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# The Obsolescence of Bureaucracy

Alexander J. Matejko

*The bureaucratic model becomes more and more self-defeating in present time because it is highly inadequate to meet the challenges of the modern world. Literature on the alternative models of collective work is now available. These are also several highly encouraging practical experiences. Fewer and fewer people still trust that any substitute for bureaucracy is just unrealistic.*

Bureaucracy<sup>1</sup> rests on command in the allocation of scarce resources and therefore should be treated as political in its true nature — opposed to the allocation based on customs or exchange contracts (Easton, 1965). The distinction between friend and foe, Us and the Other (Schmitt, 1963) is therefore the backbone of bureaucracy. Bureaucracy controls the scarce resources and in this capacity is vulnerable to external and internal danger. At the same time bureaucracy itself may artificially manipulate scarcity for its own benefit and become dangerous to its own surroundings. This power of bureaucracy depends on the ability to countervail the rival socio-political forces as well as to achieve internal cohesiveness.

It is an open question as to how much bureaucratization is able to harm complex organizations by depleting their storage of energy, slowing down their organizational growth, undermining organizational endurance and survival, and diminishing the organizational control of the surrounding environment. Obviously, bureaucracies are strongly oriented towards survival and the satisfaction of the supreme disposer but place less emphasis on the long term maximization of organizational returns. “The organization shall not incapacitate its environment as a source of inputs and a receiver of outputs, since doing so would reduce its own effectiveness or even its power to

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<sup>1</sup> According to Marx, there are at least four different meanings of the word “bureaucracy”: a) civil service, b) the indifferent treatment of clients by administrators, c) the growth of the executive sector over and above the legislative sector, d) the domination exercised by the administrative power elite. He also made a distinction between the four types of bureaucracy based on guardianship, caste, patronage and merit (Marx, 1957:20-21 and chapter four).

survive. Maximization to that seemingly self-destructive point is by no means uncommon..." (Katz and Kahn, 1978:251). Bureaucracies deplete their environments by reducing their functionaries to mediocrities (Matejko, 1979), creating a widespread anomie, forcing people to take a defensive attitude, splitting human relations according to organizational lines, spreading impersonality and anonymity, imposing the procedural approach to all problems, idolizing the institution over and above the human good, enforcing rigidity, and substituting sincere commitment for goal fulfillment by the pretentious manipulation of facts, materials and human beings.

It is in the nature of bureaucracy that it naturally drives in its endeavours beyond an optimum and stimulates countervailing forces. The process of task specialization entirely neglects the utmost importance of socio-moral bonds which energize individuals, allow them to find the common understanding, provide stability and predictability, and assure some minimum of mental health. Standardization of role performance fractionates human responsibility, endangers the internal cohesion and identity of individuals and groups as natural elementary parts of social systems, and creates the illusion of "order", "rationality" and "coordination" in which the social factors are omitted.

In bureaucracies unity of command and centralization of decision making are based on a very simplified and one-sided understanding of the nature of power — power free from moral responsibility, oriented towards manipulation, reduced mostly to coercion, sanctified by the priority of institutional good over the good of human communities. The whole concept of community as the source of such power is foreign to bureaucracy in which its supreme disposer is reduced to something anonymous and therefore free from any ultimate responsibility. The dilution of responsibility between various steps in the bureaucratic hierarchy makes the latter factor particularly harmful to the human community.

Uniformity of practices within the bureaucratic organizations is the major source of ossification and conservatism. Following mainly "the survival model" bureaucracies show a great hesitancy to accept any novelties which would upset the well established order. The vested interests of bureaucratic functionaries located at various hierarchical levels prevent new ideas and the people behind them from being introduced successfully into the organizational reality. Bureaucracies are more willing to accept counterfeit innovations rather than genuine innovations because the former are much easier to digest; especially if the pseudo-innovators and the entrenched bureaucrats share some common interests.

No duplication of functions is allowed in bureaucracies but this principle is combined with the elimination of opinion differences, questioning,

opposition, and right of dissent. Bureaucracies are not designed to accept dissent and disagreement as a source of progress and creativity. There is a strong tendency to localize, "pacify" and eventually eliminate any sources of potential disagreement. In the selection of personnel special attention is paid to the rejection of possible "troublemakers" who may contaminate the supposedly prevailing spirit of peace and agreement. The anti-dialectical nature of bureaucracies is one of the major sources of their self-defeat.

Bureaucratic personnel are supposed to be rewarded for merit but this is interpreted mainly as disposability and institutional loyalty. The well-being of the bureaucratic organization itself is the ultimate institutional goal and the latent function of self-preservation and self-aggrandizement dominates over the manifest goals formulated and reformulated for the sake of good public relations. Under such circumstances the employees who really deserve merit are those who contribute to the good of the bureaucracy and not those who are committed to other goals of a professional, social or moral nature. The gradual elimination of those who do not share the total bureaucratic commitment, are not willing to serve the hierarchy and accept the stereotype of an "organization man" (Whyte, 1956) is the "triumphant" bureaucracies.

Depersonalization of the office was a great organizational achievement in the historical beginnings of the bureaucratic form when it took over from the arrangements totally immersed in the tribal, familial and privatized frameworks. It was necessary once to make a clear difference between the "private" and the "institutional" spheres, especially as long as the division of labour remained underdeveloped. The problem is that bureaucracy instead of fulfilling its historical function and timely withdrawing from the historical scene in order to provide a place for the higher forms of work organization, more adequate to the sophisticated level of socio-economic development, has survived and has become a suitable organizational weapon for power and the success of those who gain from bureaucracy. One of the very important reasons that this above mentioned perpetration could happen is the ideological neutrality of bureaucracy as a machine disposable to anybody who is powerful enough to take it over and sophisticated enough to use it for his own benefit. In this machine the ultimate values are pushed aside; therefore it is easy to switch from one ideological programme to another without effecting much change in the machine. Even the change of personnel may be achieved very smoothly by the application of appropriate selections and training devices.

Depersonalization has several side effects which are disastrous for bureaucracies in the long run. In this dehumanized world of bureaucracy human well-being has to be constantly neglected, work motivation does not

crystalize, loyalties are superficial and ephemeral, responsibility to the external world becomes subordinated to the vested interests of the institution and its disposers. The growth of formalization thwarts the natural development of informal relationships: organization becomes distorted, uncontrollable and dominated by private coalitions harmful to the institution. Cliques play a major role even if they do not appear on any organizational blueprint. Privatization flourishes unhampered within the formalized organizational environment which is supposed to eliminate completely any personalization.

