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MCDONALDIZATION AND ARCHIVES

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Abstract

In the article, the author writes about the connection between archives and the theory of McDonaldization. The goal of the presented paper is to show, how, in general, archives can be described from the sociological perspective. That's why the author was trying to bring closer mentioned theory and show the examples of archival reality connected to it. The paper is based on literature that's why the research methodology was based on bibliographic and comparative methods. During the research, the author finds many areas like new technologies or multilevel description, which can be connected to the McDonaldization. The future scope is to make case studies about archives in different countries, to prove and widen the theory.

Keywords

McDonaldization, Archives, Rationalization, Bureaucracy

1. Introduction

Every science seeks new approaches describing its subject. Likewise is in humanities seeking for interdisciplinary issues. The article responds to this search by presenting a research approach combining archives and sociology.

1.1 Research Issues

The archival reality is traditionally described from the historical view. But archives are also social institutions and can be considered from that perspective. One of the most promising theories explaining society as a whole and its different agendas is the theory of McDonaldization created in 1993 by George Ritzer (Ritzer, 1993). Therefore this theory can also be applied to archives, observed as theoretical models as well as real institutions in various countries. By taking this as a start point, the research issue is to carry out if and how archives, in general, can be linked with McDonaldization. Therefore, the goal of the analyze was to find and point the areas of archival reality and their functioning which enter them in the pattern of functioning of the fast-food restaurants. The goal of the presented paper is also to make non-archivists familiar with that new approach.

1.2 Theory

In his works, Ritzer defined McDonaldization as: "The process by which the principles of the fast-food restaurant are coming to dominate more and more sectors of American society as well as of the rest of the world" (Ritzer, 2001). Despite the name, the theory of McDonaldization is not concentrated only on a fast-food restaurant. They are only the start point to show how the functioning of social agendas like healthcare, universities, or shopping centres is changing in the modern world.

The fast-food restaurants are only one of the predecessors of the process called McDonaldization. The others are, for example, holocaust (bureaucratic machine for killing), assembly line, malls, scientific management. But probably the most important for the whole process, and the foundation of other predecessors is bureaucracy (Ritzer, 2009). What is most crucial in the bureaucracy is that it is the carrier of formal rationalization described by Max Weber. The formal rationality means that people are choosing the best way to reach a goal based on universally agreed-upon rules, regulations, and laws (Ritzer, 2001). But why bureaucracy? According to Weber, it is the most efficient structure to deal with tasks based on so-called paperwork. Bureaucracy is also trying to quantify as many tasks as possible, which allows estimating its efficiency better. Because of deep-rooted rules, regulations and laws, bureaucracy is also functioning in a very predictable way. It is also trying to replace the people's judgement by the dictate of rules, regulations, and structures (Weber, 2002). The grow of bureaucracy in the 19th and 20th centuries influenced the whole society, which cannot today function without it.

What is essential, formal rationality and bureaucratic methods of work are since the 19th century also strongly presented in a capitalistic company (Weber 2002). As a result of these influences, other social agendas have also started using formally rational methods in their work. As a basis for organizing the work, however, they have been adopted to the greatest extent in fast food restaurants like Kentucky Fried Chicken, Burger King and McDonald's but what was aforementioned not only.

On the base of his analyze Ritzer argues that there are four main aspects of McDonaldization: efficiency, calculability, predictability, and control. Efficiency means the optimum method for getting from one point to another. For customers, it means that McDonald's offers the best available way to get from being hungry to being full. Calculability is an emphasis on the quantitative aspects of products sold (portion size, cost) and service offered (the time it takes to get the product). Ritzer points out that quantity has become equivalent to quality. A lot of something or the quick delivery of it means that it must be good. Predictability indicates the assurance that their products and services will be the same over time and in all locations. Finally, the control means that nonhuman technology (the assembly line, for instance) control people. "The people who eat in fast-food restaurants are controlled, albeit (usually) subtly. Lines, limited menus, few options, and uncomfortable seats all lead diners to do what management wishes them to do: eat quickly and leave. The people who work in restaurant are also controlled. They are trained to do a limited number of things in precisely the way they are told to do them. The technologies used and the way the organization is set up to reinforce this control" (Ritzer, 2001).

Though the McDonaldization offers compelling advantages, it also has a downside. The rational system inevitably spawns irrationalities (the irrationality of rationality), which means that rational systems are often functioning unreasonably. Ritzer gave some examples of irrationalities in McDonald's. Among other things, he argues that in the most efficient restaurants people must wait in the long queues to make an order and also the cost of food is much higher than the same prepared in a private home (Ritzer, 2009). The crucial aspect of irrationality is dehumanization. It means that worker in rationalized organization is not able to use his inventiveness and abilities; he or she can only execute the activities that are predetermined and perform them in a certain way. From the worker's point of view, that kind of job is irrational, unsatisfactory, and did not give a sense of stability (Ritzer, 2009). These dimensions of

McDonaldization mentioned above can be applied to archives in their historical development. Below, the author will try to show some examples of how they relate to the archival reality.

