Organization matters. Policy entrepreneurship among Street-Level Bureaucrats in public employment services. Insights from an Italian case-study

Organization matters. Policy entrepreneurship among Street-Level Bureaucrats in public employment services. Insights from an Italian case-study

Roberto Rizza and Silvia Lucciarini

1. Discretion in action: street level bureaucracy and policyentrepreneurship theories in western capitalism

Since the 1990s, the organizational principles of public employment services in western capitalism have been increasingly characterized by a prevailing managerial approach aimed at establishing contractual relationships. The success of the New Public Management paradigm (Aucoin, 1990) with its transfer of private-sector rhetoric and objectives to the public sphere has affected these trends in which citizens are defined as clients and job-seekers are subject to specific tasks and duties. Private-sector managerialism has merged with the former bureaucratic-administrative system and in some cases, this has led to moving beyond the former model but, in most cases, it has instead given rise to tension and ambivalence due to the coexistence of both models (Klenk & Pavolini, 2015).

The shift in employment services towards a logic of management through objectives and accountability tools has certainly entailed greater standardization in procedures and measures. At the same time, such standardization has come up against the well-known and ubiquitous discretion that street-level bureaucrats (SLBs) (Lipsky, 1980) exercise in implementing policies. Social workers, teachers, police officers, labour inspectors, and internal revenue agency inspectors are all street-level bureaucrats. More generally, this population comprises the array professionals working in public agencies who are tasked with implementing public policies and, in so doing, at least partly deciding how services are to be allocated (Brodkin, 2011). Their activities involve a paradox: they must treat all citizens equally but are also forced to deal with individual problems and thus choose how to deploy an often limited and insufficient pool of resources so as to solve these problems (Lipsky, 1980). Lipsky's definition identifies two constitutive characteristics of SLBs:

(1) they interact directly with citizens in order to enact sanctions or apportion benefits on behalf of the entity for which they work, representing this entity in interactions with citizens;

(2) they enjoy a certain degree of discretion in carrying out this task. This discretionary power cannot be eliminated, as it represents the essence of their work.

Given their interaction with citizen-clients and their real-life problems, the position of these low-level bureaucrats is 'unique and influential' (Meyers & Vorsanger, 2003, p. 153). Although these frontline workers do not operate at the top of the hierarchical ladder, they do play a key role in enacting measures (Hupe & Hill, 2007; Meyers & Vor-

sanger, 2003). The distinctive feature of SLBs' activity is a certain level of discretionary power that is exercised when executing laws, standards, and guidelines. This discretion often stems from the need to compromise between the limited available resources and the demands of service users or between administrative directives and assessments, on the one hand, and their interpretation, on the other.

Although discretionality is 'difficult to define' (Evans, 2010, p. 2), several scholars have proposed definitions. One the most widely cited is formulated by Culp Davis (1970). As he argues, public officials exercise their discretion whenever they find themselves making a choice between possible alternatives. Smith (2003) further distinguishes between *de jure* and *de facto* discretion. The first, which encompasses Davis' above definition, refers to an authority to act and decide granted to professionals by formal rules. *De facto* discretion instead refers to a power to act that is not based on official regulations; indeed, it may arise as the result of incomplete or ineffective monitoring of the workers' activities. According to Brodkin (2011), therefore, it is not only street-level bureaucrats themselves who enact discretion during their interactions with users: the way the organizational structure of a given entity impacts on the activity of frontline workers also generates spaces of discretion. Dubois (2009) likewise looks beyond the micro level of SLBs to consider the relationship between these actors and their institutional context. He suggests that the way these professionals exercise their discretion is influenced by: (a) the typeof their interaction with users; (b) the need to manage tensions and secure approval

for their actions by perpetuating the institutional order; (c) or by changing the institutional context in question by acting in a certain way.

As these observations clearly show, SLBs' discretion affects policy implementation and shapes outputs as part of their relationship with users. Frontline workers use value-based criteria when interacting with clients, and this may lead them to diverge from norms and procedural standards (Maynard-Moody & Musheno, 2003). Such divergence is particularly evident in social policy implementation, as research on street-level bureaucracy mainly refers to services provided under social policies (Paraciani & Rizza, 2019).

In this paper we seek to overcome the knowledge gap in street-level bureaucracy literature on labour market policies, focusing our research on a selected public employment service (hereafter PES) in Italy, as a western capitalism case-study facing institutional transformation (i.e. re-centralization of public power and competencies). In the context of active labour market policies (ALMP), PES are seen as strategic because of their direct effect in reducing unemployment in both the short and long run, and their indirect effect in reinforcing long-term training programmes (Fredrikkson, 2020). Moreover, PES have been found to be efficient in pursuing employment outcomes for disadvantaged users (Ravn & Nielsen, 2019). However, the conditions under which SLBs act diverged following recent reforms of public employment services in many European countries: some empirical cases show increased possibilities for discretion while other find the opposite. In this heterogeneous and unclear picture, to better grasp the different mechanisms influencing policy outcomes at a micro level it seems promising to merge street-level bureaucracy with the policy entrepreneur (PE hereafter) approach focused on the way caseworkers (conceived as policy entrepreneurs) influence policy design in ways that extend far beyond their formal power or resource allocation roles (Kingdon, 1984; Mintrom & Norman, 2009).

This article contributes to this more recent line of inquiry (Arnold, 2015) by considering PEs as capable of reformulating policies (Arnold, 2014) through their actions (Kingdon, 1984), thereby transforming the status quo (Frisch-Aviram et al., 2018). Studies of PEs mainly focus on policy areas and organizational-administrative structures characterized by a certain stability in which 'entrepreneurial' action is more evident (Mintrom, 2019). Much PE literature identifies the individual characteristics that enable somepeople to innovate by leveraging their specific visions and influence (Collins, 2001; Quinn, 2000), taking advantage of the opportunities that surface in the policy process (Kalil, 2017).

Although it is usually high-level bureaucrats who are PEs (Arnold, 2013), SLBs can also take advantage of their discretionary space to behave as PEs. For high-level bureaucrats, the motivations driving policy entrepreneurship are 'puzzling' (Mintrom & Norman, 2009). The first hypothesis driving this article is that, in the case of SLBs, the motivation to act as policy entrepreneurs may instead lie in a desire to serve as community advocates for their service users (Del-Corte-Lora et al., 2015). They seek to do this by acting at the intersection of their knowledge of clients' needs, their organizational practices with both users and management, and their ability to reinterpret the relationship between policy tools and objectives. By exercising professional discretion to reinterpret this relationship, SLBs are able to question the policy process; indeed, the non-linear character of policy with its quality of 'moving back and forth' (Lane, 2000) lends itself to such questioning. The second hypothesis is that the organizational level plays a

determining role in enabling SLBs to act as policy entrepreneurs. The greater the organization's level of stability in terms of consolidated routines and practices, the greater the scope of discretion through which policy entrepreneurship can be enacted. Indeed, acting as PEs depends not only on individual variables but also on organizational processes. PEs do not operate in an organizational vacuum, but in contexts characterized by values, norms and routines.

