

## ARTICLE

## Activism Among Bureaucrats: Creative Social Housing Work in a Conservative Institutional Setting\*

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How can activist bureaucrats unexpectedly influence policy outcomes? What strategies do these actors adopt in order to defend and implement public policies in institutional settings unfavorable to their ideas? How do the individual trajectories of activist bureaucrats influence their strategies and repertoires of action? Drawing from the literature on institutional activism, this article shows how bureaucrats worked as activists to create and institutionalize participatory arenas in slum upgrading projects, within an institutional setting adverse to popular participation. Our research was carried out through interviews with bureaucrats and local community actors, as well as participant observation. The main results of our study were: the identification of four distinct profiles of bureaucrats and four main activist strategies used by them, as well as the identification of bureaucrats' profiles more associated with the adoption of certain practices - so that specific profiles of bureaucrats have influenced the policy-making process in different ways, according to their relational skills, previous trajectories, and worldviews. These findings suggest that the individual characteristics of bureaucrats are important to understanding the variations in bureaucrats' activist strategies within the state, as well as how bureaucrats can influence policymaking in heterogeneous ways.

**Keywords:** Activism; bureaucracy; policy entrepreneurship; participation; urban policy.

<http://doi.org/10.1590/1981-3821202200030002>

Data replication: <https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/SGH3Y4>

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\*We are grateful to Eduardo Marques, Gabriela Spanghero Lotta, Rebecca Neaera Abers, as well as the anonymous reviewers for their insightful comments on earlier drafts. We are also grateful to Viviane Frost and the SSARU/CDHU social team for enabling the research work and providing important feedback throughout the research process. We thank participants of the 12th ABCP (Associação Brasileira de Ciência Política) meeting and the researchers from Núcleo de Estudos da Burocracia (NEB/FGV) for their valuable suggestions. Support for this research came, in part, from the Brazilian National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq).

**H**ow can activist bureaucrats unexpectedly influence policy outcomes? What strategies do these actors adopt in order to defend and implement public policy in adverse institutional settings, unfavorable to their ideas? How do the individual trajectories of activist bureaucrats influence their strategies and repertoires of action? Through these questions, this article seeks to understand how the committed practices of bureaucrats influenced the creation of participatory arenas in an adverse organizational and institutional setting, that is, one unfavorable to popular participation. The article also seeks to understand to what extent individual characteristics of bureaucrats may have influenced the adoption of some strategies and repertoires of activist action instead of others.

The political science and public policy literature has shown how bureaucrats' allocative decisions impact policy outcomes (BRODKIN and MAJMUNDAR, 2010; GASSNER and GOFEN, 2018; LIPSKY, 2010; LOTTA, 2015; PIRES, 2019). In recent decades, progress has been made in the debate about the autonomous and discretionary actions of bureaucracy and its effects on policy. However, few studies on bureaucracy have explored, in greater depth, the activist behavior of bureaucrats (ABERS, 2020, 2019, 2015; OLSSON and HYSING, 2012; RICH, 2013) and how distinct actors — with different values, trajectories, and relational patterns — influence processes of institutional change. In this regard, Jessica Rich mentions that “these state actors — here called activist bureaucrats — have been largely overlooked in the English language literature, yet they form a new layer of politics in Latin America” (RICH, 2013, p. 01).

With the objective of advancing the debate on bureaucratic activism (ABERS, 2020; OLSSON, 2016), this article contributes to a better understanding of the bureaucracy's activist strategies and the factors that may influence variations in these strategies. To this end, we analyze the case of the Companhia de Desenvolvimento Habitacional e Urbano (CDHU) of the state of São Paulo, the public agency responsible for promoting slum upgrading projects and providing social housing. CDHU is known for its conservative administration (ROYER, 2002), which has been resistant to popular participation over the course of the last few decades. It is in this unfavorable institutional setting that a group of activist bureaucrats acted creatively over time to produce and institutionalize functional

participatory arenas, producing unexpected policy outcomes. The engaged and proactive practices of bureaucrats working in a conservative context constitute a valuable case for the study of activism.

During our research, we collected data through participant observation and 77 interviews conducted with bureaucrats and social actors involved in the implementation of three slum-upgrading programs: 01. 'Pantanal', in the União de Vila Nova neighborhood of the East Zone of São Paulo, an area with approximately 8,3 thousand households whose upgrading took place between 2002 and 2010; 02. 'Serra do Mar', in Bairros-Cota, on the outskirts of Cubatão, a territory with approximately 08 thousand households whose upgrading took place between 2007 and 2020; and 03. 'Pimentas', in the region of Sítio São Francisco, in Guarulhos, an area with approximately 04 thousand households whose upgrading took place between 2008 and 2020 (SILVEIRA, 2018).

These slum-upgrading programs consisted of a set of actions promoted by CDHU with the objective of improving the housing conditions of the population of these territories. Such actions included the implementation of sewage systems; structural urban drainage works, opening of roads and paving; construction of public amenities (such as leisure/sports areas, health and education units); construction of new housing units; and land regularization. The focus of this study is on the committed practices of social workers who acted in a creative and activist way to promote and institutionalize a permanent dialogue with communities living in the territories where the policy was implemented. As these bureaucrats gradually redefined their role in CDHU, their routine actions began not only supporting the families to be resettled (which was their initial attribution), but also continuously promoting meetings to discuss the policy with the population; acting to strengthen community organization and local development; and facilitating the dialogue between local residents and bureaucrats from various sectors in CDHU (such as projects, works and the legal sector, among others), from the program planning to its conclusion.

