



## **Abstract**

This paper will argue that current critiques of bureaucracy often either render the figure of the administrator invisible or define them as objects that slow down, disrupt or block. Such constructions fail to acknowledge the subject that performs the administrative labour and portray that figure in a predominantly negative way. The authors will question whether lessons from feminist readings of domestic and maintenance work could be used to subjectify the administrator.

In addition to bringing together existing research on domestic and administrative labour, the authors will use findings from their work with the campaign group Justice 4 Domestic Workers (J4DW) undertaken in January 2016.<sup>1</sup> Feminist theory around domestic labour is well established and wide-ranging. Theories that examine the invisibility of reproductive labour seek to subjectify the figure of the domestic worker to politicise the domestic. We will map the commonalities between domestic and administrative labour, namely: (in)visibility; the gendered and objectified nature of both types of work; and the perceived placement of administration and domestic labour within the hierarchy of organisational or household priorities.

1. More information and contact details for Justice 4 Domestic Workers can be found on its website <http://www.j4dw.com> (Accessed 2016-02-20.)

# Bureaucracy's Labour: The Administrator as Subject

## **ANDREA FRANCKE**

Andrea Francke (1978) is an artist who was born in Peru and is currently based in London. Long-term projects include: *Invisible Spaces of Parenthood*, a collaboration with Kim Dhillon exploring the legacies of Second Wave feminism and their implications within art and its infrastructures, labour, and care; and *Wish You'd Been Here*, organising and reflecting on hosting as an artistic and feminist method along with Eva Rowson. She is currently a PhD candidate in Latin American Cultural Studies at the University of Manchester. Her doctoral research attempts to develop a decolonised alternative genealogy for social practice in Peruvian Art.

## **ROSS JARDINE**

Ross Jardine's work is located somewhere between art and administration. He uses a research-based approach to examine the places we live and work in and the policies, labour and symbolic frameworks that create and maintain them. He co-organises Radio Anti, a radio project which has worked with the Serpentine Gallery (London), Bloc Projects (Sheffield) and the Art Licks Festival (London). He is an experienced policy researcher and has been working with the campaign group Justice 4 Domestic Workers to examine health and safety provision for domestic workers.

1. This paper is written in the context of the United Kingdom.

2. See, for example, Graeber, David. *The Utopia of Rules: On Technology, Stupidity, and the Secret Joys of Bureaucracy*. New York: Melville House. 2015; Fisher, Mark. *Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative?* London: Zero Books. 2009; Spade, Dean. *Normal Life: Administrative Violence, Critical Trans Politics, and the Limits of Law*, 2nd edition. Durham: Duke University Press Books. 2015.

3. Administrative labour can be split into three categories: that of the “unskilled” administrator – the data entry clerk, the filing clerk; the personal assistant position that substituted the secretary; and the manager. For the purposes of this essay administrative labour will be considered separate from managerial labour.

4. Graham, Stephen and Nigel Thrift. “Out of Order”. *Theory, Culture & Society*. Vol. 24. No. 3. 2007. pp. 1-25 .p. 17. doi: 10.1177/0263276407075954.

5. Easterling, Keller. *Extrastatecraft: The Power of Infrastructure Space*. London: Verso. 2014.

6. Graeber, *op. cit.*

7. Toscano, Alberto. “Logistics and Opposition”. *Mute*, August 2011. See <http://www.metamute.org/editorial/articles/logistics-and-opposition> (Accessed 2017-01-23.)

8. Graeber, *op. cit.*

## Introduction: The Administrator as Infrastructure

Administration surrounds us: it is an infrastructure that generates, sustains and controls the flows of capital that shape our daily existence. This can be seen in how administrative processes and jargon are increasing presences in our everyday lives, imposed by both public and private institutions. As the public sector struggles to manage the UK Conservative Party’s regime of unrelenting funding cuts and the private sector continues to seek new ways to exploit profit, a common strategy to manage with fewer resources is to shift the labour of administration onto the employee, the customer or the service user.<sup>1</sup> Think, for example, about the amount of time spent by the average worker on paperwork or employee self-assessments, the time that consumers spend arranging deliveries, or the completing of application forms by users of the welfare system.