The basic assumptions in the bureaucratic model often become counter-productive not necessarily because they are wrong when taken individually but because their peculiar combination reinforces the gap between the organizational model and the socio-moral reality, as well as exposing the artificial character of this model. This is not the natural human environment open to spontaneity, creativity and dispute but a machine suitable for the skillful manipulation by those who are willing and able to take full advantage of the fact that there is enough of a gap and inconsistency between various assumptions. The bureaucratic weapon estranges itself easily from the control by a society weakened in its moral unity, open to divergent interpretations, and confused by its own complexity. In the past the rulers exercised a strong hand over the still weakly developed bureaucracies: now the "overdeveloped" bureaucracies dominate over the socially and spiritually weakened societies emptied of their moral fiber and traditional roots. The control of bureaucracies from outside has become sporadic, superficial, highly inadequate, dispirited, with no adequate feedback. Those who are closest to the centres of bureaucratic power have all the advantages available to them and can easily do what they wish.

The bureaucratic model becomes more and more self-defeating in present times because it is highly inadequate to meet the challenges of the modern world. It does not fit into the rapid change. It does not mobilize higher motivation and human willingness to cooperate. It does not pay attention to the needs and anguishes of modern people. It is not able to considerably improve its efficiency. It does not improve human relations. It does not give any hope for the solving of the crucial socio-economic and political problems of our times.

Literature on the alternative models of collective work is now available. There are also several highly encouraging practical experiences (Matejko, 1979). Fewer and fewer people still trust that any substitute for bureaucracy is just unrealistic. The question remains as to what will move faster: the self-defeating trend of bureaucracy down the drain or the thriving of the administrative revolution (Berkley, 1971). The "calculable rules"

on which the bureaucratic mechanisms depend lose in importance in a society which gains its organic solidarity (Durkheim) from the far reaching modern division of labour which is calculative by itself. Dilettantism has ceased to be a major danger under conditions of a universal education and professionalism. Legality is already relatively well assured in developed societies which show, in general, a much higher level of external and internal stability than in traditional agrarian societies (Lenski and Lenski, 1978). Formalization could be a progressive trend in the pre-industrial societies which suffered from too much intimacy. However, at the higher stages of socio-economical development it becomes a nuisance. Neutrality stops being an asset in modern times when bureaucracies have become the dominant form of work organization. In a dynamic society there is no room for the institutional structures based on longevity of their personnel, promoting delay and inflexibility.

There is a growing need for new forms of work organization which would allow the application of discretionary measures geared in every instance to the changing task exigencies. Of course, there is always a danger that without the objective, non-arbitrary application of calculable norms, the situation may lead to the unequal treatment of individuals and their cases, favoritism, and preference. However, with the progressing diversification of tasks, changing ratio of staff to line personnel, the improvement of communication up the line, transformation of authority relationships, decentralization and general relaxation of rules have become a necessity which makes the bureaucratic pyramid obsolete. We do not have enough time to waste on procedural consideration because time becomes too precious. The span of time from discovery of a new technology to its practical application is constantly decreasing (Dorf, 1974:14). When the routine and repetitive tasks diminish in importance than there is more need for new organizational forms based on an easy cross-communication, high level of job discretion, team work, intrinsic motivation, management by objectives, etc. The mounting need for innovation "places priority on men and women who can think for themselves and frowns on those who slavishly seek to imitate their peers and superiors. It requires organizations to blink at or even welcome human eccentricities when such features are part of a human being's package of potentialities. It forces organization to emphasize internal cooperation and discourage competitiveness. For innovation in the complex technology of today requires team work" (Berkley, 1971:69-70).

Bureaucracies are able to flourish in the condition of relative isolation and domination over countervailing forces. The unorganized clientele unable to exercise any control and pressure; lack of other organizational

forces able to compete effectively by offering the same or even better services at a lower rate; the passive environment unable to react against abuses practiced by bureaucracy; an effective resistance to the challenge offered by new perspectives; the concentration of full power within one's own ranks and the rejection of any input by outsiders; professionals kept at a distance; the effective prevention of personnel being exposed to any novelties; mutual loyalties among bureaucrats used to dominate over the forces of dissention; the continuous recruitment of loyalistic candidates free from any broad external commitments; the ability to apply unidimensional procedures and approaches to current tasks — all these factors allow bureaucracies to function on the basis of a semi-closed system and therefore remain relatively autonomous.

However, in the modern world there are more and more trends which undermine these factors. Clients organize themselves and exercise pressures more or less effectively, for example, R. Nader and his consumer defence movement. The vigorous entrepreneurial spirit creates various enterprises which prove to be more successful than the ossified bureaucracies, for example, the private post delivery agencies competing with the governmental postal services in North America. With the growing surplus of collective consciousness in the sophisticated developed societies (R. Bahro, 1979) the external social environment of bureaucracies is becoming more and more sensitive to the maldoings of bureaucracies. It is very significant that the public condemnation of bureaucracies is expressed more and more by people who used to be their obedient servants, from the CIA and KGB agents, through various civil servants to even the Roman Catholic priests. Organizational conformism is widely denounced in the popular literature and the stereotype of an "organization man" has clearly negative connotations.

Bureaucracies, whether they wish to or not, have to open themselves to new horizons, hire consultants, pay attention to strangers, depend on professional personnel with strong external attachments, and introduce some innovations. However, a large part of these endeavours are just "window-dressing". Professional consultants are hired but their reports remain idle in files; innovations are widely publicized for the sake of public relations and afterward they are discontinued. The conservative resistance against any deeper reforms is one of the characteristics of bureaucracies; the deep root of it is the inherent feeling of insecurity among the bureaucratic functionaries who owe everything to their institution and are helpless without its sponsorship. With the growing role of professionals in bureaucracies this feeling of insecurity is being substituted by the feeling of misplacement and alienation among people who entered bureaucracies with the trust in their own education background, and ambition to achieve in their lives

something valid professionally, and the disinclination to be conformistic. Therefore, bureaucracies are exposed to growing internal tensions, especially in the public bureaucracies when the tenure of a civil servant position and unionization defend employees quite effectively against the interorganizational pressures.

