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## Max Weber's perception of bureaucracy and modern rational models of administration

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Studia Prawnoustrojowe nr 11, 143-159

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2010

Artykuł został opracowany do udostępnienia w internecie przez Muzeum Historii Polski w ramach prac podejmowanych na rzecz zapewnienia otwartego, powszechnego i trwałego dostępu do polskiego dorobku naukowego i kulturalnego. Artykuł jest umieszczony w kolekcji cyfrowej [bazhum.muzhp.pl](http://bazhum.muzhp.pl), gromadzącej zawartość polskich czasopism humanistycznych i społecznych.

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## *Zagadnienia administracji publicznej*

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### **Max Weber's perception of bureaucracy and modern rational models of administration**

Maximilian Weber (1864–1920) was a German politician, economist and sociologist who is considered one of the founders of sociology and public administration. In his times he was viewed primarily as a historian and an economist. He began his career at the University of Berlin, later he worked at Freiburg University, University of Heidelberg, University of Vienna and University of Munich. He was very influential in contemporary German politics<sup>1</sup>, being one of German's negotiators at the Treaty of Versailles and the member of the commission charged with drafting the Weimar Constitution<sup>2</sup>. Weber's political ideas have inspired controversy in Germany for decades.

Why is he so popular and widely known? Apparently he didn't organize and develop any school and didn't leave any students who would continue his work. But it should be taken into account that Weber's thoughts were extremely complicated and sophisticated, and unfortunately lack of clear and final wording could be seen. In spite of presenting extraordinary, versatile opinions, ideas, and immense productivity, he didn't build any complete system. Indisputably, he resumed problems from different points of view, proposed definitions, unveiled reasonable connections, suggested explanations and formulated provisional generalizations supported by induction. Unfortunately the products of his work are tied to loosely and do not coordinate to generate a real foundation on which Weberian school could be built.

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<sup>1</sup> See, e.g. W.J. Mommsen, *Max Weber and German Politics 1890–1920*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago 1990, p. 417.

<sup>2</sup> More about Weber's biography see: R. Bendix, *Max Weber: An Intellectual Portrait*, Doubleday & Company Garden City 1960, pp. 480; M. Weber, *Max Weber: Biography*, translated by H. Zorn, John Wiley & Sons, New York 1975, pp. 586; T.H. Marshall, *Max Weber: An Intellectual Portrait by Reinhard Bendix*, "The British Journal of Sociology" 1961, vol. 12, no. 2, pp. 184–188; D. Kaesler, *Max Weber: An Introduction to His Life and Work*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago 1989, p. 18.

Weber wrote his books in German and it should be noted that many of his famous works were collected, revised and published posthumously<sup>3</sup>. Significant interpretations of Weber's writings were produced by such sociological luminaries as Talcott Parsons and C. Wright Mills. His major works deal with rationalization in sociology of religion and government, but he also contributed much in the field of economics. His most famous work is an essay *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, which began his work in sociology of religion. In this work, Weber argued that religion was one of the non – exclusive reasons for the different ways the cultures of the Occident and the Orient have developed. He stressed importance of particular characteristics of ascetic Protestantism which led to the development of capitalism, bureaucracy and rational-legal state in the West. Weber continued his investigation into this matter in later works, notably in his studies on bureaucracy and on the classifications of authority. In these works he alluded to an inevitable move towards rationalization. In another major work *Politics as a Vocation* Weber defined the state as an entity which possesses a monopoly on the legitimate use of physical force, a definition that became pivotal to the study of modern Western political science. His most known contributions are often referred to as the “Weber Thesis”.

It is significant that along with Karl Marks and Emile Durkheim, Max Weber is regarded as one of the founders of modern sociology. Whereas Durkheim, following Comte, worked in the positivist tradition, Weber created and worked – like Werner Sombart, a famous representative of German sociology – in the antipositivist tradition<sup>4</sup>. Those works started the antipositivist revolution in social sciences, which stressed the difference between the social sciences and natural sciences, especially due to human actions, which Weber differentiated into traditional, affectional, value – rational and instrumental<sup>5</sup>.

Max Weber's writing shows immense diversity of his interests and can be divided into a few categories. The first category constitutes historical writing, the second category – sociological and economic studies. The next group consists of commentaries connected with the First World War events and articles about Russia in 1905. The fourth category consists of studies on philosophy and methodology of sociology. The fifth group are historical studies focusing on civilization, uniqueness of cultural individuality, so-

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<sup>3</sup> Original titles printed after Weber's death are most likely compilations of his unfinished works. Many translations are made of parts or selections of various German originals, and the names of the translations not reveal what part of German work they contain.

<sup>4</sup> J.K. Rhoads, *Critical Issues in Social Theory*, Penn State Press 1991, p. 40.

<sup>5</sup> J. Ferrante, *Sociology: A Global Perspective*, Thomson Wadsworth 2005, p. 21.

cial policy, political institutions, religions and connection between these terms<sup>6</sup>.

A few distinctive features differ Max Weber's writings from typical historical works. It should be stressed that they are not restricted to dealing with describing different aspects of the culture and society only, but they reveal how they are connected.

