

Editorial

One of the assumptions about globalization processes is that they make the world increasingly similar in very different places and ensure that modern capitalism finds roughly the same conditions of exploitation in as many places as possible so that its protagonists can profit optimally from the circulation of labor. This applies not only to the sphere of production, but also to the sphere of the service industries and, if one defines this term broadly enough, also to the education sector and public administration. In all these areas, a similar problem arises: how to organize the interaction of many actors toward an optimal result. The role of those who take on this task has grown steadily and has convincingly described as resulting in a phase of, in act managerial, capitalism. This, in turn, requires standardized knowledge that simultaneously reacts to new trends and is therefore only conceivable as scientific knowledge, but which has a particularly close relationship to practice in companies, logistics chains, and sales structures and adapts as closely as possible to the dominant ideas there. In recent decades, a massive effort has undeniably been made in all these areas of management to bring about precisely this predicted effect by establishing training centers that standardize management knowledge and then train the next generation of managers for the purposes of companies and public administrations according to the most uniform aspects possible. New Public Management is only one variant of this process, but it shows the enormous impact the idea of the necessity of scientifically legitimized management knowledge has everywhere and even in places and in situations where it may be inadequate.

At the same time, however, the most important distinguishing feature between the Eastern and Western blocs was to oppose the unleashing of the free play of market forces to the so-called centralized management economy. This could give the impression that the world is divided into at least two completely different ways of managing the economy and public administration. And that is not enough differentiation, because debates about development economies and the construction of post-colonial states have pointed to the special conditions under which the demands of donors from the Global North for efficient management have to be met in the Global South. However, studies of the interventions of socialist countries in the development of countries emerging from the colonial yoke, particularly in Africa, the Middle East, and Asia, have shown that, especially since

the later 1970s, there have been remarkable similarities to neoliberal strategies that had little to do with the rhetoric of solidarity that prevailed in the 1950s and 1960s, when the relationship was still in its infancy.

The global history of management thus faces the challenge of avoiding two extreme narratives: one of complete alignment and the other of total difference. This thematic issue approaches this dual task by analyzing the forms of knowledge in which management was conceived and then imparted to a large number of future managers who were to become active at all levels of the organization of production and administrative processes. Here, analyses of polycentric networks once again prove to be superior methodological tools to diffusionist notions of a simple expansion of Western models (which were not uniformly understood and applied even in this West, which is only imagined as homogeneous) and allow a detailed examination of those nodal points at which priorities were negotiated in the respective networks.

All players were convinced of the need to use optimal tools for managing production, administration, and development – regardless of the social and political order under which they lived. These tools and approaches had to be acquired and adapted to their own needs and possibilities. Management knowledge thus became the subject of a cultural transfer that took place simultaneously in many places and responded to very different needs. Particularly in this field of knowledge, in which diffusionist ideas clearly dominated for a very long time and to a certain extent formed the business basis of a desired Americanization, it is perhaps less misleading to speak of appropriation and assimilation instead of cultural transfer in order to avoid further misunderstanding between English- and French-language research.

To adopt a transregional perspective, the contributions in this issue first outline the very different status that the topic of management has in the knowledge systems of different societies. The connection between a particular form of (decentralized) management is considered in very different ways in the different contexts of Western countries, of socialist dreams that put the worker at the central stage, and in the post-colonial world with democracy and self-determination. The connection between efficiency and the common good is also established in different ways and is given an entirely new direction in the present with the new framework narrative of the Anthropocene. This development can be seen very clearly over the course of time in the aspects that managers have to report to their stakeholders and for which they have to take responsibility to the public. It is already foreseeable today that this story will continue and that the expectations of an increasingly homogeneous world will possibly continue to disappoint in the future.

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