6), 709–736.

- Tummers, L., & Bekkers, V. (2014). Policy Implementation, Street-level Bureaucracy, and the Importance of Discretion. *Public Management Review*, 16(4), 527–547.
- Tummers, L., & Rocco, P. (2015). Serving Clients When the Server Crashes: How Frontline Workers Cope with E-Government Challenges. *Public Administration Review*, 75(6), 817–827.
- United Nations-Division for Public Economics and Public Administration. (2002). *Benchmarking E-government: A Global Perspective (2002)*
- Van Maanen, J. (1979). The Fact of Fiction in Organizational Ethnography. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 24(4), 539–550.
- Van Maanen, J. (1988). *Tales of the field: On writing ethnography*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Van Maanen, J. (2006). Ethnography then and now. *Qualitative Research in Organizations and Management: An International Journal*, 1(1), 13–21.
- Van Maanen, J. (2011a). Ethnography as Work: Some Rules of Engagement. *Journal of Management Studies*, 48(1), 218–234.
- Van Maanen, J. (2011b). *Tales of the Field: On Writing Ethnography, Second Edition* (2 edition). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Van Maanen, J. (2017). The Making of a Classic Ethnography: Notes on Alice Goffman's On the Run. *Academy of Management Review*, 42(2), 382–396.
- Vardi, Y., & Wiener, Y. (1996). Misbehavior in Organizations: A Motivational Framework. *Organization Science*, 7(2), 151–165.
- Vassiliev, A. (2000). *The History of Saudi Arabia*. Saqi Books.
- Vassiliev, A. (2013). *King Faisal: Personality, Faith and Times*. Saqi.

- Waring, J. (2015). Mapping the Public Sector Diaspora: Towards a Model of Inter-Sectoral Cultural Hybridity Using Evidence from the English Healthcare Reforms. *Public Administration*, 93(2), 345–362.
- Waters, T., & Waters, D. (Eds.). (2015). *Weber's Rationalism and Modern Society: New Translations on Politics, Bureaucracy, and Social Stratification*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Watson, T. J. (1994a). *In search of management: Culture, chaos and control in managerial work*. London; New York: Routledge.
- Watson, T. J. (1994b). Managing, Crafting and Researching: Words, Skill and Imagination in Shaping Management Research. *British Journal of Management*, 5, S77–S87.
- Watson, T. J. (2011). Ethnography, Reality, and Truth: The Vital Need for Studies of 'How Things Work' in Organizations and Management. *Journal of Management Studies*, 48(1), 202–217.
- Watson, T. J. (2012). Making organisational ethnography. *Journal of Organizational Ethnography*, 1(1), 15–22.
- Watson, T. J. (2015). Organizations: Negotiated Orders. In J. D. Wright (Ed.), *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences (Second Edition)* (pp. 411–414). Elsevier.
- Weatherley, R. (1979). *Reforming Special Education: Policy Implementation from State Level to Street Level*. MIT Press.
- Weber, M. (1930). *The Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism*. New York: Scribner.

- Weber, M. (1946). Science as a Vocation. In C. W. Mills & H. H. Gerth (Trans.), *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (pp. 129–156). Oxford University Press.
- Weber, M. (1978). *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*. University of California Press.
- Weber, M. (2015). Bureaucracy. In T. Waters, D. Waters, & E. Benjamin (Trans.), *Weber's Rationalism and Modern Society: New Translations on Politics, Bureaucracy, and Social Stratification* (pp. 73–128). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Weick, K. E. (1995). *Sensemaking in Organizations*. SAGE.
- Weick, K. E. (2012). Organized sensemaking: A commentary on processes of interpretive work. *Human Relations*, 65(1), 141–153.
- Weir, D., Sultan, N., & Bunt, S. V. D. (2016). Wasta: A Scourge or a Useful Management and Business Practice? In Mohamed A. Ramady (Ed.), *The Political Economy of Wasta: Use and Abuse of Social Capital Networking* (pp. 23–31). Springer International Publishing.
- Wenger, J. B., & Wilkins, V. M. (2009). At the Discretion of Rogue Agents: How Automation Improves Women's Outcomes in Unemployment Insurance. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 19(2), 313–333.
- Wetcher-Hendricks, D. (2011). *Analyzing quantitative data: An introduction for social researchers*. Hoboken, N.J.: John Wiley & Sons.
- Wigand, R. T., & Benjamin, R. I. (1995). Electronic Commerce: Effects on Electronic Markets. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 1(3), 0–0.
- Willmott, H. (2011). Back to the Future: What Does Studying Bureaucracy Tell Us? In Stewart R. Clegg, M. Harris, & H. Höpfl (Eds.), *Managing Modernity: Beyond Bureaucracy?* (pp. 132–154). Oxford University Press.