More specifically, in this article we consider if there are certain organizational configurations that favour the emergence of policy entrepreneurship among street- level bureaucrats. How do the organizational transformations of public employment ser- vices influence the action of SLBs? Do they encourage or inhibit the development of entrepreneurial strategies? Which organizational configurations have fostered/inhibited the emergence of policy entrepreneurship among SLBs? In asking these questions, we reject the idea that change *in itself*, even if characterized by a managerial approach, may lead to entrepreneurial strategies.

To test this hypothesis, the paper investigates an Italian public employment service. The Italian context is particularly interesting in that it has alternated between a process of decentralization and, more recently, a push towards re-centralization. To answer the research questions and identify the elements that may or may not favour policy entrepreneurship among SLBs, we conducted multiple- perspective qualitative longitudinal interviews (henceforth MPQLI). This survey technique allowed us to grasp aspects of stability and change in a complex organization by integrating different perspectives, in that accounts were collected from informants with different roles (policy administrators, high-level bureaucrats, middle-low level frontline workers) in two different moments in time: in 2008, in the context of an organizational process aimed at decentralization, and in 2019, in a setting characterized by re-centralization.

The article is divided into three parts. The first clarifies the theoretical framework (section 2); the second describes in detail the research methodology, the context surrounding this case and the main empirical evidence and discusses this evidence in relation to the theoretical framework presented above (sections 3, 4 and 5). Finally, the third section poses some new considerations and identifies possible further insights and lines of investigation (section 6).

2. Street-level bureaucracy and policy entrepreneurship: two approachesto understanding public employment services outcomes

Adopting a street-level bureaucracy perspective means analysing the way public institutions translate laws, norms, and regulations into practices, adapting resources to users' concrete needs and specific conditions (Saruis, 2015). Since they interact directly with citizens' needs, street-level bureaucrats cannot limit themselves to mechanically implementing rules and guidelines; rather, they interpret these general standards while also considering the different interests that come into play. Maynard-Moody and Musheno (2003) compare formal rules to a sea that people working at the street level must be able to navigate by bringing their moral values into play, often defining priorities and making decisions. Brodkin (2011) characterises street-level bureaucrats as *de facto* policy-makers who informally define and build policies. Moreover, citizens come into direct contact with public institutions by interacting with street-level operators.

The foundational element of the work of street-level bureaucrats lies in the discretionary power they exercise in implementing guidelines and directives. Winter (2003) defines the different ways in which rules are applied as objective discretion, and the different coping strategies used to manage the workload as subjective discretion. Furthermore, discretion itself comprises three different but non-exclusive meanings (Evans & Harris, 2004; Ham & Hill, 1986; Kazepov & Barberis, 2012; Paraciani & Saruis, 2018):

(1) discretion within norms, when street-level bureaucrats use discretionary power within the limits set by formal regulations and assigned to them by the regulation itself;
(2) discretion through the norms, when street-level bureaucrats interpret and construct norms to fill gaps and uncertainties in the formal regulatory system, inserting themselves in the spaces that are unclear, ambiguous or overlapping with other norms;
(3) discretion outside the norms, when street-level bureaucrats violate formal regulations to preclude users from accessing the service or allow users access.

Street-level bureaucrats thus use discretion as a tool to formulate practical solutions in response to the complexity of real-life problems. By analysing the discretion exercised by frontline workers, is possible to understand what happens inside the 'black box' of implementation. We can also transcend the idea of discretion as mere rule-breaking to instead recognize it as vital for managing complex situations in policy-making (Brodkin, 2008). The literature identifies several main reasons why discretion is an indispensable tool for frontline workers:

(1) There are never enough resources available to meet the numerous requests (Lipsky, 2010). The degree of discretion exercised by street-level bureaucrats deciding how to match up resources and needs is directly proportionate to the degree of resource shortfall (Ellis, 2007);
(2) The objectives of the organizations where street-level bureaucrats work and the regulations they apply are often vague and unclear. In practice, this leads to increased discretion (Brodkin, 2008);
(3) Street-level bureaucrats are privy to more information than private citizens and have more power. This asymmetry augments workers' discretion, especially when the service users belong to a disadvantaged target (Saruis, 2018).

Frontline workers' space of decision-making autonomy is therefore key to resolving what Lipsky (1980) defines 'professional dilemmas'. In the case of SLBs, a dilemma might involve deciding whether to exclude someone from public benefits or deciding who can access the service and under what conditions. This is why Brodkin (2011) defines street level bureaucrats as *de facto* policy-makers.

What strategy SLBs opt to pursue depends on three categories of factors: (i) the characteristics of the individual decision-makers; (ii) the organizational and extra-organizational context, (iii) the type of client (Prottas, 1978; Scott, 1997; Vinzant & Crothers, 1998).

Several studies have analysed the effect of the characteristics of individual decision-makers. Miller (1967) was among the first to study the relationship between labour

alienation and incentives in the case of bureaucrats with varying degrees of professionalization. He concluded that more highly professionalized ones are more likely to deviate from formal standards and rules. Several studies likewise show that rules as well as frontline workers' moral values and degree of professionalization are key to studying policy implementation processes (Maynard-Moody & Musheno, 2003; Meyers & Vorsanger, 2003; Watkins-Hayes, 2011). Organizational structure, workload and rule rigidity, and performance evaluation criteria also influence street-level bureaucrats' decision-making processes and use of discretion (Kelly, 1994; Scott, 1997; Brodkin, 2008). As Brodkin (1997, p. 24) states, 'street-level bureaucrats do not only do what they want or what the organization wants; they are often forced to do what they can'. As such, their choices end up characterizing the concrete work carried out in public entities and come to represent the very core of policies.

In the case of employment centres, frontline workers exert discretionary power over the way interventions are organized; they choose how to manage individualized measures and which projects to propose to beneficiaries. They monitor users' job searches or other activities (such as training, for example) and, if necessary, sanction users who do not comply with the agreed-on requirements. Some scholars argue that the progressive standardization of procedures stemming from the reorganization of public administrations has reduced workers' degree of discretion (Evans & Harris, 2004). In the field of employ-ment services, however, workers' scope of activity has enlarged to extend well beyond tra- ditional job placement. Their tasks have come to also include counselling, vocational guidance, and coaching as well as potentially helping to identify policies in effect atthe time. These measures are provided through 'personalized' services and specific 'indi-vidual action plans'. Service providers and users set the objectives and strategies. Quite often, street-level bureaucrats act as 'personal advisors'. Although they apply procedures involving formalized and standardized tools, their area of discretion is vast, including the power to sanction users and even reduce the welfare benefits users receive if they violate agreements.