Bureaucracies pay great attention to «esprit de corps» but this is done in an isolationistic manner. The “crystal palace” of a big corporation or of a state apparatus may be comfortable to the insiders but totally lukewarm to outsiders. “The fact that the individual is serving some group which is greater than himself blinds him to the fact that his group is only a part of the whole” (Boulding, 1953). In the bureaucracies this tendency is reinforced by the vested interests of the administrative elite which become easily divorced from social interests. “The bureaucratic landscape is dotted with agencies which no longer serve any useful purpose and which may even frustrate the attainment of society’s purposes. Yet such agencies can often cling to life with a formidable tenacity when confronted by possible extinction” (Berkley, 1971:147). Vested institutional interests lead to a high level of defensiveness or even aggressiveness; members of a given complex organization protect one another against any external scrutiny; external efforts to introduce some controls are sabotaged successfully by all levels of the bureaucratic hierarchy; coverups are a common occurrence of bureaucratic life. At the same time there are intense rivalries and animosities inside bureaucracies behind the facade of the solidarity versus the outside world. Bureaucrats within their own ranks are divided according to organizational boundaries, unit loyalties, suppressed ambitions and personal animosities. The pseudorationalistic character of bureaucracies prevents them quite effectively from achieving any deeper internal solidarity as well as an adequate efficiency. “Resources are wasted, energies are sacrificed, and efforts are sabotaged. Thus, because of the isolation which it fosters, and because this isolation tends to build up internal pressures, the overtly cohesive organization is not only not all that cohesive but it is also not all that efficient” (Berkley, 1971:149).

In the modern multidimensional world the bureaucratic endeavour to reduce everything to unidimensionality becomes more and more difficult because of the growing complexity of problems faced by bureaucracies, the growing educational level of people, the lack of imagination among bureaucrats, neglect of the intelligence function, and competition between various bureaucracies. According to Marcuse, “The more rational, productive, technical, and total the repressive administration of society becomes, the more unimaginable the means and ways by which the administered individuals might their servitude and seize their own liberation” (Marcuse, 1964:6-7). He treats an effective suffocation of liberation needs as the

distinguishing feature of advanced industrial society. The pessimistic image of a bureaucratized society offered by Marcuse is far from social reality because his image of freedom is unreal. He claims that "self-determination will be real to the extent to which the masses have been dissolved into individuals liberated from all propaganda, indoctrination, and manipulation, capable of knowing and comprehending the facts and of evaluating the alternatives" (Marcuse, 1964:252). Liberation from unidimensionality does not necessarily mean achievement of a mythologized absolute freedom from any social influences, which are unavoidable, but the resistance of people against the manipulation of them into the role of passive objects of the bureaucratic authority everywhere — under capitalism as well as under any kind of socialism.

The unidimensional reductionism of human beings under bureaucracy originates from the systemic nature of the bureaucratic model based on the rationalistic intellectual tradition, highly appealing to administrators and technicians. There is some truth in the claim of R. Lilienfeld that systems theory has become the ideology of the administrative intellectual. "The ideology of systems theory could be said to consist of having no ideology, in the popular sense of a specific political commitment. Like the dialectic, it provides a vocabulary that permits its predictiveness to celebrate and serve whatever social developments emerge over the horizon. It can be both conservative and revolutionary at the same time, perhaps in the same sense in which Marxian dialecticians are conservative with respect to their own societies and revolutionary with respect to others (...). System theory as social doctrine may be regarded as a variant of organic or 'organismic' approaches to society." (Lilienfeld, 1978:263).

The image of bureaucracy as a more or less coherent system plays a very important socio-political role because it provides a myth of a supreme organizational being, an object of service and idolatry. The power accumulated in bureaucracies provides the reinforcement for this myth and makes it even more appealing. The present organizational complexity and the high level technology on one side and utilitarianism, practicicism and the ideology crisis on the other side, make the above mentioned myth particularly suitable. "It is at such a time that the notion of society run by impartial benevolent technicians operating on the basis of actual logic and impersonal algorithmic methods could come to the fore as a new ideology (or nonideology), and in fact one that appears attractive to all advanced industrial societies regardless of their official eighteenth- or nineteenth-century creeds" (Lilienfeld, 1978:264).

This "nonideology" is well suited to the professional and semi-professional cadres of the welfare state agencies, the giant corporate enter-

prises, military institutions, etc. The system effectiveness provides a rationale for various groups of bureaucrats who badly need a scientific mystification in order to increase the justification of their actions directly to the public and to legitimize bureaucratic interventions that might otherwise be resisted (Moynihan, 1973; Krause, 1968). In this manner the bureaucratic elite imposes itself as the only problem-solver recognized and selected on account of its special capabilities. The element of mystification is reinforced by the widespread utilization of experts who are recognized as long as they play the role of the obedient servants of power (Barritz, 1965). In the U.S. there has been a growth of the government by contract and grant; the ratio of federal employees per one thousand population has diminished in the period 1956-1976 from 14 to 13, but now almost 80,000 full time government employees administer around \$110 billion given as contracts and grants (1973 data). According to R. Nader, "fortified by personal relationships and contracts, the consulting industry services the needs of public and private institutions in specific and by now routine ways. Federal department officials achieve significant insulation from criticism of their behavior if they can cite a "think tank" study. The imprimatur of consulting firms, sympathetic to and associated with the largest business interests in the land, conveys, to an inquiring congressional committee for example, that a department's action has the backing of an industrial or commercial establishment. Obviously, developing or recommending the types of Government programs which enrich corporate interests, in turn, ingratiates the consulting firms with the business part of the triangle. A combination of the abdication of its responsibilities by the Executive Branch and the assertiveness of the firms themselves insinuates them solidly into the governmental process" (Guttman and Willner, 1976:XI-XII).

## **DURABILITY AND FRAGILITY**

Complex organizations, due to their contrived nature, are potentially durable but at the same time they are highly fragile. The cement which keeps them intact consists of the interrelated roles and the individuals<sup>2</sup> who

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<sup>2</sup> The personalities are very important in the case of a charismatic authority and therefore the latter is an unstable basis of organization but very functional in the community framework. Caplov defines an organization as a social system that has an unequivocal collective identity, an exact roster of members, a programme of activity and procedures. According to Max Weber, whether or not an organization exists is a matter of the presence of a person in authority.

occupy them. With progressing standardization, formalization and mechanization of these roles there is a growing probability of a gap between the role and the human being who fills it. The perceptions of official and semi-official roles by people probably differ in modern times much more from the organizational programs than was the case in the more traditional civilizations, particularly those of a non-pluralistic nature. Individuals are more exposed to a whole variety of different values; the socialization mechanisms are less reliable; societies depend much more on mutual human interdependencies dictated by the developed division of labor than on indoctrination. (Even under communism practiced in the relatively advanced societies indoctrination is not treated seriously as the major factor of socialization.) Within the modern framework quite often there are some basic disagreements between the role-sending and the role-taking (Katz and Kahn, 1978: 191-197); the legitimacy of authority is shaky and questionable; the informal role practice differs widely from the prescribed formal roles; allocation of different values within the organizational space prevents the development of a unified organizational culture; communication suffers from misunderstanding and willful distortions; pressures arise from strong resistant counter-pressures and the partial social integration negatively oriented; the intrinsic satisfactions related to role performance do not cumulate for the benefit of the whole complex organization; the occupational and organizational self-identities of the organization members do not contribute to role-readiness.