Current critiques of administration – such as those of David Graeber, Mark Fisher and Dean Spade – are a reaction to the administration of the body and the way bureaucracy is used to control the flows of our everyday life.<sup>2</sup> From passport control to binary gender categories on job application forms, administration gently pushes us into ideologically assigned roles and positions and then traps us there. We are consistently expected to self-manage, to self-assess and to apply administrative techniques to our personal and work lives. Our paper does not dispute this impression but seeks to add a different perspective to it. Critiques of these power

relations are often positioned from the perspective of the administered body. But what of the administrator?<sup>3</sup> What of the worker who transfers information from the form to the database, who checks the form for completeness, who minutes the meeting that decides on the form’s design and then generates the form? Administration renders these figures invisible. To be deemed successful in their task the administrator must adhere to a range of standards and style guides that masks their identity with that of the institution through policies of best practice and standardisation.

In their essay on the importance of maintenance, Nigel Thrift and Stephen Graham describe infrastructure systems as being physically and metaphorically veiled beneath the surface of urban life, only made visible by the sudden absence of infrastructural flow. The smoothness of the road’s maintained surface is only made present the moment we hit a pothole, for example.<sup>4</sup> Keller Easterling expands the definition of infrastructure to include policies and systems that enable flows of global capital, for example the standardisation of the width of credit cards.<sup>5</sup> We propose to extend this definition of infrastructure further to include the labour that enables these flows. Just as with the physical infrastructure described by Thrift and Graham, as we are *swamped* by avalanches of paperwork and forms to complete, the administrator is hidden from sight, only to reappear through an error – either made by the system or the user. The administrator’s appearance is often unwelcome, unhelpful: it delays, blocks and exacerbates. In a strikingly sprawling personal

anecdote, David Graeber describes feeling stupid as he moves through administrative systems, trying to deal with the *disembodied* voices of, almost entirely, women workers in banks and hospitals. They block, they slow down and they disrupt his path.<sup>6</sup> However, by disembodiment and removing the subjectivity of these workers, formulating them into *only* infrastructure, we miss an opportunity; it is in this potential to produce frustration that we might find the potential to slow and regulate flows of capital. Alberto Toscano has pointed to how studies of logistics workers (delivery drivers, postal workers, dock workers or rail workers) have shown that they hold *choke points* over the flow of capital.<sup>7</sup> So too can administrators, who often work in intimate proximity to the leadership decisions they record, communicate and implement. *Because* administrators are seen as infrastructural, they are often witness to decisions and processes that might expose or undermine flows of capital. Confidentiality is secured through legal agreements or by removing the administrator's agency through the precarious nature of the work – even administrators on permanent contracts are consistently under threat of restructure or redundancy as lower-grade staff are often the first to go.

## Heroes and Free Men: The Making of Infrastructure

The administrator becomes infrastructure through the erosion of the value and expertise of their labour. Language is key in this process, although administrative labour seems close to an intellectual practice this wrongly implies a level of freedom and recognition for the subject performing the labour. The truth is that most administrative jobs are constructed to be a reduction of the alienated parts of a sum. They involve tasks related to reading and writing, which might seem intellectual but whose constitution has been broken into parts that can be performed after what is suggested to be minimal training. Despite often being highly trained or educated, administra-

tors can find themselves on assignments in a wide range of organisations and industries, from local councils to investment banks. No knowledge of the industry is necessary as the mechanics of the job are the same and continuity is provided by standard software for databases or finance systems, such as Microsoft Office or Sage. Organisational policies and guidelines make it easier to replace workers who are reduced to cogs in the machine rather than function as individuals with valued knowledge. Administrative documents elude authorship through the use of templates, past versions, and best practice – document histories expose the layers of change, a canon produced through the combined labour of the historic bodies that have updated and tailored the document over time. Workers are partially absolved from personal responsibility through best practice standards that aim to transfer decisions to a third party, a party that hides its ideology under the pretence of technical and factual knowledge. Actions become attached to roles instead of individuals.