1.3 Methodology

To apply the theory of McDonaldization to archives, the author tried to look at them as a model. That was also necessary for a theoretical approach. The presented research is mainly based on the literature and the author's observation of archives - especially in Europe (Ciechanowski 2019). The basis and theoretical character of the study forced to use the appropriate methodology. Therefore during the research was used mainly bibliographic (an analysis of literature) and comparative (compare the theory of McDonaldization with the results of analyze) methods.

2. Archives and McDonaldization

As it was pointed in the introduction, the dimensions of McDonaldization can be observed in the organization and development of archives. In the archives across the globe, the starting point of the career of formal rationalization is probably the development of international principles of archival arrangement, especially the principle of respect des fonds and the principle of provenance. From the beginning of the 20th century, mostly since the International Congress of archivists and Librarians in Brussel in 1910 on which the principle of provenance was generally accepted by archivists (Bachulski, 1925), the structure of archives in various countries is much similar. The reason why it is unified is its common binding with creators of archives (local government, administration, institutions). Therefore archives can be considered as predictable for users because the holdings structures are very similar on the primary level. In general, the user does not need to deeply know local administration or language to understand how to search in the archival holdings.

The predictability of archives is also growing because of international standards of archival description created by the International Council of Archives (Laszuk, 2011), which are the consequence of accepted principles of arrangement. In the archives in the different countries and on other continents, the principles of description are founded on the same basis. For this reason, users can expect similar information and its structure during searching in different institutions.

Predictability is also connected to the access paradigm (Menne-Haritz, 2001). Access granted to all users at the same rules no matter who or where wants to use archival holdings, makes archives predictable. Users can anticipate how they will be treated in archives of different countries, no matter where they go. Of course, this is only a general directive, and the detailed rules of access procedure will be different in each country but within the paradigm.

The international standards of description are the foundation of the multilevel description commonly used in archives. The multilevel description is based on the division of information among predefined levels like archive, archive group (the primary division in the arrangement of archives at the level of the independent originating unit or agency) (International, 2015), group, subgroup and item. In that description method information once entered at a higher level can be automatically used at lower levels. Therefore the application of multilevel description causes the growth of efficiency because an archivist is in many cases obligated to make only the descriptions of items which is the lowest level of description. The standardized, multilevel description also makes searches much quicker because it allows to similar structuring the information in web services of archives. Over the last years, the growth of efficiency is probably the most connected to new technologies and online access to archives. The new technologies are databases and integrated systems used in many archives across the world. These tools allow archivists to describe the holdings much quicker and also search for needed information much faster. In this same time information gathered in a computer system can be easily made accessible on the Internet. Internet access to archives reduces the time and costs to reach information.

Calculability in archives is mostly related to their status as administration offices. Because of that archives are functioning in the bureaucratic way. Supervisors account archivists for how many searches, controls, or items descriptions they made. The most crucial factor is the number of their activities taken, while much less important is the quality of that work. It must be pointed out that the domination of quantity over quality is a problem not only in archives but also in administration as a whole.

Probably the less presented aspect of McDonaldisation in archives is controlled. It is based on the regulations determining the behaviour of users and archivists in the reading rooms. Mentioned regulations are not very strict, but they set out the path and procedures that the user

must follow to access the holdings. In the other hand, regulations also describe the scope of assistance given by archivists.

Mentioned dimensions like in other McDonalized systems must spawn irrationalities. However, it is necessary to take a more in-depth look at them to point the most crucial irrationalities present in current archival reality. Probably they will be mostly related to new technologies and unification of work in archives, which make it dehumanized.

3. Conclusion

The presented article is only an attempt to look on archives from the perspective of McDonaldization; however, numerous relations make this a promising field of research. Even on the early stage of research can be pointed many areas in archival reality that can be described from the sociological view. These areas are listed in the table below:

Table 1: *Examples of Interfaces Between Archives and Mcdonaldization*

Number	Predictability	Efficiency	Calculability	Control
1	International standards of description	New technologies: databases and integrated systems	Quantification of work	Rules and regulations in the reading rooms
2	International rules of archival arrangement	Multilevel description		
3	The access paradigm	Internet access to archives		

It is clear that the mentioned aspects are only examples, and the connection between archives and McDonaldization is much more profound. But even based on this preliminary analysis, the aspects of McDonaldization mentioned above can be defined as:

- Predictability - pursue the maximum possible unification of the structure and descriptions of the resource on a global scale.

- Efficiency – seek to maximize the workload and reduce the time taken to provide information.
- Calculability - considering the work of archivists in terms of its quantity and not its quality.
- Control - control over the behaviour of the users who are going to use the archive resource and the staff serving it.

Therefore it is very likely that it will be an essential part of the discussion about archives and their development. In the future, it is crucial to make case studies about archives in different countries and based on theoretical approaches. It is also necessary to do more research in the aspect of the irrationality of rationality. The presented approach is also promising because it enables to build theoretical models of archives describing at one time institutions from different countries. Its limitations are related to various development stage in archives in different countries.

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