Formalization as the organizational technique of prescribing how, when, and by whom tasks are to be performed is a necessity but at the same time it leads to several dysfunctions. First of all there is an incompatibility between any formal structure designed to achieve limited economic goals and the expression of potentialities of those who work within it. Secondly, the administrative component tends to decrease in size as organizational size increases, but in very large organizations, the relative size of the administrative component again increases -- although not up to the level that it assumes in small organizations. Thirdly, the administrative element in large organizations is not substantially affected by operations technology and therefore it may grow beyond its reasonable limits. Fourthly, organizations with routine work are more likely to have greater formalization of organizational roles. Fifthly, organizations which employ professionals are less formalized than organizations without professionals. For professionals, the greater the degree of formalization in the organization the greater the likelihood of alienation from work.

It is an open question, to what extent modern complex organizations reduce human beings to mediocrities or deviants. The pressures to which

people are exposed within a highly bureaucratized environment can be resisted by them only up to a certain level and afterwards people just give up. It is impossible to say how much bureaucratic positions tend to attract people who are already suited to them, and how much bureaucracies just produce bureaucrats. Obviously, the mechanism of mutual reinforcement must be involved here. People bring to bureaucracies their own idiosyncracies and influence the organizational climate with them. On the other hand, the mental and moral horizons of individuals are shaped to a great extent by the organizational values and norms.

Each of the organizational subsystems develops its own dynamic tendencies: production subsystem -- technical proficiency, maintenance subsystem -- stability and predictability, boundary and adaptive subsystems -- external and internal change, managerial subsystem -- compromise, control, and survival. These tendencies quite often are in conflict with each other when any subsystem contributes to disintegration and change instead of contributing to integration and stability. The differentials in the hierarchical gradients of power, prestige and reward between various subsystems and the individuals behind them may become an object of strong competition, especially when surplus margin is not big enough to allow for organizational growth and the "limited good" has to be given to one subsystem at the expense of the remaining subsystems.

From the technological perspective organizational structures are predetermined by the technology used. Variations in the organizational structures are closely linked with the differences in techniques applied. Organizations are defined from this perspective as systems which utilize energy in a patterned, directed effort to alter the condition of basic materials in a predetermined manner. The organizational structure is largely constrained by the technology used. However, the variables of operations technology are in reality related only to those structural variables that are centered on the workflow. Size appears as more important than technology in determining structure. From the sociological perspective it is important that the technology applied within organizations molds the type of social ties that involve and allows the prediction to some extent of the strategies applied by various occupational groups in pursuit of their specific goals.

Complexity in organizations takes the form of horizontal and vertical differentiation, as well as spatial dispersion. Their members are integrated mainly by reciprocal relationships which are focused on role-requirements that govern the behavior of those members. The task system operates directly upon the socio-emotional (sentient) system which derives from the personality needs motivating the human participants. A very strict regulation of roles within organizations leads to the ossification of the whole organiza-

tional structure. Over adherence to and identification with organizational means can deflect the individual from the behavior that is most beneficial to the organization (bureaupathology).

Organizational complexity in organizations is additionally complicated by the fact that it is neither true that organizations are always goal-seeking entities (the survival concerns in many cases are closer to reality than the efficiency concerns), nor that official goals are necessarily in agreement with the operative goals. The manifest organizational functions usually differ from the latent functions. There is a considerable amount of normative incompatibility in organizations resulting from inconsistency, dissensus, ambiguity or overload. Internal states and processes in complex organizations are quite often inconsistent with the external demands and considerably lower in their adaptational capabilities. Different parts of an organization have different powers of coping with uncertainty and on this basis the interests may diverge. A common value-orientation among the organizational members is of varying importance under various circumstances. Organizations most commonly adapt themselves to the changing environment by manipulating their own structures. Organizations characterized by high centralization of authority, formalization of rules, and stratification of reward structures are less likely to adopt innovations.

The vulnerability of organizations to ossification depends, among other things, on the type of organization. The quest for stable routines and secure statuses which pushes administrators to introduce bureaucracy (Weber) will be stronger in those organizations which are focused on the maintenance function than in those focused on the economic, adaptive or managerial function (the typology of Katz and Kahn, 1978). The principle of collegiality when applied to organizations weakens substantially the strict application of bureaucratic principles. Organizations supported by users, members or donors will probably be less bureaucratic than organizations supported by the general public or by endowment.<sup>3</sup> The exertion of authority as the dominant organizational factor of strategic importance makes the organization more vulnerable to ossification than the opposition of economic interests. Organizations modeled on the machine theory may become more easily ossified than organizations in which the shared values of members and the group parameters of task interdependence play a major role. The larger and the more complex the organizations, the greater will be the similarity of several managerial parameters but also the greater the stan-

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<sup>3</sup> Endowment is defined as the legal right to enjoy current revenues derived from past accumulations of wealth.

andardization and the possibility of ossification. In organizations the degree of complexity has a direct relationship with formalization; size is the major predictor of decentralization (Child, 1973). With the growth in organizational size there is relatively less need for administrators, but at the same time communication becomes a paramount issue (Kasarda, 1974). The cost of differentiation is increased coordination. Disproportionate changes in subsystems result in the disproportionate increase in the administrative component of the organization. In general, the relative size of the administrative component in organizations depends on the following seven main factors: accessibility to technological advances, the nature of the essential throughput, marginal productivity of added administrative personnel, homogeneity of the organizational units, the degree of interdependence among the parts with respect to turning out a single product, the type of environment, and who is the principal beneficiary (Katz and Kahn, 1978).

With the progress of differentiation and integration of social structures facing the new challenges of their transforming environment there is more and more dominance of human life by complex organizations of a formalized nature, and among them mainly by bureaucracies. In simple (primitive societies) the basis for social organization is provided by kinship; they do not have any clear-cut differentiated organizations. Work and leisure are not clearly delineated. The basic human needs of security and coordination of efforts have led in the long run to the establishment of artificial structures such as complex organizations (Durkheim, 1947). They are artifacts consciously established to serve certain purposes, with patterned internal relationships, and based on some more or less formulated 'rules of the game' (Silverman, 1970). They have their own rationality, namely that all elements of an organization should contribute to the success of the whole (Kotarbinski, 1965). In reality, the organization constitutes a negotiated order in which various groups bargain with one another; however, the complex networks of groups which operate in complex organizations constitute the relatively permanent interaction systems with specific boundaries and specific members (actors).