Our analysis of the bureaucrats' activist strategies (repertoires of activist action) suggests three main findings. First, 01. We observe that these bureaucrats used four main strategies or repertoires of activist action aimed at influencing policy design through the creation and institutionalization of participatory arenas. These

repertoires were: 1.1. articulating support within the state or at the state's borders, 1.2. experimentation, 1.3. promoting visibility adjustments, and 1.4. mediating or brokering agreements. Second, 02. we identify heterogeneous profiles of bureaucrats, with distinct values, biographies, professional trajectories, and perceptions regarding the public policy. Third, the findings also suggest that 03. different repertoires of activist action (different strategies) are associated with particular profiles of bureaucrats. This indicates that bureaucrats' individual characteristics are important to understanding variations in repertoires of activist action within the state, as well as how bureaucrats may have a heterogeneous impact on policymaking.

In addition to the introduction and the final remarks, this article includes four sections. In the next section, we review the literature on bureaucratic activism, focusing on the activist strategies of bureaucrats and the factors that may influence their actions. Then, we present our research methodology, followed by the empirical context and the presentation of the results; here, we describe the profiles of activist bureaucrats and their repertoires of activist action. In the following section, we discuss our findings, connecting the repertoires of activist action to the profiles of bureaucrats.

### **Activist strategies in policymaking**

The literature on public policy has shown how implementation processes can be marked by situations of high conflict and ambiguity (MATLAND, 1995), as well as a considerable degree of uncertainty about outputs, given the complexity of the contexts of implementation, the interaction between bureaucrats and the population, and the allocative decisions of the bureaucracy (BRODKIN and MAJMUNDAR, 2010; LIPSKY, 2010; LOTTA, 2015; PIRES, 2019). In recent decades, governance arrangements marked by the multiplicity of actors and formal and informal relationships in the provision of public services (MARQUES, 2016), as well as institutional intertwining, have also made implementation processes more complex (LOTTA and FAVARETO, 2016). Moreover, different repertoires of interaction between state actors and civil society over time have modified the

policymaking processes, from policy design to implementation (ABERS, 2020; ABERS, SERAFIM and TATAGIBA, 2014; LAVALLE, 2017; VILAÇA, 2020).

In this process, bureaucracy is one of the key actors, since it holds and mobilizes not only network resources, but also institutional resources in policymaking (ABERS, 2020; ABERS, SILVA, and TATAGIBA, 2018; HYSING and OLSSON, 2011; MARQUES, 2017). Bureaucrats' actions, however, are not neutral: bureaucrats have trajectories, values and worldviews, preferences, and relational (network) affiliations that can influence their creative performance at the boundaries of state organizations (ABERBACH, PUTNAM AND ROCKMAN, 1981; ABERS, 2020; ABRUCIO and LOUREIRO, 2018; CAVALCANTE and LOTTA, 2015; MARQUES, 2017). The creative and discretionary behavior of actors involved in implementation is an important element in the analysis of public policies, especially for understanding how certain actors influence policy outcomes, sometimes in unexpected ways (ABERS and KECK, 2017; ABERS and TATAGIBA, 2016; BERK, GALVAN and HATTAM, 2014; VILAÇA, 2020). Different scholars show how actors embedded in state organizations - while maintaining or not links with social movements - can act proactively within the state, advocating the advancement of certain 'causes' or policies and fostering processes of institutional change or stability (ABERS, 2020, 2019, 2015; ABERS and KECK, 2017; OLSSON, 2016; OLSSON and HYSING, 2012; PETTINICCHIO, 2012; RICH, 2013; VILAÇA, 2020).

Rebecca Abers (2019) conceptualized bureaucratic activism by highlighting two important analytical dimensions: 01. it involves the defense of 'contentious causes', that is, the defense of ideas that are threatened or that must be defended in opposition to others. It can also involve a 02. 'proactive dimension' of bureaucrats' agency: from the perspective of the situated agency (JOAS, 1996), institutional activism consists of the proactive search for opportunities for the defense and advancement of a certain cause within the state, in specific institutional settings. Abers (2019) also proposes that bureaucratic activism does not necessarily presuppose the existence of links between bureaucrats and social movements, and generally refers to collective efforts for action (ABERS, 2019). Keeping in mind these two dimensions, Abers defines bureaucratic or institutional activism as a "collective action in the defense of contentious causes conducted within the boundaries of state institutions" (ABERS, 2020, p. 02).

Institutional activism practices can also be understood as a type of policy entrepreneurship action. As recent works have shown (COHEN, 2021; LAVEE and COHEN, 2019), bureaucrats also work as “policy entrepreneurs”, meaning that they engage in practices aiming to influence the policy-making processes towards policy-change (COHEN, 2021). In this sense, these actors exploit opportunities to promote policy alternatives, “without having the resources necessary to achieve this alone. They are not satisfied with merely promoting their self-interests within institutions that others have established; rather, they try to create new horizons of opportunity through innovative ideas and strategies” (COHEN, 2021, p. 12).

This article follows Abers’s (2020, 2019) concept of bureaucratic activism, and relies also on other studies about the subject, with some analytical distinctions. When working with the concept of institutional activism, Olsson and Hysing (2012), for instance, begin with the assumption that activist bureaucrats necessarily have — or have had at some point in their careers — ties with social movements liked to the cause they defend within the state, hence their nomenclature: ‘inside-activists’ (HYSING and OLSSON, 2011; OLSSON and HYSING, 2012). For them, an inside-activist is an individual engaged in social movement networks “who holds a formal position within public administration, and who acts strategically from inside public administration to change government policy and action in line with a personal value commitment” (OLSSON and HYSING, 2012, p. 258).

Multiple issues have not been deeply explored in the literature on bureaucratic activism. There is a lack of in-depth cumulative studies on the theme and its variations (considering different countries or sub-national contexts, different state organizations and policy sectors); on the profiles and trajectories of activists; on different types of activist strategies adopted by bureaucrats within the state; on relations between state and non-state actors; and on the consequences of activism on policymaking and on processes of institutional change or permanence (ABERS and TATAGIBA, 2016; BRANDÃO and VILAÇA, 2017; CAYRES, 2017; OLSSON and HYSING, 2012; RICH, 2013). There are still few works on how bureaucrats work in an activist way on a daily basis, on how they influence public policy, and on what conditions their activist actions (ABERS, 2020).