Administrators become infrastructure not only through how their work is constructed and described, but also by how institutions are organised and narrated around an individual leader or hero. Administrative systems are collective by nature. Collective systems without shared aims, authorship or intent are as much of a challenge to organisations as they are to discourse. In order to attribute intention and purpose to a group, we either create competitive structures that elevate protagonists, heroes and leaders, or we institutionalise the collective so that it *behaves* like a coherent individual – attributing it ownership of its actions and products. Autobiographically constructed critiques of bureaucracy such as David Graeber's are valuable, but they also risk reproducing these narrative models.<sup>8</sup> Such critiques choose a hero, often the author themselves, and narrate their battles against a mass of nameless and interchangeable administrators who stand between them and their goals. Hero narratives need to make

9. Arendt, Hannah. Arendt, Hannah. *The Human Condition*, 2nd edition. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. 1998.

10. For an in-depth analysis of different readings of Arendt in feminist theory consult Dietz, Mary G. "Feminist Receptions of Hannah Arendt". In *Feminist Interpretations of Hannah Arendt*. Bonnie Honig (ed.). University Park, PA: Penn State Press. 2010. pp. 17-50.

11. Veltman, Andrea. "Simone de Beauvoir and Hannah Arendt on Labor". *Hypatia*. No. 25. 2010. pp. 55-78. doi: 10.1111/j.1527-2001.2009.01084.x; Benhabib, Seyla. *The Reluctant Modernism of Hannah Arendt*. Modernity and Political Thought Series No. 10. London: Sage. 1996.

12. Federici, Silvia. "Precarious Labor: A Feminist Viewpoint". *In the Middle of a Whirlwind*. 2008. See <https://inthemiddle-ofthewhirlwind.wordpress.com/precious-labor-a-feminist-viewpoint/> (Accessed 2017-01-23.)

13. Ahmed, Sara. *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others*. Durham: Duke University Press Books. 2006. pp.3-12.

14. Fraser, Nancy. "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy". *Social Text*. 1990. p. 61. doi: 10.2307/466240.

15. Arendt, Hannah. *op. cit.*

16. Gitelman, Lisa. *Paper Knowledge: Toward a Media History of Documents*. Durham: Duke University Press Books. 2014.

the support structures around the individual invisible and unnamed in order to construct the myth of meritocracy, talent and authorship – i.e. the deserving subject. A consequence of the process is the creation of an ocean of unnamed, undeserving non-subjects. What such critiques therefore partially do is reinforce the authorial, meritocratic, deserving nature not only of the author but also their profession. The role of academic, teacher or artist, for example, is perceived as a specialised position. They are understood as a combination of natural talent and academic validation. The unnamed producers who support these positions are separated from the individual authors/heroes.

We propose a reading of the author/hero figure as Hannah Arendt's free man. In *The Human Condition* (1958), Arendt describes the "Free Man" – an individual who is free from having to perform the tasks related to the drudgeries of maintaining life in order to be free for political action.<sup>9</sup> This perceived de-valuation of reproductive labour parallels the processes used today to justify the erasure of the administrator's position as a subject. The administrative worker functions as an object, a piece of infrastructure, invisible until something goes wrong. Administrators are only allowed some semblance of humanity when made to embody the physical barrier blocking the way of a goal: this fleeting invisibility culminates in descriptions filled with the animosity we feel towards road bumps. The administrator becomes the incompetent, the petty dictator inebriated on what little power they have, the embodiment of the failures of

the system. What this narrative fails to acknowledge is the number of invisible roads travelled to get to the point where the hero encounters the bump.