It is noticeable that it was Weber who began the studies on bureaucracy and whose works led to popularization of this term. Many aspects of modern public administration go back to him, and a classic, hierarchically organized civil service of the continental type is called "Weberian civil service", although this is only one ideal type of public administration and government. An approach of this scholar differs from others views on bureaucracy, which are usually pejorative. Weber is not one of those who regard bureaucracy as synonymous with inefficiency: quite the reverse, it is the supremely efficient way of conducting administration. He is probably one of the most influential users of this term in its social science sense. For this scholar bureaucratic coordination of activities is the distinctive mark of the modern era and a dominant structural feature of modern forms of organization. Bureaucratic types of organization are technically superior form to all other forms of administration, much as machine production is superior to handicraft methods. The term bureaucracy should not be seen in an emotional, but in a neutral way.

The question is – why does Max Weber implement a neutral term, not pejorative? Here his methodology should be taken into account. One of his proposals is usage of paradigm "Wertfreiheit"<sup>7</sup>. In compatibility with this paradigm, pure scientific claims are only neutral and value relevant, not pejorative terms. That is why very important is conformity with this paradigm and separation of verdicts connected with values and verdicts connected with facts<sup>8</sup>. In the great majority of cases people are different in analyzing facts. They are not absolutely objective. Of course the proposal of being neutral and value relevant can't be obtained in a full way, but individuals should try to obtain this purpose. The Weberian principle can be seen as a dividing line between scientific and non-scientific claims. Objectivity for him is being able to prevent the influence of feelings, emotions, unconscious

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<sup>6</sup> Weber's bibliography and collection of English translation see: [online] <[http://www.cpm.ehime-u.ac.jp/AkamacHomePage/Akamac E-text Links/Weber.html](http://www.cpm.ehime-u.ac.jp/AkamacHomePage/Akamac%20E-text%20Links/Weber.html)>; <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List of Max Weber works](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Max_Weber_works)>; <[http:// sociosite.net/topics/weber.php](http://sociosite.net/topics/weber.php)>; <<http://www2.pfeiffer.edu/~lridener/DSS/Weber/PECAP.HTML>>, retrieved on 24.10.2009.

<sup>7</sup> *Max Weber on the Methodology of the Social Sciences*, translated and edited by E. Shils and H.A. Finch, Glencoe IL: Free Press 1949, pp. 50–112.

<sup>8</sup> S. Andreski, *Max Weber's Insights and Errors*, 1984 (Polish translation: K. Sowa, *Maxa Webera olśnienia i pomyłki*, PWN, Warszawa, 1992, pp. 32–55). The author shows connections of Max Weber's methodology with Karl Popper's methodology (pp. 39–45).

motives, imagination and valid interpretation. For any scholar the choice of problems is always value relevant. There is no absolutely objective scientific analysis of culture or social phenomena independent of special and “one-sided” viewpoints according to which – consciously or unconsciously – they are selected, analyzed and organized for expository purposes. What is considered “worthy to be known” depends upon the perspective of the inquiring scholar<sup>9</sup>.

The concept of Weber’s bureaucracy is strictly connected with his methodology<sup>10</sup>. He sees bureaucracy as one of the most important causes of the development of capitalism. Weber developed a key conceptual tool, the notion of the “ideal type”. An ideal type is an analytical construct that serves the investigator as a measuring rod to ascertain similarities as well as deviations in concrete cases. It provides the basic method for comparative study. An ideal type corresponds to concrete reality but always moves at least one step away from it. It is constructed out of certain elements of reality and forms a logically precise and coherent whole, which can never be found as such in that reality. Weber’s three kinds of ideal types are distinguished by their levels of abstraction. First are the ideal types rooted in historical particularities. They refer to phenomena that appear only in specific historical periods and in particular areas. The second kind involves abstract elements of social reality (bureaucracy, feudalism) which can be found in a variety of historical and cultural contexts. The third kind of ideal type is connected with rationalization of particular kind of behavior reconstructions<sup>11</sup>. Weber describes ideal type of bureaucracy in positive terms, considering it to be more rational and efficient form of organization than the alternatives that preceded it, which he characterized as charismatic domination and traditional domination. According to his terminology, bureaucracy is part of legal domination.

Weber’s analysis of bureaucracy concerns the historical and administrative reasons for the process of bureaucratization and the impact of the rule of law upon the functioning of bureaucratic organizations. Very important are attributes and consequences of bureaucracy in the modern world and the typical personal orientation and occupational position of the bureaucratic officials as a status group. For Max Weber a rational and modern model of bureaucracy should function in a specific manner and its characteristic features are:

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<sup>9</sup> More about Weber’s methodology see: M. Abukuma, *A Methodology of Sociological Studies*, [online] <<http://www.ne.jp/asahi/moriyuki/abukuma/moriyukis/weberian/meth/method.html>>, retrieved on 5.09.2009.

<sup>10</sup> E. Sokalska, *Biurokracja jako metoda funkcjonowania nowoczesnej administracji w ujęciu Maxa Webera*, „Studia Prawnoustrojowe”, Olsztyn 2003, nr 2, p. 119.