Studies on institutional activism have identified and analyzed different activist practices, ranging from minor actions to structuring and greater efforts regarding the development of public policies (BRANDÃO and VILAÇA, 2017). These repertoires of action involve diverse practices, such as the promotion of debates and the mediation of negotiations with other state and non-state actors; the creation of new legal procedures and instruments; the development of state capacities; the conduct of pilot experiments; the promotion of training and advice to civil society; the promotion of internal efforts to align and build alternative management models; the redefinition of policy goals and objectives; the mobilization of support external to the organization; the search for alternative sources of funding to ensure the continuity of actions; the search for opportunities to influence decisions about policy design; the adaptation of communicative strategies; the leaking of information; the strategies of adjustment to the administration through 'off the radar' and subversive practices; the encouragement of protests and other contentious actions; and practices aimed at institutional permanence such as 'no action' and shirking practices (ABERS, 2021, 2020, 2019, 2015; BANASZAK, 2010; FERREIRA, 2016; LAVEE and COHEN, 2019; O'LEARY, 2017; OLSSON, 2016; OLSSON and HYSING, 2012; PENNA, 2017; RICH, 2013; RUIZ, 2020; SANTIAGO, 2017; SILVA, 2012; SILVEIRA, 2018; VILAÇA, 2020).

Regarding the possible factors that influence the adoption of some activist practices instead of others, Rebecca Abers (2020) shows how state actors adapt their strategies over time depending on the institutional and relational (network) resources available in a given setting. By comparing the activist strategies of bureaucrats embedded in two different policy sectors (the environment and women's health sectors), the author argues that the practices of these different groups varied due to greater or lesser access to relational and institutional resources.

The results of Abers's study (2020) suggest that when the institutional setting became more adverse to the agendas defended by these actors, the group with greater access to relational resources outside the state (social movements, for example) promoted broader and more diversified actions in comparison to the group of more state-centered bureaucrats (ABERS, 2020). As the author analyzes the practices of these groups longitudinally, we can observe that the activist

bureaucrats changed and adapted their strategies over time. These changes involved learning processes and transformations of activist repertoires stemming from the creative use of relational and institutional resources available in different political regimes. It is also worth noting that, although the trajectory of social-state interactions and previous practices informs subsequent strategies (TILLY and TARROW, 1992 apud ABERS, SERAFIM, and TATAGIBA, 2014, p. 330), activist strategies may also contain improvisations, reinterpretations, transformations, and creative agency (ABERS, 2020; ABERS; SERAFIM, and TATAGIBA, 2014).

Another factor that can influence the variations in the creative work of the bureaucracy are the individual characteristics of bureaucrats, including their worldviews, biographies and trajectories, preferences, and political projects. The influence of individual characteristics on the behavior of actors is a subject studied especially in the field of public administration and bureaucracy studies with the objective of understanding the discretionary and autonomous behavior of bureaucrats (LIPSKY, 2010; LOTTA and PIRES, 2020; MAYNARD-MOODY and MUSHENO, 2003).

Among the studies on bureaucratic activism, there are fewer works that specifically analyze the individual characteristics of actors compared to studies on bureaucracy. The works of Olsson and Hysing (2012), Rech (2020), and Abers (2020) show how biographical characteristics of activists matter for certain repertoires of strategies, as they influence bureaucrats' relational patterns. In some cases, bureaucrats who had previously been members of social movements proved adept at promoting discussions and mediating agreements between state and non-state organizations, given their position as brokers between these spaces (OLSSON and HYSING, 2012). Vilaça (2020) also highlights the influence of the trajectory and biography of activist actors. According to the author, bureaucrats who had interacted with citizens and organized civil society actors were more likely to engage in activist practices than those who had not.

## Methods

To study the phenomenon of bureaucratic activism, we chose to research the case of CDHU because it is an empirical context that has the characteristics



pointed out theoretically by the literature (ABERS, 2019; OLSSON and HYSING, 2012), such as the contentious nature of the agenda mobilized by bureaucrats in the social area (in this case, popular participation) and the proactive and committed work of civil servants in the defense of this contentious cause, within a state institution that is traditionally adverse to this agenda. The 'cause' of social participation, defended in an organizational-institutional setting unfavorable to this agenda, is an analytically rich example for studies on activism. Moreover, participatory processes and society-state interactions can reconfigure decision-making processes and information flows, power relations, and the very directions of public policy (ABERS, SILVA, and TATAGIBA, 2018).

In order to identify the profiles of bureaucrats and their repertoires of activist action, we adopted the following methodological strategies: exploratory interviews conducted between April and May 2017, followed by semi-structured interviews conducted between November 2017 and May 2018; and participant observation, which involved mainly attending meetings between CDHU social workers and the local residents, in addition to following the daily work of the CDHU social team, where the author worked as a social worker between May 2014 and July 2020. The data collection took place in three upgrading slum projects mentioned in the introduction: 01. Pantanal in União de Vila Nova (eastern zone of the municipality of São Paulo), 02. Serra do Mar (Bairros-Cota in Cubatão), and 03. Pimentas (Guarulhos). The choice of these three projects was justified because they are the first and main experiences in the process of creation and institutionalization of participatory arenas.

Our selection of interviewees was made through purposive sample (MERRIAM and TISDELL, 2016), focused on the initial identification of bureaucrats who had created and implemented participatory arenas in slum upgrading projects. Then, via snowball sampling, we asked these interviewees for suggestions of other state actors from CDHU and social actors (residents and local community leaders) who were also directly or indirectly involved in the implementation of participatory arenas, thus moving to the next semi-structured interviews.