- Wills, J., & Halligan, J. (2008). *The Centrelink Experiment: Innovation in Service Delivery*. ANU E Press.
- Wimmer, M. A. (2002). A European perspective towards online one-stop government: The eGOV project. *Electronic Commerce Research and Applications*, 1(1), 92–103.
- Winner, L. (1980). Do artifacts have politics? *Daedalus*, 109(1), 121–136.
- Wolcott, H. F. (1994). *Transforming Qualitative Data: Description, Analysis, and Interpretation*. SAGE.
- Wolcott, H. F. (2001). *Writing Up Qualitative Research*. SAGE.
- Woolgar, S., & Grint, K. (1991). Computers and the Transformation of Social Analysis. *Science, Technology, & Human Values*, 16(3), 368–378.
- Wynbrandt, J. (2014). *A Brief History of Saudi Arabia*. Infobase Publishing.
- Xin, K. K., & Pearce, J. L. (1996). Guanxi: Connections As Substitutes for Formal Institutional Support. *Academy of Management Journal*, 39(6), 1641–1658.
- Yang, M. M. (1994). *Gifts, Favors, and Banquets: The Art of Social Relationships in China*. Cornell University Press.
- Yanow, D., Ybema, S., & Hulst, M. van. (2012). Practising Organizational Ethnography. In G. Symon & C. Cassell (Eds.), *Qualitative Organizational Research: Core Methods and Current Challenges*. SAGE.
- Ybema, S., Yanow, D., Wels, H., & Kamsteeg, F. H. (2009). *Organizational Ethnography: Studying the Complexity of Everyday Life*. SAGE.
- Yousfi, H. (2014). Rethinking Hybridity in Postcolonial Contexts: What Changes and What Persists? The Tunisian case of Poulina's managers. *Organization Studies*, 35(3), 393–421.

The endurance of the pre-bureaucratic and eGovernment hybridity at the street-level: An ethnographic study

Zayani, M. (2018). *Digital Middle East: State and Society in the Information Age*.
Oxford University Press.

Appendix 1: Total population of Saudi Arabia (Saudi and non-Saudi) as of 2018

السكان حسب الجنس وفئات العمر والجنسية (سعودي، غير سعودي)									
Population by Nationality (Saudi/Non-Saudi) and Gender									
Mid- year year									
	Saudi سعوديون			Non-Saudi غير سعوديين			Total الجملة		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Total	1067 5385	1018273 2	2078 8927	3885 081	387987 2	128450 83	19240 668	141727 04	33418 680

Source: Saudi General Authority for Statistics (<https://www.stats.gov.sa/en/43>)

Appendix 2: Participant Information Sheet



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته
أسمى محمد الشلاقي طالب دكتوراة في كلية الإدارة بجامعة لانكستر في بريطانيا. أحب أن أدعوكم للمشاركة في دراسة بحثية عن نوعية المنفورات في ممارسات طلب وتقديم الخدمات الحكومية العامة في ظل التحول إلى الحكومة الإلكترونية.
تجدون أسفله معلومات مفصلة عن حقوقكم و مايتضمنه دوركم في هذه الدراسة. الرجاء قراءة هذه المعلومات بتمعن قبل الموافقة على المشاركة.

Participant information sheet

Hello, my name is Mohammad Alshallaqi

I am a PhD student at Lancaster University Management School and I would like to invite you to take part in a research study about how are practices of public service delivery are changing with the introduction of electronic-government

Please take time to read the following information carefully before you decide whether or not you wish to take part.

What is the study about?

This study aims to understand how practices underpinning the delivery of public service are changing with the introduction of e-government.

عن الدراسة؟

هذه الدراسة تهدف إلى فهم نوعية المنفورات في ممارسات مقدمي وطلبي الخدمة الحكومية في ظل التحول إلى الحكومة الإلكترونية. تركز هذه الدراسة بنصب على مايتطلبه التحول إلى الحكومة الإلكترونية من تغير في ممارسات طلب تقديم الخدمات الحكومية وكيفية حصول هذا التغير.