There are various ways of viewing organizations depending on the perspective used. From the *rational perspective* organizations are a means of achieving certain social goals on the basis of a feeling of obligation (vocation, duty) and with some constraints imposed upon employees in order to make them some kind of perfect instruments in working together. "There emerges an image of a highly efficient machine wherein a collection of actors are cooperatively engaged in a series of behaviors that all fit together into a grand scheme to accomplish a desired end." (Haas and Drabek, 1973:27). From the *natural system perspective* organizations are viewed as

adaptive structures within a changing environment that must be coped with if equilibrium is to be maintained. If organizations are to survive they cannot drift and adapt haphazardly to their environments without running a strong risk of developing segments with contradictory values and objectives. From the *human relations perspective* the main issue in organizations is how to motivate people as individuals and as members of groups, as well as how to arrange their smooth cooperation. Organizations are viewed from this perspective as sets of interlocked functioning groups (the linking pin principle). From the *exchange perspective* organizations are treated as sequences of interactions and activities leading up to the decisions. The structural demands of the work situations must be related to the patterns of social relations, personality types of actors, and the exchanges of favors among them. Power in organizations may be gained by providing services desired by others who become dependent on the supplier. From the *conflict perspective* organizations are viewed as fields of power redistributions between various persons and groups. From the *classical perspective* organizations constitute formal structures. The key to their success lies in the arrangement of parts which taken together constitute an organization (Haas and Drabek, 1973:23-93).

### INTERNAL CONFLICTS OF THE HIERARCHICAL ORGANIZATIONS

In the hierarchical organization the higher you ascend the more types of action are available to you; the lower you go the less freedom of action you enjoy, and the more your role is prescribed, limited in discretion. Therefore, the cognitive and affective requirements of organizational leadership differ widely depending on the location of leader in the hierarchy. These characteristic limits vary considerably the adaptational capabilities of the hierarchical organization, especially when it is necessary to face a changing and unpredictable environment. The lower rank leader is in great difficulty in task fulfillment as well as in giving the socio-emotional support to his subordinates as his discretion is very limited. He seems unable to give promises and even more to keep them; he does not have the power to change things on the spot; he has to wait for decisions coming from the higher ranks. With the growing dependence of modern organizations on the dynamics of the external flexible environment this rigidity and inflexibility has become a more troublesome nuisance. On the other hand a far reaching flexibility and adaptability of the higher ranks also may create great organizational difficulties.

Because of the conflicting claims on available resources organizations are in reality "tension-management" entities (Moore). In order to lower the pressures, coming mainly from outside of the organization, the concept of a strict separation of office and incumbent (in the sense that the official does not own the "means of administration" and cannot appropriate the position) was widely introduced. In bureaucracies a relation between legally instated authorities and their subordinate officials is characterized by defined rights and duties, prescribed in written regulations. This is typical for a bureaucracy. Organizations possess characteristics of the bureaucratic model in varying degrees along several dimensions of bureaucracy. There are the following major bureaucratic characteristics: hierarchy of authority, division of labor, technically competent participants, procedural devices for work situations, rules governing behavior of positional incumbents, limited authority of office, differential rewards by office, impersonality of personal contact, administration separated from ownership, emphasis on written communication, and rational discipline.

However, the rigidification of any given institutional structure through standardization of procedures, far reaching specialization and limited flexibility often leads to disruption or dissolution of society by way of internal upheaval or ineffectiveness against external change. Strain between human aspirations and passivity of the bureaucratic structure leads to nonformal behavior. There is the tendency in organizations among their constituent parts to resist actions which do not serve their own purposes (Selznick called it the problem of recalcitrance). There are problems of omission, distortion, and overload in transmission of messages within organizations. Each group within the bureaucratic organization attempts to preserve and enlarge its areas of discretion, in order to limit its dependence on others, by making its behavior more unpredictable (Crozier, 1964).

Lack of congruence in various fields of organization compliance leads to: lack of commitment among the organizational members, slowing of the socialization process, undermining of the managerial effectiveness, and a shaky authority. Bureaucracy is too rigid to adjust without crisis to the transformations that the accelerated evolution of industrial society makes more and more imperative. Among the dysfunctions of bureaucracy the most important factor is the displacement of values from the intrinsic quality of work to its by-products of income, security, prestige, and leisure (Presthus, 1978). Decentralization of decision making, an emphasis on mutual dependence and cooperation based on trust, confidence, and high technical and professional competence, pressure to enlarge tasks and interrelate them, decentralization of responsibility, commitment of participants -- all of these are characteristics of organic organization free from the shortcomings of bureaucracy (Jaques, 1977).

## DIFFICULTIES WITH PROBLEM-SOLVING

The survival of complex organizations and their effectiveness depends upon their ability to solve the basic problems which they face. According to Parsons, organizations in order to survive and develop, have to solve four basic problems: goal achievement, adaptation to the environment, integration, and the maintenance of value patterns over time. Organizational effectiveness manifests itself to the extent to which an organization, as a social system, fulfills its objectives without incapacitating its means and resources and without placing undue strain on its members (Georgopoulos and Tannenbaum, 1956). Organizational effectiveness involves the balanced emphasis upon achieving organizational objectives, problem-solving competence, and human energy utilization.

The whole range of activities which a given organization is able to develop in order to face the demands (organizational capability) is usually much higher than their actual utilization and the question is not so much how to maximize the organizational effectiveness as to do well enough to get by (satisfaction).

In industrial organizations the overwhelming share of increased output should be attributed to technological factors. The state of the art of analyzing the characteristics of raw materials is likely to determine what kind of technology will be used. It is the problem of understanding the material and of standardizing it. The central problem of mass production involves the need to administrate. The administrative demands may be so excessive that people are not able to meet them and there is a normative overload.

The management of work teams in complex organizations very often meets its limits of perfection which are dictated by factors far beyond the control of a given manager. Theoretically, he should reconcile his responsibility of initiating structures with the consideration for the subordinates which contributes positively to higher work satisfaction, lower absenteeism and lower labor turnover. (There is a close relationship between absenteeism and supervisory behavior.) He should use democratic-persuasive skills and be flexible and open-minded. The more skilled his subordinates are the less direction he needs to give them. He should allow for some divergence of opinions in his team to inspire collective evaluation of current problems (creative groups produce better ideas if there is initial disagreement). In general, he should help the members of his team to handle the tasks as well as to come to terms with one another; group cohesiveness increases output when the work requires social motivation. Happy workers do not necessarily work harder, but a good team spirit contributes to the favorable organizational climate (Argyle, 1974).