Using Hannah Arendt's categories of *work*, *labour* and *action*, we can analyse the separation of values, and the potential for liberation of different occupations. These categories can be crudely summarised: *labour* sustains the biological conditions for human life; *work* builds and maintains the world, making it fit for human use; and *action* defines man as a free agent in the world among other free agents. Feminists have historically problematised Arendt's categories, especially how she fails to acknowledge they are gendered through their situatedness in certain types of spaces – private and domestic space being limited to *labour* while *action* occurs in public.<sup>10</sup> In our analysis, Arendt's categories are useful in making visible how the perception of certain jobs and the subject who performs them are paramount in enabling those same subjects to enter the public sphere and into the political space for debate. Feminist theorist Andrea Veltman's defence of *The Human Condition* shows how Arendt didn't justify the oppression of certain subjects but described how "subordinate or second-class social status is often borne out in practice" through the "relegation of chores that one would rather have someone else perform."<sup>11</sup> Thus, we can start to see how administrators are defined and de-valued for their performing of both the labour that sustains the life of the political and the work that builds the forum itself.

## Maintaining Life and Reproductive Labour – Mapping the Similarities of Administrative and Domestic Labour

The refusal to recognise the administrative subject as a full individual excludes them from the public sphere and from fulfilling their political potential – this mirrors how a similar refusal to recognise the subject that performs domestic labour, usually women, has excluded those individuals from the political sphere. This recalls the lack of recognition for domestic labour that was so strongly denounced in second-wave feminism. Feminist intellectuals, such as Silvia Federici, have commented on the vagueness of Marx’s descriptions of reproductive labour – the work performed in the private sphere that reproduces the labour power required for capitalism to survive.<sup>12</sup> This is illustrated in Sara Ahmed’s description of the different phenomenological experiences of a domestic setting. She recounts the relationship between the writer and his writing table described in other phenomenological readings by white heterosexual cis-males. As *he* sits at the table focused on *his* writing *he* is unaware of *his* family, the housework and the structures of privilege that enable *him* to be there. Domestic labour then easily becomes infrastructural for those subjects, revealed only as a bump – when the baby cries, when dinner is not ready or when the papers on his table are found disarranged after *someone* cleaned it.<sup>13</sup> Thus labour performed in the domestic sphere is made invisible not only by spatial properties. Migrant domestic workers, such as the members of J4DW, are a case in point. Because such workers work behind closed doors, it makes them particularly vulnerable to abuse and exploitation at the hands of their employers. However, this situation is exasperated by government legislation: for example, visas that tie workers to their employers and processes at immigration control that leave the passports of domestic workers in the possession of employers. Such policies deny migrant domestic

workers citizenship and therefore exclude them from the sphere of public discourse and policymaking. Furthermore, Nancy Fraser’s analysis of frameworks with systematic inequalities shows that the terms *private* and *public* are frequently deployed to delegitimise some interests, views and topics and to valorise others. The privateness of domestic space is not natural, but is constructed through the bodies that inhabit it. Fraser states that what makes a space public or private rests on a class and gender-biased notion of *publicity*, which we propose, could be expanded to include issues of race, ableism, sexual and immigrant status.<sup>14</sup> Some types of labour are made valueless through their connection with certain subjects and vice versa. It is not just the spatial qualities of certain types of labour that make them invisible but the fact that society constructs conditions of space and property, which make the work of certain bodies invisible.