A total of 58 people were interviewed, of whom 35 were CDHU bureaucrats (social workers), 08 were bureaucrats from other technical areas (sectors) of CDHU (such as projects, works, and commercial), 10 were local community leaders, 04

were residents participating in social projects carried out by CDHU, and 01 was a representative of one of CDHU's partner institutions. We chose to interview this diverse set of actors in order to identify different perceptions of the people involved in the implementation of the participatory arenas, as well as to triangulate information (THIES, 2002). As some people were interviewed more than once between the stages of exploratory and semi-structured interviews, we conducted a total of 77 interviews, as described in Table 01.

The interviews were recorded and the audios were transcribed. We analyzed the data collected from the interviews using the NVivo software and aggregated the themes into 594 distinct codes applied to 3,408 text references. Later, we recoded them into broader categories.

**Table 01.** People interviewed in the survey

Interviewees	Number of people	Number of interviews conducted
Bureaucrats from CDHU's social sector (social workers)	35	51
Bureaucrats from other technical areas within CDHU	08	08
Local community leaders	10	12
Residents participating in CDHU social projects	04	05
Representative of partner institution	01	01
<b>Total</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>77</b>

Created by the author based on the interviews conducted between 2017 and 2018.

In what concerns the identification of the bureaucrats' activist strategies, they could be considered as analytical simplifications, such as Weberian 'ideal-types'. We tried to group sets of bureaucrats' actions that were similar to each other as a way of organizing and analyzing the empirical material collected. In practice, many of the repertoires of activist strategies are complementary and interdependent, as well as being realized in nuanced and heterogeneous ways depending on the actors and context. Still, this analytical simplification was useful to understanding the phenomenon of bureaucratic activism.

As for the identification of profiles of interviewed bureaucrats (PETERS, 2009), bureaucrats with similar interpretations of their role in social work and of the practices they consider to be priorities were classified and grouped in NVIVO.

Once groups with similar interpretations were formed, the other variables for each profile — such as education and trajectories, perceptions of challenges in social work, the discursive styles mobilized during interactions, and repertoires of activist strategies — were identified. In this last step, we conducted a cross-analysis between the clusters of bureaucrats' profiles and the frequency of responses obtained for each subcategory of analysis. The results were organized in summary tables according to the answers obtained in the interviews and the patterns identified in the cross-analysis in NVIVO.

We present the findings through vignettes (HARRITS, 2019; MØLLER, 2018), that is, we present narratives from fictitious cases, built from gathering the main characteristics of each of the interviewees. This strategy allows us to synthesize the characteristics of the empirical data collected, avoiding the identification of a particular interviewee.

### **CDHU's social work in informal settlements**

The Companhia de Desenvolvimento Habitacional e Urbano (CDHU), the public company responsible for the provision of social housing in the state of São Paulo, is historically known for its conservative administration, focused on the mass production of housing units of low quality (ROYER, 2002). This modus operandi of CDHU's housing provision is marked by an interdependent relationship between construction industries, management companies, and the state (PULHEZ, 2016; ROYER, 2002), in a logic that separates housing provision from urban planning, in addition to making “the never realized universalization of the right into a means of legitimizing the government and politically coopting organized movements and city halls of upstate towns” (ROYER, 2002, p. 180, our translation).

At CDHU, slum- upgrading projects entered the agenda late and were only consolidated as programmatic action in the 2000s (SILVA, 2018). This late trend in the promotion of upgrading policies in São Paulo state administrations runs counter to the pioneering status of local governments administered by left-wing parties, which led social interest housing (HIS) and slum upgrading programs, especially from the 1980s onwards, in Brazil's metropolitan areas (BUENO, 2000; DENALDI, 2003).

With regard to popular participation, while local administrations managed by the Workers' Party fostered participatory institutions in housing policies (LAVALLE et al., 2016; PAVEZ, 2006; PAZ and ARREGUI, 2017; PAZ and TABOADA, 2010), CDHU was characterized by a scenario adverse to participation (ROYER, 2002). This scenario, however, began to gain new elements beginning in the 1990s, as a social team started to act, gradually creating and institutionalizing participatory arenas in slum upgrading projects in the state of São Paulo.

The Superintendência Social de Ação em Recuperação Urbana (SSARU) is the technical area responsible for social work in the several CDHU actions — which include resettlement, upgrading, and land regularization actions — in informal settlements. Although SSARU was formally created in 2005, social work began earlier. In 1985, an architect-urban planner (recognized for his work as a technical advisor to social housing movements) was invited to work on improvements in urban housing at CDHU. He created the Department of Slums, which was made up of an interdisciplinary team of 15 to 20 people and advanced, in a pioneering way within CDHU, projects of upgrading in informal settlements. It did so while considering territorial specificities and differentiated housing typologies through work processes that were both participatory and connected to housing movements.

Due to a major turnover in CDHU management in 1987, this architect (and part of his team) was fired and the Department of Slums was dissolved for political reasons (SILVA, 2018). However, some bureaucrats from that team remained in CDHU. Among the remnants was an architect-urbanist who reports having 'carried these early influences' with her throughout her trajectory at the organization. With the end of the Department, she took over the social work in informal settlements, with the support of other CDHU employees interested in the subject. This team was based in another superintendency, the Superintendency of Social Development. Interviewees report that, in this context, there were no guidelines for the work in slums, so that the implementation of actions was marked, concomitantly, both by the execution of actions and by the gradual institution-building process of guidelines, procedures, and foundations for the social work: it was a process of 'changing the tire while the car was moving', reports one interviewee.

In some ways, the history of social work in CDHU resembles the processes analyzed by Abers and Keck (2017), who show how the reorganization of the political-institutional framework of water management in Brazil left a wide space of ambiguities regarding the operationalization of its instruments, in practice. In this mismatch between the new legislation and its implementation, the actors — through strategies of experimentation and engagement with other actors — had to claim practical authority in order to execute the functions that had been assigned to them, although there was no specification as to the means necessary to do this.