<sup>11</sup> L.A. Coser, *Masters of Sociological Thought*, 1977, p. 234-237; *Max Weber – The Work – Ideal Type*, [online] <<http://www2.pfeiffer.edu/~lridener/DSS/weber/WEBERW3.html>>, retrieved on 5.06.2009.

“1. There is the principle of fixed and official jurisdictional areas, which are generally ordered by rules, that is, by administrative regulations.

2. The regular activities required for the purposes of bureaucratically governed structure are distributed in a fixed way as official duties.

3. Methodical provision is made for the regular and continuous fulfillment of these duties and for the execution of the corresponding rights; only persons who have the generally regulated qualifications to serve are employed. In public and lawful government these three elements constitute »bureaucratic authority« [...].

4. The principles of office hierarchy and levels of graded authority mean a firmly ordered system of super and subordination in which there is a supervision of the lower offices by the highest ones [...].

5. The management of the modern office is based upon written documents (the files), which are preserved in their original and draught form [...].

6. Office management, at least all specialized office management is distinctly modern – usually presupposes thorough and expert training [...]”<sup>12</sup>.

In the same way Weber describes the position and work of a bureaucratic official:

“1. In principle, the modern organization of the civil service separates the bureau from the private domicile of the official, and, in general, bureaucracy segregates official activity as something distinct from the sphere of private life. Public monies and equipment are divorced from the private property of the official [...]. In principle, the executive office is separated from the household, business from private correspondence, and business assets from private fortunes [...].

2. When the office is fully developed, official activity demands the full working capacity of the official, irrespective of the fact that his obligatory time in the bureau may be delimited”<sup>13</sup>.

It is noticeable that one of the main important aspects of bureaucracy is its personnel. The modern bureaucrat is a full-time, life-time professional. He requires a sufficient and regular salary and job security, because otherwise people will not stay in the full time job for life. Unless they do, the organization will not be efficient. Of course, it can take time and experience to learn the job, because it is difficult to perform particular task and it all has to be coordinated, an elaborate division of labour requires stability of the staff. Because of the importance of training and coordination in the job and the nature of bureaucratic work, bureaucracy needs educated officials. Because they should prove they have been educated, their education will be

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<sup>12</sup> M. Weber, *Economy and Society*, edited by G. Roth and C. Wittach, Bedminster Press, vol. 1, New York 1968, pp. 650–678.

<sup>13</sup> Ibidem.

attested by some certificate<sup>14</sup>. The office work demands theoretical as well as practical knowledge of the matter and regular salary and prospects of advancement in a lifetime career will be the reward. Professional work connects with the stability of bureaucratic system in many aspects. The stability of employment was connected with state pensions which were started to be paid to people working as bureaucratic officials as well as social insurance. After the First World War social insurance and state pensions were very precious privileges.

One of the main issues in the Max Weber's writing is specialization of bureaucratic officials. Job placement is dependent on technical qualifications of the worker. Every task should be given according to the rank and even to special place within the rank. On the other hand, they are free and appointed to their positions on the basis of conduct. An official must exercise his judgements and skills, but his duty is to place at the service of a higher authority. Ultimately he is responsible for the impartial execution of assigned tasks and must sacrifice his personal judgement if it runs counter to his official duties. He claims that "Precision, speed, unambiguity, knowledge of the files, continuity, discretion, unity, strict subordination, reduction or friction and of material and personal costs – these are raised to the optimum point in the strictly bureaucratic organisation"<sup>15</sup>.

The modern bureaucrat does not own his job<sup>16</sup> and the "means of administration" – the computers, the files, etc. He is even removed from property, doesn't have a prebend or benefices but he is paid a salary. Bureaucrats are not allowed to charge fees for themselves or to accept gifts. If fees are charged, they belong to the government. The ideal behind this is that if the official has any source of income apart from a salary he will not reliably follow the rules. Reliable following of the official rules is one of the highest values in bureaucracy. Impersonal application of general rules is shown as another feature of the modern bureaucrat. "The Taxation Commissioner's staff impersonally, objectively applies the rules to the taxpayer, and their own duties and rights within the organization are defined by rules applied to them impersonally by their superiors"<sup>17</sup>. A bureaucratic official exercises the authority delegated to him in accordance with impersonal rules and his loyalty is enlisted on behalf of the faithful execution of his official duties.

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<sup>14</sup> J. Kilcullen, *Max Weber: On Bureaucracy*, Macquarie University, 1996, POL264 Modern Political Theory, p. 2, [online] <<http://www.humanities.mq.edu.au/Ockham/y64109.html>>, retrieved on 20.05.2009.

<sup>15</sup> *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, transl. by H.H. Girth and C. Wright Mills, Oxford University Press, New York 1946, p. 214.

<sup>16</sup> M. Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, trans. Henderson and Parsons, New York, 1947, p. 332.

<sup>17</sup> J. Kilcullen, *Max Weber: On Bureaucracy...*, p. 3.