These conditions produce a set of windows of opportunity in which medium-low street-level bureaucrats can act as PEs. 'Their defining characteristic, as in case of a business entrepreneur is their willingness to invest their resources – time, energy, repu- tation – in the hope of a future return' (Kingdon, 1984, p. 122). In particular, the strat- egies that turn frontline workers into PEs are problem-framing, team-building, and usingand expanding networks (Mintrom, 2019). Their activity does not begin and end with setting the agenda of a policy cycle, as suggested by Kingdon (1984); rather, they 'pro- mote their preferred solution throughout all stages of the policy process' (Frisch-Aviram et al., 2019). SLBs' ability to impose their visions and act as PEs depends in part on the extent to which they are able to build consensus around their own interpretation of the policy chain. Such organizational sensemaking (Weick, 1995) is based on shared values as well as communities of practice (Orr, 1996) inside the organization.

In this case study, we investigate which organizational configurations fostered/inhib-ited the emergence of policy entrepreneurship among SLBs in two different periods. The first characterized by decentralized institutional arrangements and the second by a trend towards re-centralization. The previous decentralization trend was intended to transform employment services by bringing in a managerial logic. Managerial tools and devices such as outcome quantification, assessment grids, and the standardized profiling of

user-clients' initial positions are deeply imbued with values and principles entailing performance-comparison among workers. Our research question is thus whether the introduction of such tools fostered or inhibited the emergence of policy entrepreneurship among street-level bureaucrats. The research hypothesis was formulated by taking into account multiple elements: the fact that public employment services were innovated in a vertically-hierarchical way and that this innovation introduced new procedures; the fact that the context in which these new procedures were introduced is characterized by rather uncertain and not well-defined aims (i.e. a new minimum wage measure implemented to reinforce job seeking). Given these elements, we hypothesized that the drive toward policy entrepreneurship would be inhibited by this uncertainty and ambiguity. To successfully act as PEs, street-level bureaucrats – and this is the second hypothesis – must operate in a context with clear organizational routines so that they can redefine their discretionary power in a way that modifies and eventually replaces old organizational routines.

3. Case study context and methods

This study analyses if and how the transition from a decentralized to a centralized system favoured or inhibited policy entrepreneurship on the part of SLBs employed in PES. In particular, the capacity of SLBs to act as PEs is correlated to the organizational context, in keeping with the hypothesis that the propensity to act as PEs increases in contexts with consolidated organizational functions as opposed to contexts undergoing transformation.

Until recently nevertheless, public employment services in Italy were regulated by Legislative Decree 469/1997. This legislation included two lines of reform in a single measure: overcoming the public monopoly over job placement and intermediation activities, and decentralizing service management to the local (provincial) level. Liberalizing labour intermediation by opening up the arena to private actors was meant to make the system more efficient by introducing public/private competition and increasing the employability of potential workers, in keeping with rhetoric prevailing at the European level (Rizza & Scarano, 2019).

The reform was never fully implemented, and for approximately twenty years PES continued to be plagued by multiple issues. Monitoring of employment services' performance over the years has highlighted several weak points. First of all, there are not enough SLBs employed in public offices and they have a low level of expertise. This weakness is partly due to the indeterminacy of available training and a lack of definition of these workers' skill-sets. Secondly, PES often do not maintain relationships with businesses: there are very few instances of collaboration and networking, not only with private companies but also with municipalities' own in-house companies. Finally, low levels of funding hinder the development of new tools and innovative networks (Lucciarini, 2017).

Following the 2008 economic and financial crisis, after two years of slow economic recovery policymakers began to push for reform in 2015. The Jobs Act, law no. 183/ 2014, outlines a plan to re-centralize employment services through ordinary legislation (Valente, 2019). This move was 'pre-emptive' because such re-centralization required modifying the Constitution (Art. 117), a change that was to be carried out through a

referendum. The referendum was voted down, however, meaning that the reform outlined in the Jobs Act (and its implementing decree, no. 150/2015) ended up being deadlocked. The current system can be defined as 'imperfect centralization'. There have been processes of centralization, such as the unification of the Ministries of Labour and Economic Development into a single super-Ministry, creating a National Agency for Active Labour Policies (ANPAL) charged with planning and guidance, and reformulating some passive policy measures to place state responsibility at the centre. Alongside such shifts, it is worth noting that Italy's regions are currently given more responsibility than the state for implementing labour policies (Valente, 2019). Finally, in this turbulentregulatory and implementation framework, Law 56/2014 (the 'Del Rio Law') redefined –among other things – the role of provinces, the local authorities tasked with organizing PES. This reform thus had a significant impact on provincial personnel, turning them into regional employees and changing their tasks.

To investigate our hypothesis, we conducted two waves of (qualitative, semi-structured) interviews with a panel of key informants of the same organizational unit The public office remains the same, but it changes in terms of organization processes due to the institutional reform (decentralization vs centralization).

Table 1 compares the respondents' roles in the two different waves in the same organizational unit (PES). The main differences lie in the shift from the provincial to regional level. At both provincial and regional levels, the position of policy administrator was and is an elected position based on the presidential model. The case study shows governmental continuity in that the standing president of the province in 2008 was then re-elected president of the region in 2013 and reconfirmed in 2018. This continuity – a rather unusual feature for the Italian political landscape – is one of the elements that made the longitudinal interviews possible. The mid-level bureaucrats moved from the technical cabinet of the province to that of the region; however, the number of PES offices increased as a result of institutional reform (Law 150/2015, see above). SLBs who previously worked together in the same employment centre are now employed in these new local offices.

The unstructured interviews investigated 6 aspects influencing policy outcomes: (a) social demand, (b) formal response, (c) service 'blind spots' (Luhmann, 1991): effectiveness/misalignment of demand-service relationship (d) the organization of work, (e) tools and practices, from continuity to innovation, and (f) SLBs' perceptions of their own autonomy and discretionary scope. In the next section, we describe the main results of the two waves of interviews.

Social scientific research on organizations set up as part of the country's administrative apparatus and responsible for implementing policy face two main challenges. On one hand, it is difficult to grasp in detail the specific mechanisms of the structure

Table 1. Key informants of the organizational unit (PES) interviewed in the two waves.