Similarly, the establishment of a specific technical area for social work in slums at CDHU occurred through a gradual process of experimentation and engagement with other actors, who were linked to other technical sectors of CDHU, to community actors, to representatives of Social Housing movements, and to the population living in the territories where CDHU intervenes. Over time, the work carried out by this small, initial social work team acquired its own capabilities in creatively solving problems and specific policy needs, and built a reputational legacy (CARPENTER, 2001) relative to other sectors and to the top echelons of CDHU, as well as to local communities. According to the interviewees, there were several ‘battles’ fought between different sectors, either because the issue of slum upgrading was not a priority at CDHU, or because the creation of participatory arenas induced the reorganization of decision-making flows and work dynamics in CDHU, among the technical areas.

Countless challenges make up the institutional scenario that is adverse to popular participation in CDHU. Some of the issues mentioned in the interviews were: 01. frequent threats by CDHU top managers to the working conditions of the social teams (including threatening to fire employees and to cut the project’s budget); 02. the prejudices of some bureaucrats from other CDHU technical areas regarding the needs of the local communities (especially the most vulnerable populations), which imposed obstacles to accessing the public policy; 03. the lack of attention to the needs and opinions expressed by the community during the elaboration of the various urbanistic projects that made up the public policy; 04. the design of SH projects or solutions misaligned with local and social characteristics; 05. discontinuities or non-compliance with urbanistic interventions,

in addition to unnecessary resettlement actions which delegitimized the initial negotiations between the social team and the community; 06. defamatory statements and moral harassment by CDHU top managers, targeting the social technical team and the participative processes; and 07. attempts by the higher echelons of CDHU to excessively control the social team's actions in the field.

Although such challenges were present to a greater or lesser extent depending on the political coalitions of the administrations, the social team gradually gained some space for action. In 2004, the team was no longer linked to the Superintendence of Social Development and became part of a new superintendence, created specifically to promote popular participation in informal settlements: the SSARU (Superintendence of Social Action in Urban Recovery), whose purpose was “planning, giving guidelines and ensuring the execution of the social work in programs and actions of recovery of urban areas” (CDHU, 2004, p. 03)<sup>1</sup>. Its attributions consisted in making popular participation feasible; developing social projects; participating in the planning of slum upgrading projects; and promoting local development activities. Most of the interface between CDHU and the population living in the settlements took place through SSARU's social workers, and joint actions included registration campaigns and socio-territorial diagnosis, continuous meetings to discuss the urbanistic projects, and the promotion of local development cultural projects.

Gradually, the double movement of ‘experimentation’ and ‘engagement with other actors’ made by the social team — before and after the formal creation of SSARU — influenced housing policy in the state of São Paulo in three main ways, despite CDHU conservative administrations:

01. it implemented pioneering practices of popular participation in CDHU, such as the territorial election of community representatives, the creation and maintenance of participatory spaces for social control, and the promotion of projects to foster local development;

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<sup>1</sup>CDHU(2004), Act of the President 38 of 2004 of 07,01,2004. Subject: Transfers from subordination and denomination of functional units. Available at <<https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/SGH3Y4>>.

02. it modified decision-making processes, information flows and work dynamics in the different CDHU technical areas (especially the interface between the areas of projects, public works, commercial, legal, and social);

03. it induced institutional change processes through the design of guidelines and normative landmarks for the state of São Paulo in recent years, both in the context of resettlement actions and of slum upgrading.

Regarding the last point, the Procedural Norm (PN) of 10/20/2020 (CDHU, 2020)<sup>2</sup> stands out. The PN provides guidelines for the work among different technical areas of CDHU (from planning to the execution of actions), including popular participation. This presupposes the continuous discussion and negotiation of urbanistic projects with residents, community representatives elected in the territories, and other social actors. In addition to the 2020 PN, there are other normative milestones built through the committed performance of the social team, such as the 2018 SSARU design of procedures and methodological references (which consolidated normative guidelines regarding the participatory methodology of SSARU); the PN 10.03 of 03/12/2018 (CDHU, 2018) on housing services linked to informal settlements; as well as the Housing Secretary resolution Nº 24 of 05/31/2017, which provides for housing resettlement processes in the state of São Paulo.

CDHU's social work - from its inception in the 1980s until 2018 - has involved about 45,000 families, in 38 different projects in the state's metropolitan areas, especially in the Metropolitan Area of São Paulo and Baixada Santista. In 2018, its team was composed of 45 people, of which 37 were outsourced, 07 effective and 01 commissioned. Even among the outsourced staff, 86% had been working at SSARU for at least seven years, which allowed for relative continuity in the consolidation of SSARU practices and methodologies despite a minority of permanent staff (CDHU, 2018).

The profiles of the SSARU social workers are heterogeneous in terms of training, trajectory, practices and perceptions of participation. Regarding training, the team included urban architects, historians, social workers, sociologists, geographers, visual artists, psychologists, data scientists, and biologists, among

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<sup>2</sup>CDHU (2020), Standard of procedures of 10,20,2020. Intervention standard in slums and precarious settlements. [mimeo]. Available at: <<https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/SGH3Y4>>.

others. From the point of view of the profiles of these bureaucrats (social workers), there are multiple relational patterns and trajectories prior to SSARU: some were linked to social movements, while others had worked in local administrations of leftist parties, where they got involved in the promotion of participatory processes and developed social projects linked to affirmative policies at the subnational and federal levels. Others lived in peripheral informal settlements or worked in technical advisory projects to housing movements (self-management and 'mutirões'), in local development projects promoted by NGOs, or in multilateral agencies.

### Repertoires of activist action and profiles of bureaucrats

We present below the results of the research, which are organized in two axes: 01. the description of the bureaucrats' repertoires of activist action, focused on the creation and institutionalization of participatory arenas; and 02. the identification of different profiles of bureaucrats, with distinct interpretations of the role of social work, values/worldviews, and biographies.