Weber's principles of administration could be shown in seven points:

1. Official business is conducted on a continuous basis.
2. Bureaucratic organization is conducted with strict accordance to the following rules:
  - a) the duty of each official to do the certain work is delimited in terms of impersonal criteria;
  - b) the official is given the authority necessary to carryout his assigned functions;
  - c) the means of coercion at his disposal are strictly limited and conditions of their use strictly defined.
3. Responsibilities are part of vertical hierarchy of authority, with respective rights of supervision.
4. Officials do not own the resources necessary for the performance of their assigned functions but are accountable for their use of these resources.
5. Private business and income from office work are strictly separated.
6. Offices can't be appropriated by their incumbents.
7. Official business is conducted on the basis of written documents<sup>18</sup>.

Max Weber sets out an ideal type for bureaucracy, characterised by an elaborate hierarchical division of labour directed by explicit rules impersonally applied, equipped with professionals, who don't own the "means of administration" and obtain a salary directly from the performance of their job. These features can be found in the public administration, in the offices, even in private firms.

It can be observed that his concept of bureaucracy is strictly connected with his proposal of "types of legitimate authority". Weber shows three types of legitimate authority: rational, traditional, and charismatic. Charismatic authority can be regarded as legitimate because followers are personally devoted to a gifted leader. He notes that the instability of charismatic authority inevitably forces it to "routinize" into a more structured form of authority. A charismatic leader is someone whom people follow because of his individual personal qualities. "Charisma" is a personality. Traditional authority is regarded as legitimate because everyone has always obeyed whoever was in the leader's position, and nobody thinks of disputing his authority. Rational authority exists in a community in which there is a moral attitude of respect for law because it is regarded as legitimate<sup>19</sup>. Bureaucracy seems to be the most efficient way of *implementing* the rule of law; the legal rules are recorded, studied and applied in a reliable way to individual cases. He alludes to an inevitable move towards a rational – legal structure of authori-

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<sup>18</sup> See "Bureaucracy" in *Wikipedia*, [online] <<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bureaucracy>>, retrieved on 20.05.2009.

<sup>19</sup> J. Kilcullen, *Max Weber: On Bureaucracy...*, p. 3.



ty, utilising a bureaucratic structure. He concedes that employing ideal types is an abstraction but claims that it is nonetheless essential if one is to understand any particular social phenomena, because they involve human behaviour which must be interpreted by ideal types<sup>20</sup>. For him the ideal types aim to construct a meaningful ordering from the chaotic flux of empirical reality.

It is worth mentioning, that Max Weber also noted the dysfunctions of bureaucracy. Modern and bureaucratized systems of law have become incapable of dealing with individual cases, to which earlier types of justice were well suited. Critics of Weber's theory point out that principles of his ideal model of bureaucracy can degenerate. For example, competences of officials can be unclear and used contrary to the spirit of law. Sometimes a decision itself may be considered more important than its effect. Vertical hierarchy of authority can become chaotic and the process of making decision can be disturbed and conflicts of competence can appear. Bureaucratic officials can try to avoid responsibility and seek anonymity by avoiding documentation of their procedures. They can create extreme amounts of chaotic, useless documents. Other features that can affect modern bureaucracy are: apathy, laziness, incompetence, not efficient subordination, bribery, corruption, too big number of personnel, not allowing people to use common sense, as everything must be written by the law. This kind of organization can be prone to overspecialization, making individual officials not aware of larger consequences of their actions. Nepotism, political infighting and other degenerations can counter the rule of impersonality and create recruitment and promotion system not based on meritocracy but rather on oligarchy. In the most common examples bureaucracy can lead to the treatment of individual human beings as impersonal objects<sup>21</sup>.

As Max Weber remarks, real bureaucracy will be less optimal and effective than his ideal type, but this process will be inevitable for the efficient functioning of an administrative machine. "From a purely technical point of view, a bureaucracy is capable of attaining the highest degree of efficiency, and is in this sense formally the most rational known means of exercising authority over human beings. It is superior to any other form in precision, in stability, in the stringency of discipline, and in its reliability. It thus makes possible a particularly high degree of calculability of results for the heads of the organization and for those acting in relation to it. It is finally superior both in intensive efficiency and in the scope of its operations and is formally capable of application to all kinds of administrative tasks"<sup>22</sup>. Bureaucracy as

<sup>20</sup> See comments of M. Abakuma on *Weberian ideal types as tools...*

<sup>21</sup> See critiques of Weber's thoughts: G. Roth, *Political Critiques of Max Weber: Some Implications for Political Sociology*, "American Sociological Review" 1965, v. 3, no. 2, pp. 214–220.

<sup>22</sup> M. Weber, *Economy and Society...*, p. 223.

supremely efficient way of conducting administration should be adopted by capitalistic firms and in every institution. Weber even argues that the bureaucratization of the modern world can lead to its depersonalization, and bureaucratization and rationalization seems to him an almost inescapable fate<sup>23</sup>. "The needs of mass administration make it today completely indispensable. The choice is only between bureaucracy and dilettantism in the field of administration"<sup>24</sup>. But although Weber regards bureaucracy as supremely efficient, he regards its inevitable triumph with distaste: "No machinery in the world functions so precisely as this apparatus of men and, moreover, so cheaply [...]. Rational calculation [...] reduces worker to a cog in this bureaucratic machine and, seeing himself in this light, he will merely ask how to transform himself into a somewhat bigger cog [...]. The passion for bureaucratisation drives us to despair"<sup>25</sup>.