Key informant position	Wave 1 interviews – decentralized set-up (Province)	Wave 2 interviews – centralized set-up (Region)
Public Administrator (PA)	1	1
technical Staff, SLBs with coordination tasks (high-level bureaucrats)	4	4
Street-level workers	5	5

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

being analysed, thus requiring in-depth surveys. On the other hand, it is difficult to generalize from the results. In their seminal article on the representativeness of case studies in organizational analysis, Seawright and Gerring (2008) define the effort to generalize as 'heroic' and indeed scholars have addressed this challenge from multiple disciplines. The difficulty lies in the fact that such research is often based on a small number of interviews (Langley et al., 2006). Relying on a limited number of inter-views per case study, often due to the modest number of workers found in a given organization, reflects an 'intrinsic' logic (Guba & Lincoln, 1989) aimed at understanding the dominant and latent aspects of the specific 'organizational culture' (Hofsteade 1991). In this approach, the culture of the organization is viewed as themain mechanism producing and reproducing ways of thinking and acting and researchers look to interviewees' narratives to gain insight into the culture in ques-tion. By delving deeply into the internal processes − both formal and informal − of action logics and the organizational culture of workers with varying roles and tasks, this research seeks to answer the cognitive question of how the structure func- tions and what array of value-based and instrumental attitudes workers display. These elements are essential for understanding the effectiveness and adequacy of an organ- ization's outcomes (i.e. services, coverage) in a way that mere performance data doesnot enable. One recent contribution to this literature has enriched the debate on using qualitative surveying in organizations, by suggesting that researchers exert more choice and control over the sample of informants, as to seek out the different perspectives of various key role-holders inside one organizational unit (see Vogl et al., 2016). This type of analysis, defined as multiple-perspective, involves multiple wavesof investigation carried out over time with the same sample of respondents. We have chosen to use this tool of analysis in our research despite being aware of certainpotential issues. The main such issue has to do with changes in the organization's external context between one survey and the next. Taking this potential issue intoaccount, we have built on policy entrepreneurship literature to analyze individuals'ability and tendency to actually exercise decision-making power beyond what their position officially grants. The formality of the role, guarantees the comparison between waves, and depotentiates the context effect. We chose the interviewees by selecting different roles representing three main categories: policy administrators, high-level bureaucrats, and SLBs. The decision to distinguish between high-level and street-level bureaucrats is based on the work of Lipsky (1980) and Arnold (2011). High-level bureaucrats have managerial tasks and may carry out coordination activities; unlike SLBs, they are not continuously engaged in front-office activities in contact with users. The first survey (2008) was conducted as part of a national project (annual university project) and investigated the implementation of intertwined labour market policies: microcredit, work placement grants, and job placement for specific target populations (women and over 45 s). The research focused on the decisions made and priorities identified by street-level bureaucrats in the implementation of policy measures addressing their target users. The case study compared how the var-ious public organizations (i.e. social secretariat, employment services) of a region in central Italy (hereafter case study L) implemented these policies from the point ofview of the different actors interviewed. One of the interesting findings of this study was that some SLB workers displayed entrepreneurial skills, but this element

was not fully explored at the time (Ferrazza, 2008). The choice to conduct a second wave of interviews with the panel of PES interviewees was motivated by the above- cited processes of institutional change (Streeck & Thelen 2005) and *recentrage* inlabour policy governance. Analysing the data collected as part of the 2008 interview-ing gave rise to new survey questions regarding the new structure. For this reason, multiple perspective qualitative longitudinal interviews were carried out (see Vogl et al., 2016). We interviewed the same panel from the end of 2019 to February 2020 with the aim of investigating whether the new institutional set-up constitutedan incentive or obstacle to policy entrepreneurship on the part of SLBs. One of the most challenging aspects of MPQLIs is the difficulty of handling a voluminous set of data, but this aspect is outweighed by the multiple advantages of this method(Vogl et al., 2016). By comparing the different points of view held by actors who belong to the same organization but occupy different roles and positions, a MPQLI approach allows researchers to handle complexity and multi-dimensionality while atthe same time increasing the traceability and credibility of results (Vogl et al., 2016). This methodology can be used to detect change over time (Lewis, 2007). On one hand, comparing organizational and decision-making mechanisms in systems whose contextual conditions differ from one wave of surveying to the next is proble- matic in that, as Vogl et al. also note, these changing contextual factors make it difficult to compare the mechanisms in question. On the other hand, however, by carefully reconstructing respondents' narratives, such research can link the organiz- ational structure to the organizational culture and prevailing policy idea (Browning, 1991). Such an approach makes this type of analysis comparable over time, albeitwith due precautions (Campbell, 1975; Yin, 2003) in research of the kind presentedhere that brings together the SLB literature with that on policy entrepreneurship. For example, by analysing the changes in interviewees' narratives in different times, researchers have the opportunity to reinterpret key informants' ideas and values, framing them in a more complex and nuanced way (Vogl et al., 2016).

4. Comparing the waves: from efficacy to inefficiency

This description of the main research results highlights the extent of change between the waves of interviewing. This specific methodological choice was made so as to focus on the change 'between' rather than 'within' waves (Vogl et al., 2016). Table 2 outlines the main areas of organizational change between the first and the second wave. The interviewees were asked to indicate and specify the target users addressed by job placement services, the policy areas involved in the interventions (function), the devices used to implement PES measures, and the logic behind case management (tools).

Next to each variable we have indicated the respondents' evaluation of their adequacy and effectiveness. The respondents' opinions were expressed during each wave; they are not a reinterpretation of the past collected in the second wave. The levels of agreement and disagreement are based on whether or not the individual interviewee attributed sen-semaking (Weick, 1995) to the organizational variables that surfaced during the inter-views. While in the first wave all the key informants showed that they had internalized and shared a specific public service culture, in the second wave the SLBs appear to have partially ceased to identify with specific values and directions of action in the

Table 2. Action logics concerning specific topics and the main changes between the first and second waves.

Key Informants' position	Organizational variables	Recognizing and sharing the ACTION LOGICS IDENTIFIED BY KEY INFORMANTS	
		1st WAVE	2nd WAVE
PA	USERS (target) POLICY AREAS (functions)	ENCOMPASSING: ++ INTEGRATED BY CHOICE (assistance, work, entrepreneurship): ++	SEGMENTATION: ++ INTEGRATED BY MANDATE (assistance and work): +
	IMPLEMENTATION INSTRUMENTS (tools)	PROJECTS: +	FORMAL REQUIREMENTS: +
	INTERVENTION LOGICS (guidelines for action)	ACCESS TO PROFESSIONAL NETWORKS AND OPPORTUNITIES: ++	REMAINING SAMPLE: +
High-level-Bs	USERS POLICY AREAS	ENCOMPASSING: + INTEGRATED BY CHOICE (assistance, work, entrepreneurship) ++	SEGMENTATION: − INTEGRATED BY MANDATE (assistance and work): −
	IMPLEMENTATION INSTRUMENTS	PROJECTS: ++	FORMAL REQUIREMENTS: −
	INTERVENTION LOGICS	ACCESS TO PROFESSIONAL NETWORKS AND OPPORTUNITIES: +	REMAINING SAMPLE: −
SLBs	USERS POLICY AREAS	ENCOMPASSING: + INTEGRATED BY CHOICE (assistance, work, entrepreneurship): +++ (action of PE)	SEGMENTATION: − − INTEGRATED BY MANDATE (assistance and work): − −
	IMPLEMENTATION INSTRUMENTS	PROJECTS: +++	FORMAL REQUIREMENTS: − −
	INTERVENTION LOGICS	ACCESS TO PROFESSIONAL NETWORKS AND OPPORTUNITIES: +	REMAINING SAMPLE: − −

Respondents' comparative evaluation of the effectiveness of the logics (opinions expressed during the waves, not a reinterpretation of the past).