In the reality of complex organizations the dependence of a team leader on higher echelons of authority introduces very serious limits in his ability to activate the group. It is a well known fact that in smaller organizational units job satisfaction tends to be greater, absenteeism, labor turnover, accidents, and labor disputes are less, in many cases by a large amount. However, the autonomization of small units is very often actively discouraged because it limits the power of higher authority levels. If working people are adequately informed about the results of their work then they can make their own performance more accurate, their motivation increases and they are more able to improve their own work. However, in reality the higher levels of authority do not have any vested interest in keeping the work teams adequately informed because this would create some problems. The experiments in autonomization of work teams quite often fail only because they never gained any sincere acceptance by the higher management levels vitally interested in keeping people subordinated to them as dispersed as possible.

A rigid hierarchical organization may have a negative impact on its members by reinforcing in them those personality attributes which lead to submissiveness, lack of originality and initiative, inability to empathize, and low tolerance of any incongruities. It is a well known fact that offices occupied by people influence their attitudes (Lieberman, 1956) and it is even more valid to roles played in cohesive groups. The intensification of control exercised by the complex organization in offices and formal groups, as this is typical for hierarchical organizations, may have far reaching consequences for the mentality of people who are within the scope of organizational influence. The limitations of options open to the role occupants is one of the most important measures of organizational control and socialization. By rewarding some people with role discretion and withdrawing it from others complex organizations introduce the factor of social inequality and selective rewarding for loyalty without the necessity of appealing to coercion or to calculative rewarding.

## **STRESS AND PARTICIPATION AS A REMEDY**

Modern complex organizations show a high level of sophistication in dealing with stresses. They alter the degree of stress by changes in either demands or capacity. They absorb new elements into the leadership or policy-determining structure of an organization as a means of averting threats to its stability or existence (co-optation). The more successful firms

exhibit means of integrating (co-ordinating) their organizational units in a manner appropriate to their degree of differentiation (Lawrence and Lorsch, 1967).

There are several ways to protect the throughput process from critical fluctuations in the environment: buffering, leveling, forecasting, and control. The choice of them depends to a large extent on the nature of the environment. Emery has distinguished four levels of environments: placid, random (goals and noxiants distributed randomly and independently one from another); placid, cluster (goal and noxiants occur together with varying probabilities); disturbed, reactive (for example, the oligopolic market --the survival of a system depends on its relation to other systems); and turbulent (dynamic processes arise from the field itself and create significant variances for the component systems). With the growing environmental unpredictability it becomes more and more difficult for complex organizations to defend themselves against entropy, even if potentially social systems are capable of the almost indefinite arresting of the entropic process (Katz and Kahn, 1978:123).

In the highly developed economies there is a concentration of organizational power but at the same time there is also a lot of entropy because, among other things, of the overrationalization of organizational structures. A high degree of calculability is an important advantage of bureaucracy (Weber, 1968). Bureaucracy subordinates itself to anyone who is able to master the economic and legal techniques necessary for its proper functioning (Abrahamsson, 1977:62). Bureaucracy, and particularly state bureaucracy, is the medium through which the passage from the particular to the general interest becomes possible (Mouzelis, 1967:8). However, at the same time bureaucracies -- as was already mentioned -- reduce human beings to objects of manipulation. The hierarchical organizations are authority-bound and they constrict the drive of individuals towards maturity (Argyris, 1964). Various types of power in organizations are quite often in mutual disagreement.<sup>4</sup> In supervision legitimate, expert and referent

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4 According to French and Raven there are the following five basic types of power in organizations: reward power — the ability to reward another person in exchange for compliance; coercive power — the ability to bring about an undesired state of affairs for another person in case of noncompliance; referent power — compliance based on liking or identification with a person because one admires the personal qualities and desires the other's respect; expert power — compliance based on the belief that another has greater technical knowledge or expertise and can be trusted to share the knowledge without distortion; and legitimate power — compliance which stems from a belief in the right of another person to direct activities and the belief that one has an obligation to comply.

power are primary acceptable grounds for eliciting compliance of subordinates (Bachman et al., 1968). This compliance is a consequence of the exercise of legitimate power supported by the means to reward and coerce subordinates, with control facilitated by expert and referent power (Tausky, 1978:139). Various types of power interfere with one another and this leads to several tensions. An organization itself is the outcome of the interaction of motivated people attempting to resolve their own problems.

The question is how to motivate people but at the same time not to impose too much authority on them. There are various methods of coordination called for by a particular technology and its interdependencies. Organization according to Thompson (1971) is a closed system (the technical core) operating within the protective boundaries of an open system. The style of motivation and coordination should be a response to all those elements or features of an organization which impinge on employees to decide or limit the behavioral content of their work (Woodward, 1970). There are the following basic organizational constraints the supervision must deal with: technology, control systems, product market, labor costs, and interest groups. There is a problem in modern complex organizations of leadership and power based on the control of scarce organizational resources. The nature of the personnel in the organization, its task, and the general technological-environmental conditions appear to be the key determinants of the form of leadership and power appropriate for various kinds of organizations. The distribution of control in most organizations is unequal. Those in power in an organization tend to remain in power. On the other hand, the power of those at the top of the organization becomes increasingly limited with increased size of the organization. The degree of integration of elites and the number of resources at their disposal are a matter of dispute. Application of control limits freedom of subordinates as well as superiors. The social phenomenon of occupants of authority positions losing interest in their personal acceptance by subordinates is generally related to progressing bureaucratization. In this respect it is worth mentioning as a significant fact that the largest proportion of managers in the U.S. hold downwardly anchored career perspectives (Tausky, 1978:155).

There is still strong belief among the complex organization functionaries that organizations are naturally authoritarian. "Who says organization, says oligarchy" (Michels, 1915). This belief is historically founded in the authoritarian historical origins of complex organizations and on the attractiveness of the top positions in hierarchical structures. The fact that a working organization consists of conflicting claims on available resources and that it constitutes a network of groups that comprise a complex bargaining system, also creates a demand for some arbitrary power. However, in reality "The final order which arises spontaneously is always

superior to that which human combination had by anticipation constructed" (Comte). Complex organizations neglecting the factor of spontaneity and following in their daily practice the machine theory neglect some very important sources of variability and unpredictability. The fact that so far within complex organizations vested interests of managers play a crucial role explains to a large extent the social origin of this omission.

However, the crux of the problem is not so much in the managerial bias but in the situations structured in such a way that there is not much chance for alternative organizational solutions. It makes more sense to talk about participative and autocratic situations than it does to talk about participative and autocratic managers (Vroom, 1976:1545). Differences in productivity which can be attributed to management are approximately only 15 percent (Argyle et al., 1958; Mott, 1972). From the perspective of a contingency theory it is necessary to accommodate alternative structural arrangements, as well as to concern oneself with the degree and consequences of uncertainty.