Max Weber believes that administration and politics are very close but they operate in different aspects<sup>26</sup>. Bureaucracy as a part of administration should be excluded from the sphere of politics<sup>27</sup>. He suggests that different life spheres have different moral laws, which may come into conflict. So what is wrong in some department of life may not be wrong in politics. He even contrasts the status honour of the bureaucrat with the responsibility of politician. If a bureaucrat's superior gives him a directive he considered wrong, he should object, but if the superior insists, he should respect it. And on the other hand, the politician can even lie and publicly reject the responsibility for political actions that run counter to his convictions and must sacrifice his office to them<sup>28</sup>. A genuine political leader should be ready to accept responsibility for morally dubious action. Maybe that is why the bureaucracy needs to be under the control of politicians or other charismatic leaders, and as Weber claims, at the top of bureaucratic organization an element which is not purely bureaucratic is needed<sup>29</sup>. In his *Politics as a Vocation* Max Weber says: "The administrative staff, which externally represents the organization of political domination, is, of course, like any other organization, bound by obedience to the power holder and not alone by the concept of legitimacy [...]. There are two other means, both of which appeal

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<sup>23</sup> About Weber's maxim of rationalization see: P. Ghosh, *Max Weber's "Isolated Man": Marginal Utility Theory, the Protestant Ethic, and "Spirit" of Capitalism*, Max Weber Studies, London Metropolitan University, London 2006, p. 75.

<sup>24</sup> M. Weber, *Economy and Society...*, p. 224.

<sup>25</sup> Ibidem, p. 223.

<sup>26</sup> More about Max Weber's theory of politics see: D. Beetham, *Max Weber and the Theory of Modern Politics*, London 1974, pp. 82-89.

<sup>27</sup> A. Sylwestrzak, *Historia doktryn politycznych i prawnych*, Warszawa, 1994, pp. 395-396.

<sup>28</sup> J. Kilcullen, *Max Weber on Bureaucracy...*, p. 5.

<sup>29</sup> J. Kilcullen, *Max Weber*, Macquarie University 1996, POL264 Modern Political Theory, p. 9, [online] <<http://www.humanities.mq.edu.au/Ockham/y6408.html>>, retrieved on 10.04.2009.

to personal interests: material reward and social honour. The fields of vassals, the prebends of patrimonial officials, the salaries of modern civil servants, the honour of knights, the privileges of estates, and the honour of civil servant comprise their respective wages. The fear of losing them is honour and booty for the followers in war; for the demagogue's following, there are "spoils" – that is, exploitation of the dominated through the monopolization of office – and there are politically determined profits and premiums of vanity<sup>30</sup>.

Weber's views about the inescapable rationalization and bureaucratization of the world have obvious similarities to Karl Marx's notion of alienation. They both agree that modern methods of organization have increased the efficiency and effectiveness of production and allowed domination of man over the world of nature. But Weber disagrees with Marx when he sees alienation as only a transitional stage on the road to man's true emancipation. Weber doesn't believe in the future leap from the realm of necessity into the world of freedom. In the sphere of economic production Marx documented that capitalist industrial organization led to expropriation of the worker from the means of production. Weber countered with Marx's observations. Such expropriation would characterise a socialist system of production just as much as it would be the capitalist form. Being fascinated with the dynamics of social life, Weber created a more flexible interpretative system than Marx had provided. He attempted to show that the relations between system of ideas and social structures were multiform and varied, and that casual connections went in both directions, rather than from infrastructure to superstructure alone. Weber's modification and refinement of the Marxian system is likewise evident in his theory of stratification<sup>31</sup>.

Max Weber is best known and recognised today as one of the leading scholars and founders of modern sociology. His work has been continued by many scholars<sup>32</sup>. In the field of administration Weber regards bureaucratization as one of the leading and inescapable features of modern world. According to him, the attributes of modern bureaucracy include its impersonality, concentration of the means of administration, a levelling effect on social and economic differences and implementation of a system of authority that is practically indestructible.

Theoretical trends and orientations connected with the study of administration and of course implemented Weber's rules could be divided into few

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<sup>30</sup> M. Weber, *Politics as a Vocation*, p. 3, [online] <<http://www2.pfeiffer.edu/%7Elridener/DSS/Weber/polvoc.html>>, retrieved on 10.02.2009.

<sup>31</sup> Levis A. Coser, op. cit., pp. 227–228.

<sup>32</sup> For example by Roberto Michels, see: J. Kilcullen, *Roberto Michels: Oligarchy*, Macquarie University 1996, pp. 1–5, [online] <<http://www.humanities.mq.edu.au/Ockham/y64111.html>>, retrieved on 22.04.2009.

groups: the Old Public Administration, the New Public Management and the New Public Service<sup>33</sup>. Many scholars and practitioners contributed to the early development of the field of public administration. For example Woodrow Wilson established what was known for many years as the politics-administration (a policy-administration) dichotomy. The separation between politics and public administration, which Wilson argued, has been the subject of fierce debates for a long time, and different points of view on this subject differentiate periods in public administration. In fact, administrators started to play a more active role in the policy process, especially as they brought expert advice to bear on the legislative process. Later Luther Gulick and Lyndall Urwick integrated the ideas of such theorists like Henri Fayol into a comprehensive theory of administration. They believed that thoughts of Fayol offered a systematic treatment of management, which was unique at that time and they supposed that this could be applied as well for the management of companies as for administrative sciences.