Regarding the first aspect, 01. we identified four main strategies or repertoires of activist action: 1.1 networking, inside or outside/at the state's borders, 1.2 experimenting with solutions, 1.3 promoting adjustments of greater or lesser visibility/recognition, and 1.4 mediating agreements.

01. 'Network articulation' consists of mobilizing support from different state or non-state actors or organizations in order to influence policies. Here, we start from a relational understanding of the state, in which networks channel information, access to material and immaterial resources, support and leadership, political projects and perceptions/worldviews (MARQUES, 2006). From the interviews conducted, we observed that SSARU/CDHU bureaucrats mobilized both relational resources (1a) within the state (among different technical areas of CDHU), and at (1b) the state's borders (involving community leaders, NGO representatives, social movements, among others) to promote the participation agenda.

The 02. 'experimentation strategies with new solutions' consist of collaborative, gradual, and creative efforts, seeking to concretely solve problems



using the organizational-institutional resources available. Such experiments may start with small efforts aimed at easily attainable goals. Once such efforts are successful, other actors become more inclined to join, and more likely to expand their partnerships. Examples of experimentation strategies are the election of territorial representatives and the subsequent constitution of a collegiate forum that could organize the debate between CDHU actors and social actors. With the accumulation of these experiences over time, new participatory spaces were consolidated, as was the case of the Urbanization Operational Nucleus and the election of Community Urbanization Agents (who were territorial community representatives).

The 03. 'visibility adjustments' correspond to the adoption of different advocacy practices, in ways that are more or less perceptible/recognizable by a given political community. It is about calibrating the degree of visibility and recognition of an action, according to the setting and the intended objectives. Thus, on the one hand, bureaucrats have adopted explicit strategies to promote (3a) greater visibility of social work in an attempt to highlight their unique organizational capabilities, reputation, and legitimacy in a given network of state and non-state actors. Examples of such strategies are publicizing awards, publishing books on social work, associating social work's image with renowned public figures, and so on.

On the other hand, in institutional settings marked by greater conflict between activist bureaucrats and their superiors, certain practices occurred in a secret/subversive manner, which consisted of (3b) less visible practices, promoting adjustments to the administration. Through these strategies, bureaucrats sought to act 'off the radar', influencing policy in an unnoticed manner. Examples of these strategies include the promotion of practices that are not aligned with top-level management, such as: instigating demonstrations and protests against the upper echelons of the administration by the communities; not complying or partially complying with the decisions of superiors; or simply moderating the discourse when interacting with top management by adjusting their language and using communicative strategies to avoid conflicts.

Finally, 04. 'mediating agreements' refers to the strategies of bureaucrats situated in privileged positions in networks of formal and informal relationships.

Such actors are able to transit through different organizational settings, understand and mobilize their distinct grammars, and mediate and facilitate agreements. Repertoires of activist mediation in SSARU/CDHU include the mediation of bureaucrats in negotiations between social actors and CDHU's project and construction technicians, so that the upgrading project could be elaborated based on community perspectives and, moreover, be suited to the needs of vulnerable populations.

With regard to the identification of profiles of SSARU bureaucrats, the social team is formed by bureaucrats with varied biographies, trajectories, worldviews, and values regarding public policy. In Chart 01, we present the four groups or profiles of bureaucrats involved in the creation and institutionalization of participatory arenas in CDHU. For each profile, we present: the main practices, biographical characteristics/trajectory, the main styles of interaction, the values and focus of action, and the patterns of mobilization (external or external) of actors in the articulation of partnerships.

As mentioned in the methodology, we used the resource of vignettes to present the different profiles of bureaucrats indicated in the Chart 01. The vignettes make it possible to narrate the actions of a fictional character that synthesizes the main characteristics of the different members of each group. The first profile refers to bureaucrats (1) politicizing or inducing popular participation. In this profile, we highlight the performance of Ana, who has militant trajectories both in social movements for popular housing and in the Workers' Party (PT). Ana is recognized for her experience and professional performance as a facilitator in different participatory spaces. Prior to her work at the CDHU, Ana was part of the social team that coordinated participatory budgeting during Marta Suplicy's (PT) tenure as Mayor of São Paulo. She also facilitated self-management projects in social housing projects in the São Paulo metropolitan area. Recognized for her work in participation projects, Ana was invited by bureaucrats of the Ministry of Cities to be part of a deliberative forum monitoring of Brazil's Growth Acceleration Program - PAC upgrading projects in Rio de Janeiro.

Ana's values and focus of action emphasize the importance of popular participation and the strengthening of community organization, so that social actors

can manifest themselves critically and contribute to the development and co-management of public policies. According to one of the interviewees in this group, it is a matter of "equipping the population" so that it recognizes its rights and is able to negotiate and put pressure on state actors — thus consolidating practices of popular control and shared management of public policies. One of the bureaucrats interviewed reports the importance of his trajectory for his later performance in the CDHU:

“In the PB [participatory budgeting] we trained 2,500 delegates in public budgeting, in the Constitution, in rights. (...) I think that the political scenario of popular participation that the PT governments were making, (...) favored this methodology to be appropriated by the Superintendency [SSARU] at that time. (...) Not exactly in the state government [of São Paulo], because the state government did not do this. But [name of manager], in her commitment to the participation process — she really believed that it should be participatory. (...) In the sense of empowering the population and giving them the tools so that they could debate with an engineer, take ownership of the upgrading process, gain knowledge in this area, know their rights. That’s what’s important! And the PBs already had this methodology.”  
(politicizing bureaucrat)

Together with the bureaucrats of the 'articulator' profile, Ana and her colleagues were pioneers in the creation of participatory spaces in CDHU. In order to create a culture of participation in an adverse institutional setting, Ana made use of diverse repertoires of action, involving experimentation, articulation (especially at the state's borders), and countless strategies of greater or lesser visibility in terms of participation. In general, Ana's actions also involved more contentious interactions, such as encouraging the critical mobilization of the population, even if this meant publicly presenting harsh criticisms of the organization's top management.