Arendt traces a historical connection between ownership of private property and access to the public sphere.<sup>15</sup> We propose that the hero/author operates in the public sphere using the private ownership/authorship of their intellectual labour as an entry ticket, while the mass of unnamed administrators provide the infrastructure for his adventure. The administrator’s lack of authorship and ownership of their intellectual property re-enacts the same strategy that has historically been used to undervalue domestic labour – which has always been perceived as un-authored, unskilled and performed for the head of the household. Lisa Gitelman’s historical analysis demonstrates how the class and gender composition attached to categories of documents identifies them as authored and thus constituting intellectual property.<sup>16</sup> Although current copyright definitions automatically assign authorship to new documents, authorship in clerical work is still mostly ignored. Corporations now include copyright clauses in all contracts to ensure that the institution retains ownership of any intellectual production performed by workers. This is not simply a legal consideration: socially we prefer to

17. See Fraser, *op. cit.*

18. Dalla Costa, Mariarosa and James, Selma. *The Power of Women and the Subversion of the Community*. Bristol: Falling Wall Press. 1972. See <http://libcom.org/library/power-women-subversion-community-della-costa-selma-james> (Accessed 2017-01-23.)

19. Hochschild, Arlie. *The Second Shift: Working Parents and the Revolution at Home*, 2nd edition. London: Penguin. 2003.

20. The study included controlling for education and skill.

21. Levanon, A., England, P. and Allison, Paul. "Occupational Feminization and Pay: Assessing Causal Dynamics Using 1950–2000 U.S. Census Data". *Social Forces*. Vol. 88. No. 2. 2009. pp. 865–891. doi:10.1353/sof.0.0264.

22. Nadasen, Premilla. *Household Workers Unite: The Untold Story of African American Women Who Built a Movement*. Reprint edition. Boston: Beacon Press. 2016. p. 19.

23. Fraser, , *op.cit.* p. 67.

imagine that the form we are completing was never authored. Administrative systems are put in place to pretend that these documents are generated through automated technical procedures that erase any trace of humanity or responsibility from them. Documents, forms and templates are constructed on top of each other, each time by a different unnamed worker. Absent from the document is a signature, responsibility but also credit. Such documents are not objects that can be used as an entry pass into the public sphere. The process of denying authorship (in the sense of denying the subjectivity expressed in the construction of a form or Excel spread sheet, not in the copyright transforming it into an asset) is, in itself, a process of de-subjectification.<sup>17</sup> It creates a hierarchy of work and labour, categorising the administrator as maintainer instead of a creator.

Mariarosa Dalla Costa and Selma James's feminist reading of Marx in 1972 focused on the lack of wages as the main instrument for making domestic labour invisible and thus allowing capitalism to exploit its surplus labour at no cost. However, in their essay's footnotes there is a prescient quote from the *Financial Times* in 1971 suggesting that many capitalists are missing the opportunity to use women in positions of middle management; "being grateful outsiders, women would not only lower the pay structure..."<sup>18</sup> Through purposeful de-skilling and modularisation, administrative labour has now become poorly remunerated and invisible. Women have been pushed to enter the workforce, not through the recognition of domestic labour as work, but by adding a *second shift* on top of their reproductive labour.

In this process they have been used to lower wages, to bring invisibility and to reduce the social recognition of certain jobs and professions.<sup>19</sup> Women render spaces oblique or removed from public discourse through their participation, a process mirrored in the effects they have on the valuation of certain types of labour. "Occupational Feminization and Pay", a study of the US labour market analysing census figures between 1950 and 2000, showed that occupations with a greater share of female workers pay less than those with a lower share.<sup>20</sup> The study attributes this pay gap to a cultural devaluation of types of work when performed by women. It is not the case that women simply do work of low value, rather that the work has a low value *because* it is performed by women – in a similar way that spaces are private because of the bodies that inhabit them. For example, wages for designers in the US fell by 34 per cent when women entered the industry in large numbers, such as in housekeepers (21 per cent) and biologists (18 per cent). However, when male computer programmers began to outnumber female, in what was once seen as a relatively menial occupation, the job gained more prestige and a higher wage.<sup>21</sup>