Why have I been invited?

I have approached you because I am interested in understanding your experiences of the way in which you request/deliver public services are changing with the introduction of e-government.

I would be very grateful if you would agree to take part in this study.

لماذا تم دعوتك؟

تمت دعوتك لاهتمامنا في الاستفادة من خبراتكم وتجاربكم في تقديم الخدمات العامة وفهم نوعية التغيرات في ممارسات طلب او تقديم الخدمة في ظل التحول إلى الحكومة الإلكترونية.

نشكر وتقدر لك اهتمامك وموافقتك على المشاركة.

What will I be asked to do if I take part?

If you decided to take part, this could involve one or all of the following:

- 1- Interviews lasting 40-90 minutes. These interviews will take place in a private setting where possible to ensure that what you say and how you participate remain confidential.
- 2- Observations of your practices in the context of public service delivery. These observations may last from 2-4 hours in one work day. They will take place in a public place where you normally work or interact with others in the process of requesting/delivering public services.
- 3- Documents and other materials: Documents and other material objects relevant to this topic are greatly appreciated as sources of data. We will ask you if you believe that specific documents and other materials belonging to you are of relevance to this research and we will always ask for your permission to collect it for data analysis.

Interviews and observations will complement each other in trying to understand how are service delivery practices are changing with the introduction of e-government.

ما هو المطلوب مني في هذه الدراسة؟

مشاركتك في هذه الدراسة قد تتضمن كل من أو جزء من الآتي:
مقابلات فردية قد تستغرق 40-90 دقيقة. سوف تجري هذه المقابلات في أماكن نستطيع أن نعاقد فيها على خصوصية البيانات التي تشاركينا بها ويتفضل أن تكون في المنطقتين التي نعملون فيها. إذا تعذر الوصول على مكان مناسب ومناسب في مكان عملكم فمن الممكن أن نبحث عن مكان مناسب خارج مقر عملكم.
مشاهدة لمعملكم في سياق طلب/تقديم الخدمات. قد تستمر هذه المشاهدات من 2-4 ساعات في يوم عمل واحد. سوف تجري هذه المشاهدات في بيئة العمل وفي سياق طلب/تقديم الخدمة الحكومية
الوثائق وغيرها من الأشياء العادية ذات العلة بهذا الموضوع هي موضع تقدير كبير كمصدر للبيانات. وسوف نطلب رأيك فيما إذا كان هناك مواد متاحة قد نريد هذا البعث. مثال على ذلك قد يتضمن أعباءات معينة، تقارير منشورة الخ. سوف يتم طلب الإذن الرسمي من ملاك هذه المواد قبل استخدامها.

What are the possible benefits from taking part?

If you take part in this study, your insights will contribute to our understanding of recent Information and Communications Technologies (ICT)-enabled government reforms and the changing nature of service delivery practices. ICT-enabled changes are becoming increasingly necessary and there is a lot to explore and understand about how they are being enacted.
There will be no financial rewards or incentives for your participation in this study.

ما هي الفوائد المحتملة من المشاركة في هذه الدراسة؟

مشاركتك في هذه الدراسة سوف تسهم في فهمنا لكيفية ونوعية التحول للحكومة الإلكترونية. تكنولوجيا المعلومات أصبحت جزء لا يتجزأ من عمل القطاع الحكومي وهناك الكثير لا تعرفه من ماهية ونوعية وكيفية تغير "ممارسات" المستخدمين ودورها في تفعيل و تشكيل حقائق ونتائج هذه التحولات الإلكترونية.

لن يكون هناك مكافآت أو حوافز مالية للمشاركة في هذه الدراسة.

Do I have to take part?

No. It's completely up to you to decide whether or not you take part. Your participation is voluntary.

If you decide not to take part in this study, this will not affect your position in the organization and your relations with your employer.

The endurance of the pre-bureaucratic and eGovernment hybridity at the street-level: An ethnographic study

هل أنا ملزم بالمشاركة؟

أنت غير ملزم تماما بالمشاركة. مشاركتكم هي تطوعية واختيارية. قرارك بعدم المشاركة لن يؤثر عليك بأي شكل من الأشكال ولا على علاقتك بالمنظمة التي تعمل لها.

What if I change my mind?