As for the profile of 02. 'articulators', their work is closely linked to management and articulation activities both at the state's borders and among state actors. While politicizers tend to use a more contentious repertoire of actions, articulators act to facilitate agreements between different state and non-state actors. Like the politicizers, the articulators also encouraged the participation and critical manifestation of the population in participatory spaces. The difference and uniqueness of the articulators lies in their strong relational performance and search for opportunities for negotiation and dialogue not only among social actors, but also inside CDHU, thus working for a greater legitimacy of the participatory spaces.

**Chart 01.** Profile of bureaucrats involved in the creation and institutionalization of participatory arenas

Characteristics	Politicizer / inducer of participatory processes	Articulator	Systematizer / attentive to policy coherence	Facilitator and mobilizer in the territory
Main practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Creating participatory spaces</li> <li>- Strengthening the culture of participation</li> <li>- Encouraging community protagonism in the co-management of politics and social control</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Creating participative spaces</li> <li>- Articulating between different sectors in CDHU</li> <li>- Incentivizing institutionalization</li> <li>- Enabling agreements that guarantee the creation and continuity of participatory spaces</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Registering and elaborating normative proposals (institutionalizing public policy workflows)</li> <li>- Proposing alternatives between implementation gaps and policy design</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Facilitating cultural projects for local development</li> <li>- Networking with social actors in the territory</li> <li>- Facilitating continuous dialogue in the territory</li> </ul>
Biographical aspects (personal or professional trajectory) used to justify practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Coordinating participatory processes (Worker's Party-administrations)</li> <li>- Facilitating participatory processes in social housing projects</li> <li>- Political party militancy (Worker's Party)</li> <li>- Social movements</li> <li>- Popular education projects via NGOs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Facilitating participatory processes in social housing projects</li> <li>- Social projects (NGOs)</li> <li>- Academic research</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Data analysis and information management support in participation projects (Worker's Party-administrations)</li> <li>- Professional or personal experience in informal settlements</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cultural and social minority inclusion projects</li> <li>- Professional or personal experience in informal settlements</li> <li>- Academic research</li> </ul>
Main interaction styles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Contentious interactions, aimed at supporting the critical mobilization of the population and confrontational approaches to CDHU's upper echelons</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Contentious and conciliatory interactions, aimed at articulating different sectors, stakeholders, and agendas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Conciliatory interactions, aimed at dialogue between internal actors with a focus on institutionalization</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Conciliatory interactions aimed at articulating partnerships in the territory between state and social actors</li> </ul>
Values and focus of action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Emphasis on the participation and autonomy of the community organization</li> <li>- Focus on participatory processes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Emphasis on participation and autonomy of the community organization</li> <li>- Focus on institutionalization: iterative and gradual adjustments</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Emphasis on dialogues about (i) implementation challenges and (ii) gradual change of work processes</li> <li>- Focus on institutionalization: iterative and gradual adjustments</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Emphasis on strengthening community ties through culture</li> <li>- Focus on participatory processes</li> </ul>
Mobilization of actors (main aspects)	External (non-state actors)	Internal and external (state and non-state actors)	Internal (state actors)	External (non-state actors)

Created by the author's based on the interviews.

The fictitious case of Lara illustrates the work of the articulators: she has worked in slum upgrading projects in which the urban project was developed based on continuous dialogue and identification of the population's needs, considering the territory's vocations and potential. In these experiences, the development of actions took place in a joint way between state actors and social actors; and the participatory spaces were legitimized by the state's social workers. If, on the one hand, Lara had important participatory experiences, on the other, she also acquired communicative and negotiation skills among different sectors within the state itself. Her position as an 'intermediator' with easy access both to community actors in the territory and to CDHU's administration allowed her to act as a moderator of agreements and negotiations. This broker profile and the construction of bonds of trust between different state and social actors help explain her numerous activist strategies of articulation (within and at the state's borders) and of mediating agreements. The following account, from an interviewee with the 'articulator' profile, illustrates this aspect:

"I think that I had a technical-militant role (...) You have to, first, gain an extraordinary degree of credibility to be able to act. Because, if they [the population] don't believe in you, your word is worth nothing. So I was always very transparent with them, I shared the laurels and shared the problems: "Look, the work will stop, because the governor has changed, because the [top management] team that is coming is different, they understand that the priority is different (...). In order not to stop [the project], you have to do this, this and this; you have to organize yourselves" (...). We are going to organize ourselves and present the project to the new Board of Directors [of CDHU] and try to convince them of its importance. I had a pact with the community that we would act together, you know? (...) I think it is a technical and militant performance at the same time. (...) A really political engagement" (Bureaucrat 'articulator').

The performance of bureaucrats like Lara was crucial both to adapting decisions from top management to the needs of the territory and to inducing gradual changes in policymaking based on local demands, as pointed out by social actors and frontline workers in the field. The 'articulators' played a fundamental role in the institutionalization of social work methodology for two main reasons: 01. as managers, they are recognized by the technical staff for being open to proposals for changes, gradual adaptations, or new practices. In addition, 02. they act as

articulators with the other technical sectors of CDHU or other partner institutions, mobilizing support, enabling alternatives, and building agreements that were gradually institutionalized - thus institutionalizing the participatory arenas within CDHU.

The third profile, 03. 'systematizer' or 'attentive to policy coherence', gathers bureaucrats whose profile — with its trajectory and acting strategies — contributed to the gradual improvement of new social work procedures and to the institutionalization of these novel processes, including the institutionalization of work flows among CDHU's technical areas following the consolidation of participatory arenas.