The basic sociotechnical problem in this whole field is how to achieve an effective social integration inside complex organizations that would counteract the negative effects of impersonalization and formalization. Differentiation and integration are two basic dimensions of organizations. Any formal system is bound to be slower than an informal one (Thiefenthal, 1975). The distortion of information is built into the structure of organizations (Wilensky, 1967; Downs, 1967).

The inability of complex organizations to produce harmony between individual characteristics and organizational demands has been widely criticized. For example, Abrahamsson (1977) criticized the Barnard-Simon-March traditions from the perspective of organizations being utilized as a power resource and as a means for the domination of others. Various organizational participants are treated very differently and several of them are not really stakeholders (Rhenman, 1968) and this limits their commitment. The reduction of working people to objects of manipulation, so evident in Taylorism, may lead under certain circumstances to higher productivity but in general it leads to low employee morale. Some authors in the field take an even more sinister view, particularly on bureaucracy. According to Emery and Emery (1975) the bureaucratic system "is based on the built-in high level redundancy of parts, and not on the multifunctional character of parts. The mass of people are parts who are rendered maximally redundant and hence have to be minimally relied upon or trusted for their performance. Assymetry, egocentrism and the difference in status define communication, and the 'shadow society' in the background becomes a necessity. Messages either inform or instruct, but they do not enlighten" (Emery and Emery, 1975).

There is a question of under which conditions people working in complex organizations are willing and able to be productive and satisfied. According to the expectancy theory, people will be motivated to be highly productive if they feel they can be highly productive and if they see a number of positive outcomes associated with being a high producer. The perception of the situation is very important (Lawler, 1973:52). Level of pay and job security are of widespread concern among employees. Pay has at least the same value as an inducement in jobs choice among the blue collar workers as challenging jobs (Tausky, 1978:59). The attitude of people towards their work depends, among other things, on their location in the division of labor. Job orientation is much more common among white collar workers than among blue collar workers (Dubin et al., 1975). The white collar workers are not satisfied with increased income and a large proportion of them are tolerant of tension on the job if that is the price of career progression. Job satisfaction is directly related to the amount of pay received, the amount of consideration that people report they receive from their supervisors, the belief they have in chances of promotion, and their chances of being in a stable workgroup, having a varied task and control over their place at work. There is not a direct relationship between job satisfaction and productivity. Disparity between aspiration and achievement is the basic source of dissatisfaction among organizational members. The worker is psychologically alienated at work only when he brings into it certain expectations and ends which are not satisfying. The satisfaction of organizational members grows with the position in the hierarchy of power and prestige.

The organizational involvement of subordinates depends, among other things, on the potential of their supervisors to exercise power. By stimulating the satisfaction of subordinates their superiors may raise the general level of loyalty, morale, and mutual understanding. People who work under strict control lose initiative and eagerness to produce more.

Changes based on the active participation of people are relatively difficult to achieve. In highly cohesive groups, group standards are effectively used to produce at a rate which is either higher or lower than among groups with low cohesion (Seashore). Organizations in which decision making is shared widely throughout the structure with well-integrated linking processes provided by overlapping groups will be more productive than organizations in which most decisions are made at upper levels.

In order to achieve a satisfactory organizational integration it is necessary to take into consideration the adequacy of the given pattern of integration for the achieved state of differentiation, the degree to which common values exist between integrators (leaders, administrators, etc.) and people who are objects of integration, and the effectiveness of the particular in-

tegrative pattern in dealing with social disturbances. For example, an organization is more likely to be strongly centralized during external crises than during the normal period. A mechanistic organization is likely to occur when the task activity is repetitive. Younger workers express less work satisfaction than older workers. People who are higher in the organizational hierarchy express stronger feelings of responsibility. Discontent with routinized highly repetitive tasks is relatively common among employees.

In modern times there is a growing tendency to promote job reform as job enrichment rather than job enlargement. Job enrichment means a vertical expansion of an employee's job requiring an increase in the skills repertoire, while job enlargement means a horizontal expansion of an employee's job, giving him more of the same kind of activities but not altering the necessary skills (Herzberg). Teamwork is experimented with on a large scale particularly in Scandinavia. The results are not always encouraging but on the other hand there is also no empirical evidence that employee participation correlates with low efficiency, low profits and inadequate investment. A great deal depends on the forms in which the employee participation is practiced. "Not only is it physically impossible to make numerous decisions in some sort of mass-meeting or plebiscite format, but managers and employees alike will ordinarily not wish to trade time for participation in unnecessary meetings -- unnecessary in the sense that the preferred decision would occur without the need for participation by the individual involved" (Garson, 1975:32).

The introduction of participatory schemes in complex organizations does not necessarily lead to higher satisfaction of the organizational members. Participation works best when people are used to it. The sharing of some common goals among involved parties is basic for an effective participation (Thiefenthal, 1975). A formal participation plan is welcomed to the extent that it has positive consequences for job security, pay, benefits and other conditions of work (Tausky, 1978:128).

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## L'obsolescence des bureaucraties

En général, les individus perçoivent les organisations comme un ensemble de contraintes. On y observe une crise de l'autorité en tant que pouvoir légitime, qui pousse leurs membres à se comporter selon la volonté de ceux qui occupent les positions importantes à l'intérieur de l'organisation. Les divers types d'autorité qui se fondent sur le droit, la position, la compétence, l'attraction sociale ou la personnalité, bien souvent ne se renforcent pas les unes les autres. Dans ces circonstances, le dilemme de la direction désireuse d'assurer une coordination efficace de l'activité du personnel devient très critique. L'établissement d'un rapport optimal entre des intérêts techniques, sociaux et économiques, qui s'opposent souvent, apparaît comme une tâche extrêmement délicate.

Aussi, la prévision et la compréhension d'un événement ainsi que le degré de programmation anticipée qui met en lumière les réponses appropriées conformes à des exigences pressantes sont d'une importance capitale pour les organisations lorsque celles-ci ont à traiter de cas urgents. On peut faire face à ces cas urgents, en mettant au point des mécanismes variés d'adaptation, y compris l'esprit d'organisation. Et la nécessité de l'esprit d'organisation s'accroît suivant la progression de la division du travail.

On note de forts éléments collectivistes dans les organisations bureaucratiques modernes qui déploient plusieurs techniques de manipulation afin de rendre leurs membres sujets d'obligations d'abord, puis ensuite seulement de droits. Toutefois, la différenciation socio-culturelle plus grande qui existe dans les sociétés modernes contre-balance cette tendance. Quand des groupes au sein d'une organisation ressentent la nécessité d'être fortement différenciés, mais requièrent aussi d'être rigoureusement intégrés, il est nécessaire pour l'organisation de développer des mécanismes d'intégration plus compliqués. Les mécanismes d'identification sont très forts considérés globalement (la consommation de masse), mais ils ont beaucoup moins d'influence sur les individus et les petits groupes. Même dans les pays totalitaires, l'efficacité de ces mécanismes paraît plutôt douteuse.