Note: Respondents' levels of agreement expressed on a scale from very 'high disagreement' (− − −) to very 'high agreement' (+ + +).

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

new organization. The public administrator (PA) expressed adherence to the new organizational structure (albeit in a less decisive way than in the first wave), probably in part because of his formal role. The PA conveyed confidence in the implementation of the policies in both the first and second waves, describing his own 'good governance' as having minimized conflict and reduced difficulties. These responses communicate a logic of personifying presidential skills, a typical feature of systems in which local elections are focused more on the individual candidate than the party (McAllister, 2007). For the other interviewees, the transition from a decentralized to a centralized structure was characterized by a loss of the previous organizational 'culture' (Weick, 1995), in particular the system of practices and routines that translated policy instruments into interventions. These tools changed in part due to the new tasks and functions assigned to the service, and respondents seemed to not yet perceive them as established routines. In particular, street-level bureaucrats at various levels perceived the shift from a system of project-based work to a system based on formal criteria as having decreased their autonomy and degree of control over their work.

The 2008 provincial presidential elections represented a chance to reflect on how the

service was working and to develop objectives. The provincial structure was modelled after Spanish public employment services, as the PA stated in his interview. The Spanish model had gained a certain degree of popularity in that period, in particular because it was seen as promoting micro-entrepreneurship and self-employment incentives. This

system was replicated – with obvious adjustments owing to the different contexts – in the PES we investigated. This process of mimetic isomorphism (Di Maggio & Powell, 1983) led to two outcomes: creating sensemaking within provincial PES offices around institutional purposes and functions, and promoting projects and actions that push users towards self-employment. The Spanish model was a source of inspiration but it remained a rather vague idea, lacking in specific organizational practices. One of the major differences between the two organizational phases (decentralized and centralized) is that, under the more decentralized set-up, workers had the opportunity to interpret PES func- tions in their own ways because there was no specific vision for the service being imposed on them. In the centralized system instead, workers' activity was reduced to a more stan-dardized process of enacting a function (i.e. ascertaining that clients meet the require- ments for accessing means-tested benefits).

Many high-level bureaucrats and SLBs saw the shift from the decentralized to the re-centralized model as having undermined their ability to meet clients' needs, decreased their autonomy and discretion, and restricted the pool of functions and tools available to PES. To better clarify this point, let us compare and contrast the operational approaches identified in the first wave of interviewing with those described in the second wave. In 2007, PES workers had an encompassing approach towards users (see Table 2), that is, aimed at serving a wide array of different users: interventions were built around individuals, thanks in part to the fact that PES were able to draw on public services (welfare, micro-entrepreneurial programmes) to round out their interventions. During the first phase of research, a low-level frontline worker who managed to establish herself as a policy entrepreneur pushed for and fostered this kind of networking. It was her vision and activities that led to developing a local labour policy model by leveraging a system of opportunities made available by networking policy programmes and tools from different areas. In 2008, the decentralized PES structure created a strong network comprising multiple public agencies and gave rise to a set of local projects headed by different councillorships. The SLB/PE in question supported this integration by success-fully envisioning areas of overlap between different policies and instruments.

In particular, this networking consisted of bringing together PESs, social services, and funding for micro-credit projects and social incubators. Given the availability of multi-level (municipal and provincial) funding and the familiarity and collaboration among staff at various public agencies, SLBs were able to direct job seekers towards more suitable programmes and initiatives. This expertise and know-how were brought into the organization by the SLB/PE. The programmes in this case included work grants (provided by the municipal welfare service), access to micro-credit loans (provided by the Department for Suburbs, in that the projects were only eligible for funding if developed in peripheral areas outside the main city centre), and job matching. This system seems to have been quite effective (and its projects were indeed very effective). In this period, the activity of the SL/PE was incisive in creating cooperation among agencies: it was her idea to make resources available on a system-wide scale, and this went on to become a consoli- dated practice in case management. The fact that the PE's career had involved moving from one public agency to another meant that she was able to coordinate and identify pathways of integration between different policy areas. The 'involuntary' turnover she had experienced as the result of a lengthy period of employment precariousness had gifted the SLB/PE with a wide understanding of tools and devices in other policy

areas, as well as direct contacts with other staff working in those services. The delivery and management of policies in each organizational structure proved highly effective, and the SLB/PE's work of coordination made efforts to meet users' needs more coherent and less fragmented.

The conditions identified via the second wave of interviewing were very different. As mentioned above, the PA's approach focused mainly on leveraging the 'presidential' authority granted him by the popular vote to strengthen and consolidate the ability of PES offices to implement effective measures regardless of the larger institutional context and governance system. The SLBs we interviewed were extremely critical of this new set-up, indicating that their autonomy and discretion had been curtailed. The centralization of PES offices seems to have involved a shift towards a more standardized logic of case management, with more stringent requisites for receiving benefits and greater confusion around job placement programmes. The networks built during the 2008 phase, networks that reflected a certain interpretation of the role of PES, ended up unravelling under the new governance arrangement. Employment Centres (EPCs), the main offices of PESs in this new model, were busy dealing with their new functions and no longer had time for networking. Their main new task was to disburse *Reddito di Cittadinanza* (RdC or 'Citizenship Income') benefits, a measure designed to enhance social inclusion that was delegated to the EPCs. This responsibility required a high degree of institutional collaboration. According to the SLBs, however, these services were ineffective at fostering social inclusion and instead generated segmentation among beneficiaries, requiring them to meet more stringent criteria for accessing provisions. The new system was thus characterized by a proliferation of divergent and non-integrated measures and initiatives on the part of different public institutions, welfare services, micro-entrepreneurship programmes, etc. One of the reasons for this incoherence was the fact that areas of responsibility had been restructured, with labour policies centralized and social welfare and micro-entrepreneurship decentralized. Moreover, the 2019 legislator made a serious mistake in defining the RdC as an active labour policy rather than a social assistance measure and imagining that it would be possible to overcome the administrative stalemate plaguing employment centres (charged with carrying out all the associated administrative tasks) simply by hiring a few thousand new employees. These new hires, known as 'the navigators' (Valente, 2019), have yet to begin working because their hiring process was blocked due to the COVID emergency. The new employment centres face intense organizational difficulties precisely because they are overloaded with work and grappling with organizational change without the necessary skill sets and professional resources to deal with these challenges. Apart from the PA, key informants described these problems as causing disaffection among SLBs.