## Subjectifying the Administrator: Learning from Domestic Workers

The workplace is changing. Increasing privatisation, decentralised management and a growing un-contracted workforce pose new challenges for workplace organisation. Furthermore, the shift



of work from the factory to the office, and more recently the home, often means that work is no longer dirty or dangerous – though it could certainly be considered demeaning. In our experience, a lack of what are perceived to be single big issues – like worker or consumer safety – can make it harder to make the case for organising the workforce. This is compounded by an increase of new managerial techniques such as employee self-assessment, health care initiatives, and resilience training that seek to further individualise the worker and their issues. Employees often don't recognise that stress and ill-health are caused by the nature of their work, and when they do it is something to “get over” or become more resilient towards, rather than something to organise against.

In the previous section we mapped a series of points where domestic and administrative labour meet, not only through the invisible nature of the work, but also in how they both maintain, support and reproduce more valued types of labour. We believe that these similarities make it possible to look to successful campaigns around domestic labour to find new ways of organising and politicising administrative workers. Justice 4 Domestic Workers is a grassroots organisation of, mainly female, migrant domestic workers who are often exploited in conditions of slavery under the supervision of the UK Government through immigration and employment laws described in previous sections. While the group is affiliated to Unite, a major UK trade union, it operates in radically different ways to traditional trade unions. A particular characteristic of migrant domestic workers is that they often live in the homes of their employer, which not only increases their vulnerability to exploitation but also makes it much harder for them to organise. This difficulty is compounded by the fact that domestic work is by its nature performed by lone workers across multiple sites, with little opportunity to build solidarity other than around the employment agency, if at all. As such, members of the group meet on weekends, often at the Unite offices or

The Showroom Gallery in central London, and meetings take on a more social nature: members cook for each other, celebrate birthdays, christenings and other milestones, and listen to one another's problems – an extension of care, for the carers. As well as campaigning for workers' rights and changes to immigration and employment laws, J4DW gives its members support in many areas, such as health care, training and visa counselling. Premilla Nadsen points to how African American domestic workers who supported the Civil Rights movement in the US used their employers' domestic spaces as tools for political emancipation, for example through using their kitchens to cook food that could be sold to fund the movement while bringing knowledge they acquired through their political practices back to the workplace.<sup>22</sup> This acknowledgement of the potential to shape and utilise the space of production could offer some insight to what is possible if administrators embrace informing their practices through their political engagement and also recognising the production potential of the administrative space. Not only in its world-making capacities, but also in the practical *using-the-copy-machine-to-publish-pamphlets* way.

J4DW also pays particular attention to how it represents itself and how others represent it. Members of the group are trained in public speaking and turns are taken to present publicly, often in public forums reserved for the initiated, such as the House of Commons, party or trade union conferences or the media. This way of organising provides workers with an arena in which to create and discuss counter discourses to those their employers and governments have given them. Nancy Fraser defines subaltern counter-publics as “discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counter discourses, which in turn permit them to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests and needs”.<sup>23</sup> We see here how J4DW successfully manages to take its counter discourse, constructed in the subaltern, through workshops, conversations and dance classes, into the

24. Albin, Einat and Mantouvalou, Virginia. "The ILO Convention on Domestic Workers: From the Shadows to the Light". *Industrial Law Journal*. Vo. 41. No. 1. 2012. pp. 67-78. doi: 10.1093/indlaw/dws001.

25. *Words That Lie Between Love and Work* was part of the Communal Knowledge programme developed by The Showroom Gallery for the "Now You Can Go" conference held in London in 2016.

26. See <http://www.werker-magazine.org/domesticwork/> (Accessed February 2017.)

27. Morgall, Janine. "Typing Our Way to Freedom: Is It True That New Office Technology Can Liberate Women?". *Feminist Review*. 1981. pp. 87-101. p. 89. doi: 10.2307/1394917.

28. Morgall, *ibid.* p. 89.

29. Spade, *op. cit.*

dominant political sphere, allowing its members to speak in otherwise unreachable forums.