If you change your mind, you are free to withdraw at any time during your participation in this study and without fear of any consequences. If you want to withdraw, please let me know, and I will extract any data you contributed to the study and destroy it. Data means the information, views, ideas, etc. that you and other participants will have shared with me. However, it is difficult and often impossible to take out data from one specific participant when this has already been anonymised or pooled together with other people's data. Therefore, you can only withdraw up to 3 weeks after taking part in the study.

ماهو الاجراء اذا قررت الانسحاب من الدراسة؟

اذا قمت بتغيير رأيك، فإن لك الحرية أن تنسحب في أي وقت أثناء مشاركتك في هذه الدراسة، ودون خوف من أي عواقب. إذا كنت ترغب في الانسحاب، اسمحوا لي أن أعرف، وسوف استخراج أي بيانات لك قد تتضمن معلومات معينة، وجهات النظر، والأفكار وغيرها في هذه الدراسة والتخلص منها. إننا أتباعا لسياسة السرية التامة نقوم "بتجهيل" أي بيانات يتم جمعها وإضافتها إلى بيانات أخرى بحيث يصعب تحديد مصدرها في مدة لا تتجاوز 3 أسابيع من تاريخ مشاركتكم، نرجوا منكم اختيارنا برفعتكم الانسحاب خلال هذه المدة لكي يتسنى لنا تحديد مشاركتكم والتخلص منها.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

There are minimal risks in this study because any views you express will be treated as confidential and anonymised in any publications that follow from the research. In view of this there are no major disadvantages anticipated following your participation in this study. However, taking part in this study means investing up to 90 min. of your time.

ما هي مميزات والمخاطر المحتملة للمشاركة؟

ليس هناك مخاطر متوقعة في هذه الدراسة لأن كل المعلومات والآراء التي تدلي بها سوف تجهل (لن يستخدم اسمك الحقيقي) وسوف تعامل وفقاً لمعايير سرية صارمة. ليس هناك مساوئ متوقعة لمشاركتك في هذه الدراسة. من المهم أن تعرف أن مشاركتك في هذه الدراسة تعني استثمار من وقتك قد يصل إلى 90 دقيقة للمشاركة في هذه الدراسة.

Will my data be identifiable?

After an interview and/or an observation, only the researcher conducting this study and the research supervisors will have access to the data you share.

I will keep all personal information about you (e.g. your name and other information about you that can identify you) confidential, that is I will not share it with others. I will anonymise any audio recordings and hard copies of any data. This means that I remove any personal information and so you cannot be identified through it.

هل سوف تكون البيانات الخاصة بي يمكن تحديدها؟ ماهي سياسة السرية؟

جميع البيانات يتم تجهيلها وتشفيرها بسرية تامة وجمعها مع بيانات أخرى بحيث يصعب تحديد مصدرها. جميع الأجهزة المستخدمة مثل مسجلات صوتية أو أجهزة حاسب هي مشفرة تشفير كامل بناء على سياسات الجامعة. لن يتم استخدام أي معلومات قد تحدد جهات معينة أو أشخاص. سوف يتم الاستمانه بأسماء وهمية وتغيير أي بيانات قد تستخدم لتحديد مصادر معينة. سوف يتم تشفير وتجهيل أي تسجيلات صوتية بشكل كامل. فقط الباحث الرئيسي ومشرفون البحث لهم أحقيه الاطلاع على البيانات المجموعة في هذه الدراسة.

How will my data be stored?

Your data will be stored in encrypted files (that is no-one other than me, the researcher will be able to access them) and on password-protected computers.

I will store any hard copies of any data securely in locked cabinets in my office.

I will keep data that can identify you separately from non-personal information (e.g. your views on a specific topic).

In accordance with University guidelines, I will keep the data securely for a minimum of ten years.

كيف يتم تخزين مشاركتي والبيانات المجموعه في هذا البحث؟
يتم تخزين جميع البيانات وتغير أي بيانات معرفة (مثل أسماء منظمات أو أشخاص) يتم تخزين جميع البيانات في ملفات مشفرة وعلى خوادم جامعة لانكستر المحمية وعلى أجهزة الكمبيوتر مشفرة و متوافقه مع سياسات ومعايير السرية المعمول وعلى بها في مثل هذه الأبحاث.