Analysing interviewees' narratives about how the organization functions, we found that the 'conformity assessment' – the workers' assessment of their ability to meet the needs of different user groups – decreased from one wave to the next. Multiple interview questions were designed to investigate how individual respondents judged the service using some classic categories of public administration and public service evaluation, especially effectiveness and efficiency (Poland 1974). Effectiveness, defined as the percep- tion that one's actions have an impact in terms of changing (and improving) users' con- ditions, decreased for High-level-Bs and SLBs between the two surveys in the sense of both internal and external measures. Our internal measure of effectiveness in this case

was the respondent's perceived ability to achieve the objectives set by management, including targets outlined informally, and shared among members of the professional team. In the first wave, interviewees' had a positive perception of the relative achievement of these intra-organizational objectives in that they underlined the fact that key outcomes had been attained 'despite' the difficulties. The external measure of effectiveness refers instead to the number of users served and helped to find employment. Our mapping of the interview results suggests that this measure decreased over time. By comparing the narratives of the two waves of interviewing, we found that bureaucrats perceived having greater autonomy and decision-making and procedural control in the first moment. In the second moment, the system had become more formal and rigid in a way that ended up undermining its performance. Finally, both High-level-Bs and SLBs described a trend of decreasing service efficiency over time. Using the formula for calculating efficiency in public administration system evaluations, i.e. the ratio between resources used and results achieved, the prevailing perception among second-wave interviewees was that their workload was focused on process and procedural concerns. The main consequence of this shift is that they had a more limited ability to devise effective solutions to the var-iety of users' needs. Specifically, interviewees perceived a lack of congruence between the new, more stringent rules for who can access the service and how so and the fact that thePES offices were now serving a wider array of users, with a range of needs that did not match the pre-structured character of available measures.

5.   Elements that foster policy entrepreneurship among street levelbureaucrats

Thanks to multi-perspective analysis, we have been able to identify some factors that favour the emergence of policy entrepreneurship among street-level bureaucrats. Table 3 summarizes the elements that were found to favour or inhibit the emergence of PEs among SLBs in the first wave. No individuals emerged as PEs in the second wave, even though the new organizational context promoted management values and compara-tively ranked the performance of SLBs in relation to each other.

In the first wave, workers' direct relationship with political power holders certainly had an influence. However, policy entrepreneurship appears to have stemmed from fac- tors can be traced to individual capabilities, in particular the ability to build networks (networking with social services and micro-entrepreneurship projects) that granted the SLB legitimacy among her colleagues. The PE's activity took the form of 'integrating by choice' (see Table 2) through individual projects. Such voluntary integration was made possible in part by the local nature of the projects, as the frontline worker/policy entrepreneur was familiar with both organizational mechanisms and the people working in those organizations. The PE supported a management-by-enabling (Lipsky, 1980) approach among all the actors involved in each project, an endeavour that was facilitated by the local scale (ref. dimension of governance). There were established innovative rou-tines and practices at each of the agencies that the SL/PE brought into the network, The consolidated organizational functioning of the various agencies was decisive in putting the SLB in the position to become a PE.

In the first wave, a street-level bureaucrat took on the role of PE, in particular by promoting and consolidating integration among policy areas and frontline workers.

Table 3. Elements that favoured or inhibited policy entrepreneurship among street level bureaucrats.

Key informants' position	Elements favouring SLBs' acting as PEs		Elements inhibiting SLBs from acting as PEs	
	Wave 1	Wave 2	Wave 1	Wave 2
High-level SLBs	No elements	No elements	Limited knowledge of the network	Increasing numbers of offices across the local area, dispersion of staff with competences and a vision
SLBs	Networking with social services and micro-entrepreneurship projects; promotion of management-by-enabling (Lipsky); Routines and established practices. Proximity to political power; individual skills	No elements	No elements	Destruction of networks; Formalization of procedures, increased load of standardized bureaucratic devices and tools; insistence on welfare measures with which operators have no experience

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

To better understand the dynamics involved, we use Mintzberg's model (1992) of professional bureaucracy. In his work, Minzberg identifies the 5 groups that makeup an organization. The strategic summit is the highest hierarchical level and, as such, represents the group exercising leadership and making strategic decisions. The technostructure includes the individuals who design and modify the work andtrain people. The support staff includes people from outside the organization who provide services that are fundamental to its functioning (i.e. legal services). The inter- mediate line interfaces between the operational core and strategic top management, acting as a link and allowing the top management to delegate some of its responsi- bilities. The operational core is the lowest level of the hierarchy with the lowest degree of responsibility, and it is this component that carries out the tasks and activi-ties that enable the organization to operate. The different organizational models identified by Minzberg, namely 'simple structure' organizations, 'mechanical bureauc- racies', 'professional bureaucracy', 'divisional form' and 'adhocracy', do not containthese five groups in the same way.

PES fall within Minzberg's definition of 'professional bureaucracies'. Although this is obviously an ideal-type, some characteristics of this model are useful for under- standing the factors that favoured policy entrepreneurship. In the organizational configuration of 'professional bureaucracies', the fundamental component is the oper- ative nucleus (SLBs). The workforce is composed of professional bureaucrats who exercise autonomous control over their work. This is why the intermediate level is limited or lacking in this kind of organization, and in small organizations SLBs have a direct relationship with the strategic summit. In this case study, this organiz- ational form made it easier for street-level bureaucrats to develop a direct relationship with political-administrative power holders, allowing them to carve out a space for manoeuvring and innovation connected directly to the decision-making summit by lobbying administrative superiors for solutions better suited to the local context. The SLB/PE then acted more decisively, using her discretionality to creatively 'recom- bine intellectual, political, and organizational resources into new products and coursesof action for government' (Oliver & Paul-Shaheen, 1997).

The street-level bureaucrat in this case managed to impose organizational strategies based on collaboration with other public offices, each with specific policy tools. Thanks

to this integration, these strategies led to better performance and a shift towards project-based micro-entrepreneurial solutions. This represented an innovative shift given that one-off cash transfers were among the most commonly-used measures at the time to fund training or compensate for emergencies (i.e. rent, utilities, etc.) in the case of users with limited capital. Due in part to the fact that there were high-level bureaucrats able to devise and propose a new repertoire of action, the SL/PE introduced and consolidated innovative interventions based on case management involving other professionals who shared her idea of policy (micro-entrepreneurship). The integration among different policy fields (microcredit providers, welfare, social incubators) was based on management-by-enabling. New routines rooted in new practice were established over time, thanks to the trust-based relationships between SLBs belonging to different organizations; these latter played both coordination and bridging roles between the different structures. As Arnold has pointed out (2013, p. 3), by bridging the 'structural holes' separating heterogeneous jurisdictions and actors, policy entrepreneurs access a diversity of ideas from which useful innovation might emerge (Burt 2004; Petchey et al. 2007). In this case, consolidated tools, individual expertise and networking made it possible to implement new kinds of interventions.