After the World War Two appeared the new generation of scholars who questioned the ideas of Wilson and others. Luis Brownlow from the University of Chicago founded Public Administration Service on the University of Chicago campus and to the late 1970s Public Administration Service provided consulting services to governments at all levels; the federal government, states, cities counties and foreign countries. Rational choice model of bureaucracy was implemented by William Niskanen at the same time. His "budget-maximizing" example of bureaucracy as well as "the bureau-shaping" model of Patrick Dunleavy were of course critiqued by a range of authors. The model of Patrick Dunleavy put forward the idea that rational bureaucrats should only maximize the part of their budget that they spend on their own agency's operations or give to contractors or powerful interest groups. It means that rational officials will get no benefit from paying out larger welfare checks to millions of poor people, since the bureaucrats' own utilities are not improved. Consequently, we should expect bureaucracies to significantly maximize budgets in areas like police forces and defense, but not in areas like welfare state spending<sup>34</sup>.

It should be taken into account, that further academic researches were oriented on the extent to which elected officials can control their bureaucratic agents. It occurred that bureaucrats had more information than elected officials about what they were doing and what they should have been doing. That's why they had the ability to implement policies or regulations that went against the public interest. And in American context, these concerns

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<sup>33</sup> There are many different types of divisions in the literature. This is one of them.

<sup>34</sup> "Public administration" in *Wikipedia*, [online] <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Public\\_administration](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Public_administration)>, retrieved on 27.01.2008.

led to the “congressional abdication” hypotheses, the claim that congress had abdicated its authority over the public policy to appointed bureaucrats. The man who initiated this debate was Theodore Lowi. In 1979 he pointed that the U.S. congress didn’t exercise effective oversight of bureaucratic agencies. Instead, policies were made by groups of interest, appointed bureaucrats and congressional subcommittees, which were more likely to present more extreme views than congress as a whole<sup>35</sup>. Academic researches connected with Lowi’s claims asked whether legislatures can control bureaucrats. This empirical question was motivated by a normative concern: if we wish to believe that we live in a democracy, then it must be true that the appointed bureaucrats can’t act contrary to the elected officials’ interest. If we fully trusted elected officials, we wouldn’t spend so much time implementing constitutional balances<sup>36</sup>.

According to Janet Vinzant Denhardt and Robert Denhardt core ideas of **Old Public Administration** generally can represent the following elements:

1. The focus of the government is on the direct delivery of services through existing or through newly authorized agencies of government.
2. Public policy and administration is concerned with designing and implementing policies focused on a single, politically defined objective.
3. Public administrators play a limited role in policy making and governance. Rather they are charged with the implementation of public policies.
4. The delivery of services should be carried out by administrators accountable to elected officials and given limited discretion in their work.
5. Administrators are responsible to democratically elected political leaders.
6. Public programs are best administrated through hierarchical organizations, with managers largely exercising control from the top of organization.
7. The primary values of public organization are efficiency and rationality.
8. Public organizations operate most efficiently as closed systems, that’s why citizens’ involvement should be limited.
9. The role of the public administrator is largely defined as planning, organizing, staffing, coordinating, budgeting, directing and reporting<sup>37</sup>.

Recently, organization theorists have described a transition from bureaucracy to post-bureaucracy involving a declining emphasis on formalized internal organizational structures and control mechanisms. The values of bu-

<sup>35</sup> T. Lowi, *The end of liberalism*, W.W. Norton & Company, New York 1979, p. 69.

<sup>36</sup> Scholtz and Wood, *Controlling the IRS: Principals, principles and public administration*, “American Journal of Political Science” 2006, v. 28, pp. 16–79.

<sup>37</sup> J. Vinzant Denhardt, R.B. Denhardt, *The New Public Service: Serving, not Steering*, M.E. Sharpe 2007, pp. 11–12.

reaucratic administration included structural hierarchies, rational systems based on rules and procedures, the formalization of decision making process, and advancement based on administrative expertise. The characteristics of public sector bureaucratic organizations reflected Weber's legal-rational model, which described bureaucracy as hierarchical, impersonal in the application of laws, rule enforcing, and constituted by members with specialized technical knowledge of rules and procedures. In contrast, the post bureaucratic organization is characterized by negotiations, trust, collaboration, decentralization of authority, teamwork and reduced management layers.