Dans les organisations traditionnelles, la structure sociale était dominante, relativement stable et fondée sur la coutume, tandis que dans les organisations modernes, la techno-structure, la structure administrative et la structure sociale sont relativement indépendantes les unes des autres, suivent leur propre cheminement dynamique et interfèrent. La fonction de coordination s'accroît, mais, dans une grande mesure, elle est coupée des structures énumérées ci-dessus et sa valeur est de nature purement rationnelle. Très souvent, cette rationalité engendre le doute ou même une mauvaise utilisation lorsqu'il lui faut relever un défi qui dépasse de beaucoup la compétence de la direction. C'est à ce moment qu'une crise d'autorité peut saper la stabilité de l'organisation et entraîner une division entre les diverses structures.

La loyauté envers l'organisation est alors exposée à des dangers même si des hommes dévoués (organization men) s'efforcent de maîtriser leurs désaccords en matière de savoir en s'impliquant à fond dans leur organisation. La caractérisation d'un rôle dans les organisations modernes n'est probablement fondée que d'une façon marginale sur l'engagement envers les organisations, mais elle tient à des engagements d'un type différent qui est souvent en état de conflit avec l'idéologie apparente des organisations. Tensions, rivalités, hostilités mêmes sont des facteurs d'importance majeure. Comme le déclarent Katz et Kahn, en se fondant sur des données empiriques, «l'expérience de situations de conflit en milieu de travail est généralisée». Suivant les estimations américaines, la moitié des employés travaillent en conditions de conflits notables et d'un dixième à un tiers d'entre eux font l'expérience à un degré substantiel d'un rôle ambigu. À mesure que l'organisation grandit, il y a davantage de conflits, de retards, de maladies et de roulement de main-d'oeuvre. Dans les grandes organisations, il y a même anomie; l'acceptation du rôle qu'on y joue est diminuée; il y a plus de différenciation et, en même temps, il devient plus difficile d'humaniser l'ambiance au sein de l'organisation en la ramenant à quelques dimensions individuelles discernables. La contrainte totale est principalement accentuée dans les postes marginaux qui sont exposés à des pressions et à des prévisions qui se contredisent.

La disparité entre les ambitions et leur réalisation est une des sources principales du défaut d'adaptation. Les organisations caractérisées par des rapports tendus tant au plan vertical qu'horizontal peuvent changer plus facilement que celles dont les cliques sont plus marqués. La continuité et le changement dans les structures de performance varient en fonction des types de contraintes et de résistance parmi et à l'intérieur des structures de normes, de rapports humains et de ressources disponibles. Les incompatibilités et les oppositions apparaissent à la fois à l'intérieur des réseaux de systèmes et entre eux.

Avec la croissance du secteur public, les perspectives de tension dans les organisations complexes deviennent de plus en plus importantes qu'auparavant. L'idée de gouvernement considéré comme une institution de service qui ne doit pas être sujette à préemption par l'un quelconque des individus et des groupes qui combattent dans l'arène politique est mise en danger par des droits acquis derrière lesquels on se retranche. Les administrateurs ont tendance à développer des droits acquis sur les terrains ou dans les activités sur lesquels ils exercent leur compétence et leur autorité en observant le moins possible les règles formelles, parfois même en y passant outre. La croissance sans restriction de l'administration publique peut mettre en danger le rôle de la loi et la séparation des pouvoirs. Afin de se défendre de toutes les accusations possibles, la bureaucratie a pour stratégie de s'en tenir à la lettre de la loi.

Les organisations envisagées ici comme relativement complexes et comme des systèmes d'interaction relativement permanents aux frontières et aux acteurs spécifiques diffèrent dans leurs cultures respectives, c'est-à-dire que celles-ci ont un profil distinct formé de normes, de valeurs, de convictions, de façons de se comporter etc., qui caractérisent la manière selon laquelle les groupes et les individus s'allient dans l'accomplissement de leurs tâches. Dans les bureaucraties, la culture composante est en grande partie dictée par l'organisation formelle, entendue ici comme «une structure consciemment conçue s'adaptant aux conditions internes et externes, appuyés sur des activités de contrôle mises en place pour guider et régulariser la correspondance entre les activités réelles et les activités projetées». Ceci est relié dans une large mesure au volume de croissance de l'organisation. Les grandes organisations ont tendance à être plus spécialisées, plus standardisées et plus formalistes que des organisations plus petites. Les plus grandes organisations se trouvent dans le secteur public et leur personnel est formé de fonctionnaires, c'est-à-dire d'un corps d'administrateurs institué selon des procédures bien établies en matière de sélection, de formation, d'évaluation, de rémunération, de discipline et de mise à pied.

Les phénomènes au sein des organisations complexes doivent être situés à l'intérieur même des frontières de l'organisation qui inclut des secteurs d'activité qui, au point de vue social, sont reconnus comme étant les limites de la compétence de l'organisation et sur laquelle elle a autorité. Le plus important de ces phénomènes est le pouvoir avec ses attributs fondamentaux de récompenses, de coercition, de soumission personnelle, de compétence et de légalité. Le pouvoir coercitif apparaît dans ses formes extrêmes dans les organisations totalitaires complexes. Toutefois, sous quelque régime que ce soit, le pouvoir joue un rôle majeur dans toutes les situations où le contrôle de ressources peu abondantes est une nécessité. Les fonctions et les dysfonctions des rapports de pouvoir sont un des principaux objets de l'analyse sociologique qui essaie d'expliquer comment les systèmes sociaux réagiront aux forces de changement en s'y adaptant, pourquoi l'ordre social se maintient malgré les pressions internes et externes qui poussent au changement, quelles sont les situations et les causes de conflits aussi bien que d'équilibre relatif, comment les systèmes disposent leurs conditions internes et leur développement pour convenir aux exigences externes, comment le processus de sélectivité répond au changement ambiant de fonctions. Il est d'importance primordiale de ce point de vue d'étudier comment les organisations complexes parviennent à un état qui inclut l'acceptation de l'autorité légitime et la soumission à ses exigences, soumission qui, pour bien des gens, s'étend à des actes qu'ils ne comprennent pas et qui peuvent violenter leurs propres valeurs. Le concept des types idéaux est particulièrement utile dans tout ce qui vient d'être cité.

L'élaboration d'un «type idéal» comme outil d'analyse sera d'autant plus abstrait qu'il aura été conçu de façon précise et exacte. C'est ainsi qu'il sera mieux en mesure de remplir son rôle qui consistera dans la formulation d'une terminologie, dans l'élaboration de classification et d'hypothèses.