One of the tools used by employers to disempower the members of J4DW is the language used to describe what they do. Domestic workers are told they should *love* the children they take care of: they should care for the family as if it was *their own*. But they should not expect to be loved back. They are expected to stay up all night if a child is sick, as a worried parent would, but if they get sick they should carry on working because they are *workers*. The relevance of being a *worker* in this context, instead of a family member, is that a *worker* is not recognised as a subject. Just like the administrator, the *worker* is an infra-structural object that should not be visible. It should not become a bump in the road. A sick domestic worker is a bump on the household's path, unable to undertake the tasks they have been (sub)contracted to perform in order to liberate other individuals to pursue more important, more subjectifying paths. Yet the expectation of love is used to limit their legal rights for "if treated as family members domestic workers are exempted from the Minimum Wage Act altogether".<sup>24</sup> The employer's ability to control how and when love and work are used de-subjectify the domestic worker.

In our workshop "Words That Lie Between Love and Work" we worked with J4DW members to map the different words used by the state and employers to describe what they do.<sup>25</sup> The workshop focused on generating a new language to describe the labour conditions and attributes of domestic workers, with the

aim of them entering the public sphere armed with their own terms and definitions. During the workshop members of J4DW produced sets of words under the headings *love*, *work* and *words between love and work* (Fig. 1). From those words the members produced posters using a photographic archive of their daily lives made over the previous few years, a project initiated in collaboration with *Werker Magazine* (Fig. 2).<sup>26</sup> As we untangled the words used to describe love and work, three spheres emerged: the workers' own domestic sphere, from which they are absent but which their families still inhabit; the domestic sphere where they are employed; and J4DW, a space between the two where the workers are brought together through their work but also find friendship, solidarity and authorship. The *space between love and work* emerged as an Arendtian space of action, populated by words such as solidarity, struggle, education, organising. On the posters these words were associated with images of the group's political activities with J4DW.

## **An Invisible and Unnamed Army of Administrators Institutes the World as You Read This**

For subjects to be fully present in the public sphere we need a symbolic order that reflects their position as subjects. Until legal, media and state systems reform their discourse to reflect immigrant domestic workers as valid subjects we will encounter policies such as the current visa applications for domestic workers that frame them

