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Bureaucracy in action

Max Weber's description of bureaucracy and the actions and attributes of bureaucrats continues to influence contemporary sociological examinations of government and administration. We take ethnographic materials gathered from one of UK's government major Departments and re-examine a number of the features of his ideal type description. We describe the work done by Department employees in achieving the stability of these features and thereby attempt to unpack Weber's characterisations in a description of their work and interactional practices.