It's interesting to consider, that at a broad level organizational transformation can be seen as a reflection of broader economic, cultural and social developments connected with rapidly changing technologies as well as the competitive pressures associated with globalization, wider diversity in the labour force and the increased dependence on knowledge workers in the new technology industries. The declining relevance of bureaucracy is also linked to the changing relationship of organizations to their external environments. Relations between organizations have become more important and the boundaries have become blurred, losing formalism and control less suitable. Rapidly changing markets and consumer preferences drive organizations to develop the capacity to respond to these processes by establishing decentralized organizational structures. In order to properly use the knowledge of workers it is required greater employee autonomy and it is implemented through employee participation in decision making and teamwork rather than planning, centralization and control<sup>38</sup>.

As far as public sector is concerned, new management techniques were adopted in an attempt to overcome bureaucratic pathologies, including inefficiency and inflexibility. There was increased interest in management approaches that were regarded as more suitable to the increasingly competitive global economic environment. Further there was a recognized need for public sector organizations to be more flexible and responsive in their dealings with the public and to be more sensitive to their diverse needs of the citizens that they service. In this context, the changing economic and social circumstances placed pressure on public sector organizations to be more efficient and competitive and more flexible in order to respond to diverse social needs and identities.

In the last few decades, fundamental changes transformed societies all over the world. These changes included the development of a global economy and the rapid progress and widespread adoption of information technology. The public sector underwent a huge transformation, leading to the emergence of what has been called the **New Public Management** (NPM).

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<sup>38</sup> R. Parker, L. Bradley, *Bureaucracy or post-bureaucracy? Public sector organizations in changing context*, "The Asia Pacific Journal of Public Administration" 2004, vol. 26, no. 2, pp. 107-198.

New Public Management is a kind of management philosophy used by governments since the 1980s to modernize the public sector. NPM is a broad and very complex term used to describe the wave the public sector reforms throughout the world since that time. Based on public choice and managerial schools of thought, new public management seeks to enhance the efficiency of the public sector and the control that government has over it. The main hypothesis in the NPM reform is that more market orientation in the public sector will lead to greater cost-efficiency for governments, without having negative side effects other objectives and considerations<sup>39</sup>.

One of the early writers of NPM – Jonathan Boston identified several ways in which public organizations differ from the private sector<sup>40</sup>:

- 1) degree of market exposure-reliance on appropriations,
- 2) legal, formal constraints-courts, legislature, hierarchy,
- 3) subject to political influences,
- 4) coerciveness-many state activities unavoidable, monopolistic,
- 5) breadth of impact,
- 6) subject to public scrutiny,
- 7) complexity of objectives, evaluation and decision criteria,
- 8) authority relations and the role of managers,
- 9) organizational performance,
- 10) incentives and incentive structures,
- 11) personal characteristics of employees.

Boston also underlined the fact that the reform tends to ignore these differences.

In 1995 the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) observed that “a new paradigm for public management has emerged, aimed at fostering a performance-oriented culture in a less centralized public sector”<sup>41</sup>. The report noted that implementation of the new paradigm was far from complete, and varied from country to country. At about the same time, during one of the conferences of the organization for public administration practitioners and academics in the 54 countries of the British Commonwealth – the Commonwealth Association for Public Administration and Management (CAPAM) – there were shown and summarized common themes in the experience of public sector reform in this diverse group of countries. The major characteristics of NPM were:

<sup>39</sup> “New Public Management” in *Wikipedia*, [online] <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New\\_Public\\_Management](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Public_Management)>, retrieved on 29.01.2008.

<sup>40</sup> See, J. Boston, J. Martin, J. Pallot, P. Walsh, *Public Management: The New Zealand Model*, Oxford University Press, Auckland 1996, pp. 10–30.

<sup>41</sup> S. Boris, *New Public Management: North American Style*, Chapter 13 of Mc Laughlin, Osborne and Ferlie, *The New Public Management: Current Trends and Future Prospects*, Dec. 2000, p. 2, [online] <<http://www.uts.utoronto.ca/~mgmt/courses/mgtc42/na-style.doc>>, retrieved on 28.01.2008.

- 1) providing high-quality services that citizens value,
- 2) demanding, measuring, and rewarding improved organizational and individual performance,
- 3) advocating managerial autonomy, particularly by reducing central agency controls,
- 4) recognizing the importance of providing the human and technological resources managers need to meet their performance targets,
- 5) maintaining receptiveness to competition and open-mindedness about which public purposes should be performed by public servants as opposed to the private sector or nongovernmental organizations<sup>42</sup>.

The New Public Management defined in this way can be treated as an agreement between the public and their elected representatives on the one hand and the public service on the other. The society and politicians want high-quality public services and better performance by public organizations. To get it, they are keen on giving public servants more managerial autonomy and human and technological resources. If public servants do not improve performance, politicians and public are willing to introduce competition within the public sector or move activities to the private sector.

There is no doubt that a few factors operating together drove the adoption of NPM. There were a high level political commitment to change, economic pressures and a set of ideas to shape the change but of course the experiences of different countries varied a lot<sup>43</sup>. For example in the UK political leaders proposed the set of ideas that would lead to major institutional change in the public sector. Their two main sources of inspiration were developed by economists public choice theory and agency theory. Public choice theory was connected with the assumption of the self – interested rationality to both: bureaucrats and politicians. Bureaucrats were assumed to maximize their departmental budgets, and politicians to maximize their chances of re-election, like in business where businessmen seek to maximize profits. The theory predicted that bureaucrats would expand their empires and politicians would use the public purse to confer benefits on interest groups, and consequently public sector would grow at the expense of the private sector, and this would reduce economic growth. The second theory – agency theory analyzed social and political relationship as a series of negotiated contracts between principals and their agents. The nature of these contracts depends on both: the information available to principals and

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<sup>42</sup> Ibidem, p. 3.