لا يستطيع أحد الوصول إليها غير الباحث فقط. إذا كان هناك نسخ مطبوعة من أي البيانات سيتم تخزينها بشكل سري آمن في خزائن مؤمنة ومخصصة لهذا الغرض في جامعة لانكستر. وسوف يتم فصل وعزل أي بيانات تعرفيه (مثل أسماء منظمات أو أشخاص) عن أي معلومات غير شخصية (مثل وجهات نظركم بشأن موضوع محدد).

ووفقا للسياسات الجامعة وممارسات البحث، سيتم حفظ البيانات المجموعه (بمد تشفيرها وفصل البيانات الشخصية تجهيلها بشكل كامل) بشكل آمن لمده سنوات كحد أدنى على خوادم الجامعة بشكل سري وآمن.

How will we use the information you have shared with us and what will happen to the results of the research study?

After anonymization, I will use data you share with me for academic purposes only. This will include writing and defending a PhD thesis as well as possibly publications in academic Journals. I may also present the results of my study at academic conferences and they might be published in conference proceedings.

When writing up the findings from this study, I would like to reproduce some of the views and ideas you shared with me. When doing so, I will only use anonymised quotes (e.g. from our interview with you), so that although I will use your exact words, you cannot be identified in our publications.

Anonymised collected data that is used to underpin a publication might be made available through Lancaster University institutional depository for other researchers upon request and review of their intended use.

If anything you tell me in the interview or during observations suggests that you or somebody else might be at risk of harm, I will be obliged to share this information with research supervisors and possibly other legal bodies if needed. If possible I will inform you of this breach of confidentiality.

كيف سوف نستخدم المعلومات التي قمت بمشاركتها معنا وماذا سحدث لنتائج دراسة بحثية؟
يتم تجهيل البيانات وإخفاء أي دلائل على الهوية سوف تستخدم المعلومات التي تسهم بها للأغراض الأكاديمية فقط. وسوف يشمل ذلك كتابة والدفاع عن أطروحة الدكتوراه وكذلك ربما المنشورات في المجلات الأكاديمية. أيضا قد تقدم نتائج دراستي في المؤتمرات الأكاديمية وقد تنشر في وقائع المؤتمرات.

عند كتابة نتائج هذه الدراسة، أود أن إنتاج واقتباس بعض الآراء والأفكار التي أسهمت بها (على سبيل المثال من حوارنا معك). سوف يتم ذلك بمد تجهيل البيانات واستخدام أسماء ودلالات وهمية. لن يتم استخدام أي من بياناتكم التعريفية ولن يمكن أن يتم تحديد مصدر البيانات من منشوراتنا. يتم تجهيل جميع مصادر البيانات التي تستخدم لتدعيم بحث ميم منشور يمكن أن تخزن في خوادم الجامعة عن طريق الإيداع المؤسسي لجامعة لانكستر عند طلبها من باحثين آخرين بمد النشر للإطلاع عليها. سيتم ذلك بمد دراسة وتدقيق طلبات الإطلاع وموافقتم على ذلك.

The endurance of the pre-bureaucratic and eGovernment hybridity at the street-level: An ethnographic study

نلتزم في هذا الدراسة بسياسة سرية صارمة جدا حيث أن جميع البيانات التي تشاركون فيها لن يتم مشاركتها مع أحد خارج الإطار الأكاديمي وقبل تجهيلها. لكن يستثنى من ذلك هناك أي شيء تقوله يفيد بتهديد أو إيذاء لأحد. سوف يتم أخباركم بأي خرق لسياسة السرية اذا كان هناك ما يدعي لذلك.

Who has reviewed the project?

This study has been reviewed and approved by the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences and Lancaster University Management School's Research Ethics Committee.

من قام بالدراسة الاخلاقية لهذا البحث؟

قد استعرضت هذه الدراسة وأقرتها لجنة أخلاقيات البحوث المشتركة في كلية الفنون والعلوم الاجتماعية وكلية الإدارة في جامعة لانكستر.

What if I have a question or concern?