The second period of interviewing showed that the environment at the time was inhospitable to the emergence of policy entrepreneurship. The centralization process ended up destroying the networks that had been built. Moreover, skilled human resources were dispersed when multiple new offices were opened across the local area. With this reshuffling caused by centralization, some offices were staffed by employees who had only a limited knowledge of organizational mechanisms and functions because these mechanisms had yet to become consolidated routines or practices. This state of organizational instability deterred the emergence of PE among SLBs. Moreover, the limitation of SLBs' discretionary space as a result of more standardized case management systems (i.e. managerialisation, standardization of requirements for accessing benefits) had a dampening effect on their ability to innovate the policy process.

6. Conclusion

This paper shows that policy entrepreneurship strategies can only emerge when SLBs are able to exercise discretion in an organizational context that is well-defined and endowed with established practices and routines. Nevertheless, management practices require project-by-project rather than standardized procedures, and depend upon specific accountability procedures. In fact, in order to function, entrepreneurial strategies must be based on and revolve around an internal and external system that has the capacity to adapt to PEs' reformulation of policies and implementation of new practices and repertoires.

The PE role does not emerge from an organizational *vacuum*. Rather, it is reinforced by an organizational environment that is capable of keeping up with PEs' stimuli and innovative work-sharing processes in both the back and front office. In this sense, a PE emerges not from *among* other actors, but *thanks to* other actors; PEs take the contributions made by these other actors and recombine in a positive-sum game of resources and processes, using their discretion to redefine both the policy goal and the intra- and inter-organizational relationship.

The success of these processes depends on the organization's capacity to make the most of certain strengths, such as teamwork, organizational routines, established practices, etc. Policy entrepreneurship is more likely to emerge among SLBs in a stable status quo, therefore, rather than in situations of change that undermine the internal processes of bureaucratic and professional work. This research hypothesis has been confirmed by our interviews. Besides corroborating the aspects that had already been identified and agreed upon in the literature – such as personal characteristics and entrepreneurship throughout the entire policy cycle – this research finds that the organizational variable also constitutes a fundamental factor for the emergence of PE, as long as SLBs are able to act out their professional discretion all along the chain of policy implementation.

References

Arnold, G. (2013). Street-level policy entrepreneurship. *Public Management Review*, 17(3), 307–327.

Arnold, G. (2014). Policy learning and science policy innovation adoption by street-level bureaucrats. *Journal of Public Policy*, *34*(3), 389–414. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0143814X14000154

Arnold, G. (2015). Street-level policy entrepreneurship. *Public Management Review*, *17*, 307–327. https://doi.org/10.1080/14719037.2013.806577

Aucoin, P. (1990). Administrative reform in public management: Paradigms, principles, paradoxes and pendulums. *Governance: an International Journal of Policy and Administration*, *3*(2), 115–137. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0491.1990.tb00111.x

Brodkin, E.Z. (1997). Inside the welfare contract: Discretion and accountability in state welfare administration. *Social Service Review*, 71(1), 1–33.

Brodkin, E. Z. (2008). Accountability in street-level organizations. *Journal of Public Administration*, 31, 317–336.

Brodkin, E. Z. (2011). Putting street-level organizations first: New directions for social policy and management research. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, *21*(suppl. 2), 199–277. https://doi.org/10.1093/jopart/muq094

Browning, L. D. (1991). Organisational narratives and organisational structure. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, *4*(3), 59–67. https://doi.org/10.1108/EUM0000000001199

Burt, R. S. (2004). Structural holes and good ideas. *American Journal of Sociology*, *110*(2), 349–399. https://doi.org/10.1086/421787

Campbell, D. T. (1975). III. "Degrees of freedom" and the case study. *Comparative Political Studies*, *8*(2), 178–193. https://doi.org/10.1177/001041407500800204

Collins, J. (2001). *Good to great: Why some companies make the leap … and others don't*. Harperbusiness.

Culp, D. K. (1970). Discretionary justice. *Journal of Legal Education*, *23*(1), 56–62. https://doi.org/10.1177/000271627642800113

Del-Corte-Lora, V., Vallet-Bellmunt, T., & Molinamorales, F. X. (2015). Be Creative but not so much. Decreasing benefits of creativity in clustered firms. *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development*, *27*(1/2), 1–27. https://doi.org/10.1080/08985626.2014.995722

Di Maggio, P. J., & Powell, W. W. (1983). The iron cage revisited: Institutional isomorphism and collective rationality in organizational fields. *American Sociological Review*, *48*(2), 147–160. https://doi.org/10.2307/2095101

Dubois, V. (2009). Le trasformazioni sociali alla lente dell'etnografia. *Etnografia e ricerca qualitativa*, *2*, 163–187.

Ellis, K. (2007). Direct payments and social work practice: The significance of "Street-Level Bureaucracy" in determining eligibility. *British Journal of Social Work*, 37(3), 405–422.

Evans, T. (2010). Professionals, managers and discretion: Critiquing street-level bureaucracy. *The British Journal of Social Work*, 41(2), 368–386.

Evans, T., & Harris, J. (2004). Street-level bureaucracy, social work and the (exaggerated) death of discretion. *British Journal of Social Work*, *34*(6), 871–895. https://doi.org/10.1093/bjsw/bch106

Ferrazza, D. (2008). Street Level Evaluation: un approccio innovativo allo studio delle politiche sociali. In *Rivista trimestrale di scienza della amministrazione* (Vol. 1/2010, pp. 1–21). Milano: FrancoAngeli.

Fredrikkson, D. (2020). Moving targets: Target groups of active labour market policies and transitions to employment in Europe. *International Journal of Social Welfare*, *29*(Issue 3), 270–284. https://doi.org/10.1111/ijsw.12421

Frisch-Aviram, N., Cohen, N., & Beeri, I. (2018). Low-level bureaucrats, local government regimes and policy entrepreneurship. *Policy Sciences*, 51(1), 39–57.

Frisch-Aviram, N., Cohen, N., & Beeri, I. (2019). Wind(ow) of change: A systematic review of policy entrepreneurship characteristics and strategies. *Policy Studies Journal*, *48*(3), 612–644. https://doi.org/10.1111/psj.12339

Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1989). *Fourth generation evaluation*. Sage.

Ham, C., & Hill, M. (1986). *Introduzione all'analisi delle politiche pubbliche*. IL Mulino.

Hofstede, G. (1991). *Culture and organisations*. McGraw-Hill.