<sup>43</sup> About the implementation of NPM in different countries see: *The New Public Management and its legacy*, [online] <<http://www.worldbank.org/publicsector/civilservice/debate1.htm>>, retrieved on 29.01.2008; M. Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years*, Harper Collins, New York 1993; D. Kettl, *The Global Public Management Revolution: A Report on the Transformation of Governance*, Brookings, Washington 2000.



agents and their skills. As far as the politicians and public servants were concerned, it was felt that the public servants had exploited their informational advantage and wanted to reshape their relationship with public servants in a way that would offset that advantage.

In comparison to the other public theories, NPM seems to be more oriented toward outcomes and efficiency through better management of public budget. It is considered to be achieved by applying competition, as it is known in the private sector, to organizations of public sector, emphasizing economic and leadership principles. NPM addresses beneficiaries of public services much like customers and conversely citizens as shareholders.

Some modern authors say that New Public Management has already reached the top and they proclaim that NPM is “dead”. They argue that the cutting edge of change has moved on to digital era governance focusing on reintegrating concerns into government control, holistic government and digitalization<sup>44</sup>. And as a result of this, in the 1990s and early 21<sup>st</sup> century was put forward a new model of public administration – the **New Public Service**. It was proposed by Robert B. Denhardt and Janet Vinzant Denhardt and focused on people being treated as “citizens” rather than “customers”. They regard the citizen’s primary role as a participation in the government and activity throughout the process of implementing policy, instead of the end product of policies.

According to Robert B. Denhardt and Janet Vinzant Denhardt government shouldn’t be run like a business but should be run like a democracy. They describe various elements of the New Public Service by contrasting it with traditional and more contemporary approaches to public policy and public administration. “Around the world, both elected and appointed public servants are acting on this principle and expressing renewed commitment to such ideas as the public interest, the governance process, and expending democratic citizenship. As a result they are learning new skills in policy development and implementation, recognizing and accepting the complexity of the challenges they face, and treating their fellow public servants and citizens with renewed dignity and respect. Public employees are feeling more valued and energized as this sense of service and community expands. In the process, public servants are also reconnecting with citizens. Administrators are realizing that they have much to gain by »listening« to the public rather than »telling« and by »serving« rather than steering. At the invitation of public servants, even their urging, ordinary citizens are again becoming engaged in the governance process. Citizens and public officials are working together to define and address common problems in cooperative and mutual-

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<sup>44</sup> P. Dunleavy, H. Margetts, *New Public Management is dead: Long live digital era governance*, “Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory” July 2006, p. 22.

ly beneficial way. We suggest that this new attitude and new involvement are evidence of an emerging movement in public administration which we call »the New Public Service«<sup>45</sup>.

Today many of Weber's principles seem obvious and common. These days we also think of bureaucracies as inefficient, slow and generally bad. In Weber's time, they were seen as marvelously efficient machines that reliably accomplished their goals. And in fact bureaucracies did become enormously successful, easily exceeded other forms of organizations. They also did much to introduce concepts of fairness and equality of opportunity into society, having a profound effect on the social structure of nations.

For a long time Weber's rational bureaucracy model dominated social science thinking about large, modern organizations. The ideal bureaucracy and administration is a conceptual construction of certain empirical elements into a logically precise and consistent form which in its ideal purity will never be found in reality. Weber's ideal form of bureaucracy since has been the starting point and the main source of inspiration for many theories.

## **Streszczenie**

### **Współczesne racjonalne modele administrowania i biurokracji według Maksa Webera**

Niniejsza praca jest próbą przedstawienia studiów Maksa Webera, który był jednym z uczonych zajmujących się zagadnieniami związanymi z prawidłowym funkcjonowaniem administracji publicznej. Weber pozostawił po sobie olbrzymią spuściznę literacką, dlatego znaczną część rozważań stanowią dywagacje związane z jego twórczością i interpretacją pojęcia biurokracji. Weberowskie studia nad biurokracją doprowadziły do popularyzacji tegoż terminu do tego stopnia, iż jest on mylnie uważany za twórcę pojęcia. Maksa Webera postrzega się też jako jednego z patronów współczesnej myśli socjologicznej oraz racjonalnych podstaw działania na polu administracji publicznej i choć nie pozostawił po sobie tego, co można by nazwać „szkołą”, to jego idee obecne są na wielu polach humanistyki.

W drugiej części artykułu zostały ukazane nowe trendy teoretyczne i badania związane ze studiami nad administracją publiczną, odpowiednim doborem kadr administracyjnych oraz racjonalnym działaniem urzędników administracji państwowej.

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<sup>45</sup> J. Vinzant Denhardt, R.B. Denhardt, op. cit., p. 3.