If you have any queries or if you are unhappy with anything that happens concerning your participation in the study, please contact myself

ماذا لو كان لدي سؤال أو استفسار؟

إذا كان لديك أي استفسارات، أو إذا كنت غير راض عن أي شيء يحدث فيما يتعلق بالمشاركة في الدراسة، يرجى الاتصال بالباحث الرئيسي أو أحد المشرفين في الترتيب الآتي:

Mohammad Alshallaqi

E-mail: m.alshallaqi@lancaster.ac.uk

Or

مشرفي البحث:

Professor Niall Hayes

Department of Organisation, Work and Technology

Lancaster University LA1 4YX

Office: B26, B-Floor, Charles Carter Building

Tel: +44 (0) 1524510962 E-mail: n.hayes@lancaster.ac.uk

Professor Darren McCabe

Department of Organisation, Work and Technology

Lancaster University LA1 4YX

Office B07, B-Floor, Charles Carter Building

Tel: +44 (0) 1524 510950 E-mail: d.mccabe@lancaster.ac.uk

If you have any concerns or complaints that you wish to discuss with a person who is not directly involved in the research, you can also contact:

إذا كان لديك أي استفسارات أو شكاوى ترغب في مناقشتها مع شخص لا يشارك مباشرة في البحث، يمكنك أيضا الاتصال برئيس قسم المنظمات والعمل والتكنولوجيا في جامعة لانكستر:

Professor James Faulconbridge

Head of Department, Organisation, Work and Technology

Office B28, B-Floor, Charles Carter Building

Tel: +44 (0) 1524 510265

Thank you for considering your participation in this project.

نشكركم على تعاونكم ورغبتكم المشاركة في هذا المشروع والسلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته.

Appendix 3: Participant Consent Form

CONSENT FORM

استمارة الموافقة



Project Title: Reconfiguring public service delivery: The implications of electronic-government on practices of public service delivery
العقيرات في ممارسات تقديم الخدمة: تداعيات الحكومة الإلكترونية على ممارسات تقديم الخدمة

Name of Researcher: Mohammad Alshallaqi محمد الشالقي
 اسم الباحث:

Email: m.alshallaqi@lancaster.ac.uk
 البريد الإلكتروني:

Please tick each box

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily
 تؤكد أنني قد قرأت وفهمت ورقة معلومات للدراسة المذكورة أعلاه. وقد أتيت لي الفرصة النظر في المعلومات وطرح الأسئلة وكانت الإجابة على نحو مرضي
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time during my participation in this study and within 3 weeks after I took part in the study, without giving any reason. If I withdraw within 3 weeks of taking part in the study my data will be removed.
 أفهم أن مشاركتي طوعية وأن أنا حر أن انسحب في أي وقت خلال مشاركتي في هذه الدراسة، وفي غضون 3 أسابيع بعد أن شاركت في الدراسة، وبدون إبداء أي سبب. إذا انسحبت في غضون 3 أسابيع سيتم إزالة البيانات الخاصة بي
3. I understand that any information given by me may be used in future reports, academic articles, publications or presentations by the researcher/s, but my personal information will not be included and I will not be identifiable.
 أفهم أن أي المعلومات التي يمكن أن تستخدم في تقديم رسالة دكتوراة أو مقالات و منشورات أكاديمية التي يقدمها الباحث ، ولكن معلوماتي الشخصية لن يتم تضمينها ولن يتم التعرف على هويتي.
4. I understand that my name/my organisation's name will not appear in any reports, articles or presentation without my consent.
 أفهم أناسم يظهر اسمي أو اسم المنظمة التي أعمل لها في أي بحوث تقارير ومقالات أكاديمية دون موافقتي.
5. I understand that any interviews or focus groups will be audio-recorded and transcribed and that data will be protected on encrypted devices and kept secure.
 أفهم أن المقابلات قد تكون مسجلة صوتياً وأن جميع التسجيلات قد تكتب لتحليلها. جميع التسجيلات والنسخ الكتابية يتم تشفيرها وتتم على أجهزة مشفرة ومؤمنة ومتوافقة مع معايير السرية واختناقيات البحث الأكاديمي.
6. I understand that data will be kept according to University guidelines for a minimum of 10 years after the end of the study.
 أفهم أن البيانات المجموعه بعد تشفيرها وتجهيلها سوف تحفظ بسرية تامة على خوادم الجامعة لمدة عشر سنوات على الأقل.
7. I agree to take part in the above study.
 أفهم المشاركة في الدراسة المذكورة أعلاه.

Name of Participant الاسم

Date التاريخ

Signature التوقيع

I confirm that the participant was given an opportunity to ask questions about the study, and all the questions asked by the participant have been answered correctly and to the best of my ability. I confirm that the individual has not been coerced into giving consent, and the consent has been given freely and voluntarily.

Signature of Researcher /person taking the consent _____ Date _____ Day/month/year

One copy of this form will be given to the participant and the original kept in the files of the researcher at Lancaster University