Hupe, P., & Hill, M. (2007). Street-level bureaucracy and public accountability. *Public Administration*, *85*(2), 279–299. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9299.2007.00650.x

Kalil, T. (2017). Policy entrepreneurship at the White House: Getting things done in large organizations. *Innovations: Technology, Governance, Globalization*, *11*(3–4), 4–21. https://doi.org/10.1162/inov_a_00253

Kazepov, Y., & Barberis, E. (2012). Social assistance governance in Europe. Towards a multilevel perspective. In I. Marx, & K. Nelson (Eds.), *Minimum income protection in flux* (pp. 217–248). Palgrave Macmillan.

Kelly, M. (1994). Theories of justice and street-level discretion. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 4(2), 119–140.

Kingdon, J. W. (1984). *Agendas, alternatives and public policies*. Little, Brown and Company.

Klenk, T., & Pavolini, E. (a cura di) (2015). *Restructuring welfare governance. Marketization, managerialism and welfare state professionalism*. Edward Elgar.

Lane, J. A. (2000). *The public sector: Concepts, models and approaches*. Sage Publications.

Langley, A., Royer, I., & Montréal, H. (2006). Perspectives on doing case study research in organizations. *M@n@Gement*, *9*(3), 81–86. https://doi.org/10.3917/mana.093.0081

Lewis, J. (2007). Analysing qualitative longitudinal research in evaluations. *Social Policy and Society*, 6, 545–556.

Lipsky, M. (2010). *Street-level bureaucracy: Dilemmas of the individual in public services 30th anniv*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Lipsky, M. (1980). *Dilemmas of the individual in public services*. Russell Sage Foundation.

Lucciarini, S. (2017). Politiche del lavoro e azioni regionali: modelli di capitalismo tra eredità storica e capacità di innovazione. *Cambio. Rivista Sulle Trasformazioni Sociali*, *6*(12), 49–65. https://doi.org/10.13128/cambio-20400

Luhmann, N. (1991). *Soziale systeme: Grundriß einer allgemeinen Theorie* [Social systems: Outline of a general theory]. Suhrkamp.

Maynard-Moody, S., & Musheno, M. (2003). *Cops, teachers, counselors: Stories from the front lines of public service*. University of Michigan Press.

McAllister, I. (2007). The personalization of politics. In J. D. Russel, & H.-D. Klingemann (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of political behavior* (pp. 571–588). Oxford University Press.

Meyers, M. K., & Vorsanger, S. (2003). Street-level bureaucrats and the implementation of public policy. In B. Guy Peters, & J. Pierre (Eds.), *Handbook of public administration* (pp. 245–254). Sage.

Miller, G. A. (1967). Professionals in bureaucracy: Alienation among industrial scientists and engineers. *American Sociological Review*, *32*(5), 755–768. https://doi.org/10.2307/2092023

Mintrom, M. (2019). So you want to be a policy entrepreneur? *Policy Design and Practice*, *2*(4), 307–323. https://doi.org/10.1080/25741292.2019.1675989

Mintorm, M., & Norman P. (2009). Policy entrepreneurship and policy change. *Policy Studies Journal* 37(4).

Mintzberg, H. (1992). *Structure in fives: Designing effective organizations*. Prentice Hall.

Oliver, T. R., & Paul-Shaheen, P. (1997). Translating ideas into actions: Entrepreneurial leadership in state health care reforms. *Journal of Health Politics, Policy and Law*, *22*(3), 721–788. https://doi.org/10.1215/03616878-22-3-721

Orr, J. E. (1996). *Talking about machines: An ethnography of a modern job*. Cornell University Press.

Paraciani, R., & Rizza, R. (2021). When the workplace is the home: Labour inspectors' discretionary power in the field of domestic work – An institutional analysis. *Journal of Public Policy*, *41*(1), 1–16. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0143814X19000254

Paraciani, R., & Saruis, T. (2018, September 13–15). *Caseworkers' ideas of justice in social welfare practices: Two case studies in Denmark and Italy*. Paper prepared for the XI ESPAnet Italia Conference "Oltre la continuità – Le sfide del welfare in un mondo globale", Florence.

Petchey, R., Williams, J., & Carter, Y. (2007). From street-level Bureaucrats to street-level policy entrepreneurs? Central policy and local action in lottery-funded community cancer care. *Social Policy & Administration*, *42*(1), 59–76. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9515.2007.00588.x

Prottas, J. M. (1978). The power of the street-level Bureaucrat in public service Bureaucracies. *Urban Affairs Quarterly*, *13*(3), 285–312. https://doi.org/10.1177/107808747801300302

Quinn, R. E. (2000). *Change the world: How ordinary people can achieve extraordinary results*. Jossey-Bass.

Ravn, R., & Nielsen K. (2019). Employment effects of investments in public employment services for disadvantaged social assistance recipients. *European Journal of Social Security*, 21(1), 42–62.

Rizza, R., & Scarano, G. (2019). *Nuovi modelli di politica del lavoro*. Egea.

Saruis, T. (2015). *Gli operatori sociali nel nuovo welfare. Tra discrezionalità e responsabilità*. Carocci editore.

Saruis, T. (2018). Street-level workers' discretion in the changing welfare. Cambio. *Rivista Sulle Trasformazioni Sociali*, 8(16), 31–42.

Scott, P. G. (1997). Assessing determinants of bureaucratic discretion: An experiment in street-level decision-making. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, *7*(1), 35–58. https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordjournals.jpart.a024341

Seawright, J., & Gerring, J. (2008). Case selection techniques in case study research: A menu of qualitative and quantitative options. *Political Research Quarterly*, *61*(2), 294–308. https://doi.org/10.1177/1065912907313077

Smith, S. R. (2003). Street-level bureaucracy and public policy. In B. G. Peters, & J. Pierre (Eds.), *Handbook of public administration* (pp. 354–365). Sage.

Streeck, W., & Thelen, K. (eds.). (2005). *Beyond continuity: Institutional change in advanced political economies*. Oxford University Press.

Valente, L. (2019). *Diritti dei disoccupati. Le politiche per il lavoro e il welfare dal jobs act al diritto di cittadinanza*. CEDAM.

Vinzant, J. C., & Crothers, L. (1998). *Street-level leadership. Discretion and legitimacy in front-line public service*. Georgetown University Press. 185 p.

Vogl, S., Zartler, U., Schmidt, E.-M., & Rieder, I. (2016, September 11–16). *Analysing multiple-perspective qualitative longitudinal interviews (MPQLI), conference: RC33 conference*. 9th International Conference on Social Science Methodology, at Leicester.

Watkins-Hayes, C. (2011). Race, respect, and red tape: Inside the black box of racially representative bureaucracies. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, *21*(Suppl. 2), i233–i251. https://doi.org/10.1093/jopart/muq096

Weick, K. E. (1995). *Sensemaking in organizations*. Sage Publications.

Winter, S. (2003, November 6–8). *Political control, street-level bureaucrats and information asymmetry in regulatory and social policies*. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association for Policy Analysis and Management, Washington, DC.

Yin, R. K. (2003). *Case study research: design and methods*. Sage.