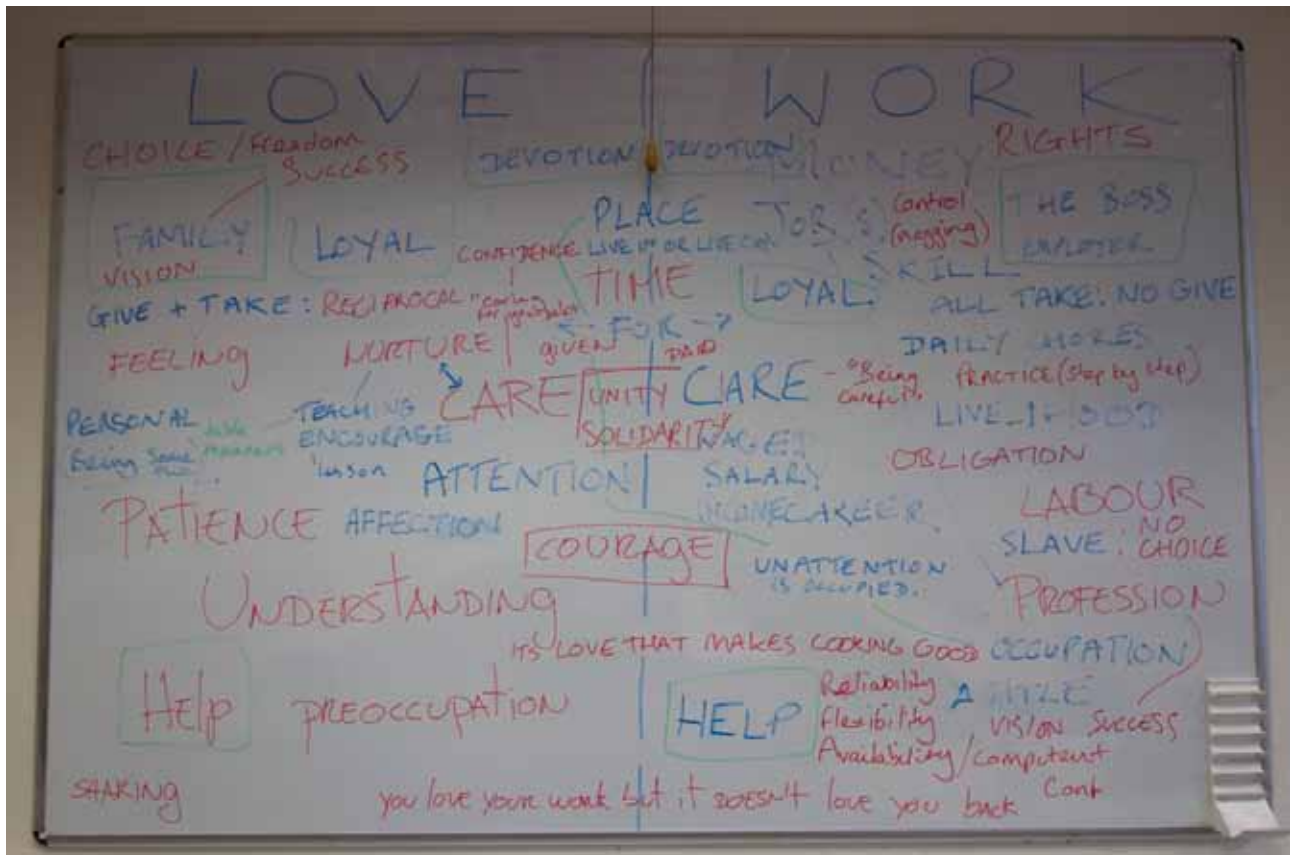
as appendages of their employers, broadly similar to their pets. This essay proposes that much of the contemporary discourse directly on, or around, administration, is guilty of a similar mistake. By not recognising the administrative subject as a full individual it excludes them from the public sphere and from fulfilling their political potential. In a text published in the *Feminist Review* in 1981, Janine Morgall mapped the feminisation of administrative labour in her call to arms for the women who had become the administrative workers:

*Women did not improve their position in society by entering into office work. They were paid less than men, there was no career ladder for them and they were given the routine and less responsible tasks. [...] It became women's work to transform, store and send information and men's work to acquire information, assimilate and manipulate existing information to generate new information.<sup>27</sup>*

Morgall calls for technology in the office to be used for liberation, so that “women must be made to see they can be authors”.<sup>28</sup> In his book *Normal Life*, queer activist and legal scholar Dean Spade argues that policy and administrative systems are the invisible disciplinary forces that generate our experiences as subjects, thus they are key areas for enacting political transformation. By reflecting on the usually anonymous subjects that generate and enforce those systems we aim to unleash awareness of their political power and potential to enact change.<sup>29</sup> There are moments in time where the solidity of the systems we recognise as everyday life start to flicker, when opportunities for change and for a redefining of our shared understanding of the world become possible. If change is going to happen it will inevitably depend on the development of radically different administrative and bureaucratic systems. By recognising the subjects that author, perform and enact them and their implication in the construction of the world, we can discuss these processes with all their ideological implications. For revolution to happen we need administrators on our side.



"Words That Lie Between Love and Work". Poster by the following J4DW members: Mary Gold Balquen, Eliza B. Lizardo, Annalyn A. Alarcio, Sylvana P. Sierte, Salvacao Mendes, Dotty Fernandes, Aisha Bose and Zaida Cenxon.



"Words That Lie Between Love and Work". Workshop documentation.