The fictitious case of Lia illustrates the profile of these bureaucrats: since her time as an undergraduate, she has worked in the advancement of public policies aimed at minority inclusion. Although she has not had a track record of militancy in social movements or parties, her circle of close friends has always included militants in non-governmental organizations (NGOs), as well as PT (Workers' Party) members. Her professional trajectory included both field actions conducted together with technical staff and social actors (which consisted of socio-territorial diagnosis studies and support for participatory processes, especially in projects promoted by PT local administrations), and management support actions, which consisted of systematizing information, conducting research and organizing databases. At CDHU, Lia was always recognized by her peers for her skills in database management and for her ability to support negotiations and to mediate the agreements of her 'articulator' colleagues (with whom she always worked together).

In addition to having a professional trajectory that combines technical expertise with practical actions in the territory, Lia has a personal trajectory that also includes important experiences in peripheral areas. Often, when reflecting on her social work practices, Lia makes use of arguments and references linked to both her professional and personal experiences. This allowed her to have an attentive look, on the one hand, at the implementation gaps in public policy and, on the other, at the possibilities for improving policy design. Not by chance, bureaucrats with Lia's profile were key players in the drafting of normative proposals that

culminated with the gradual institutionalization of social work. Her work took place in close partnership with Lara and other bureaucrats of the 'articulator' profile, in view of the necessary discussion among the different sectors of CDHU for the standardization of the work processes, including the participatory spaces and their interfaces. Their approaches and interaction styles tend to be predominantly conciliatory and aimed at the broadening of support coalitions around the popular participation agenda and the standardization of minimum parameters to the teams' actions.

The gradual construction of workflows, procedures, standardization, and improvement of social work (advanced by bureaucrats of the 'systematizing' profile) is related to their values of greater equity in providing services to the citizens. According to a bureaucrat of this profile:

“My vision is to improve the relationship between the staff [of CDHU] and the residents [citizens]. In the sense of the [frontline] bureaucrat being able to answer with argumentation, to have support to deal with the demands that come from the area [of the territory]. (...) We have responsibility in what is said [to the population], we need to give conditions to the [frontline] bureaucrat (...) with criteria, [normative] procedure, without having double standards. Trying to be more fair” (Bureaucrat 'systematizer').

The profiles 04. 'facilitators/ mobilizers in the territory' gather bureaucrats who are permanently in the field, dedicated to continuous actions aimed at popular participation and at strengthening community organization. Their main activist strategies were the experimentation of different social actions or projects and the articulation of partnerships at the state's borders, in addition to visibility adjustments. By being constantly in the field and having proximity to various social actors, the 'facilitators/mobilizers' made a central contribution to the proposition and development of projects, continuous experimentation, and gradual adjustment of these initiatives.

Gabriela's trajectory and performance illustrates the characteristics of this profile: an organizer of visual arts and hip-hop projects in different slums in the metropolitan region of São Paulo, she is linked to cultural movements in the peripheries and to university research and extension projects, and has also worked in cultural projects with vulnerable street youths and with youths in different socio-

educational institutions of the Fundação Centro de Atendimento Socioeducativo ao Adolescente (CASA Foundation). She also has experience in NGOs working in the cultural sector, and has coordinated projects of education, educommunication, and support for vulnerable youth.

The skills acquired throughout their professional career have enabled them to act creatively in proposing and experimenting with social projects that strengthen the participatory arenas created in the territories where CDHU operates. In the words of an interviewee with this profile, their daily routine is marked by the continuous ‘reinvention of practices’, whose adaptations are made as they interact with the population and identify different needs, potentialities, and community vocations in the territory.

### Characteristics of bureaucrats matter for activist repertoires

In this discussion of our results, we associate the different profiles of bureaucrats with different activist strategies. It is possible to identify that certain groups of actors — with their own characteristics, trajectories, skills, and values — adopt certain repertoires of activist action, instead of others. Chart 02 below relates the profiles of bureaucrats to the main activist strategies mentioned, both in the creation/implementation of participatory arenas, and in their gradual institutionalization. Given that each bureaucrat profile tends to resort to distinct activist strategies in articulation with the other profiles, the results also suggest that the repertoires of bureaucratic activism in CDHU have developed in a complementary and interdependent way among the different profiles of bureaucrats involved.

Regarding the strategies of 1a. ‘network articulation within the state’, the performance of bureaucrats, especially those with an articulating and systematizing profile, stands out. With established connections to state actors from different technical areas in CDHU, these bureaucrats played a strong role in sensitizing and gradually building agreements linked to the functioning of the participatory arenas in the workflows of public policy. Their strong relational performance, articulating and expanding support bases within the state, was necessary for the creation and institutionalization of participatory spaces.



**Chart 02.** Bureaucrats' profiles 'versus' main activist strategies mentioned

Activist strategies and influence in policymaking	Profiles of bureaucrats			
	Politicizer (2 cases)	Articulator (4 cases)	Systematizer (4 cases)	Facilitator/mobilizer (11 cases)
Influence on policymaking:	- Creation of participatory arenas	- Creation of participatory arenas - Institutionalization	- Institutionalization	- Creation of participatory arenas
(1a) Network articulation within the state	•	• • •	• • •	
(1b) Network articulation at the state's borders	• • •	• • •		• • •
(2) Experimentation with new solutions	• • •	• • •	•	• • •
(3a) Promotion of greater visibility adjustments	• • •	• • •	•	• • •
(3a) Promotion of lower visibility adjustments	•	• • •		•
(4) Mediation of agreements	•	• • •	•	•

Created by the author's elaboration, based on the interviews.

Notes: Bureaucrats' activist strategies: • rarely mentioned • • • • frequently mentioned.

Bureaucrats like Lara and Lia (the 'articulator' and the 'systematizer') are adept at building and mobilizing different support coalitions, either because they have built a reputational (organizational) legacy in the SSARU through functional participatory instances, or because they have established reciprocal relationships between different technical teams in CDHU. The dialogue and negotiation skills, as well as the conciliatory interaction styles, of these bureaucrats are associated with their frequent use of activist strategies to articulate support within the state.

As they had more access and proximity to CDHU's high-level decision-making bodies, the 'articulator' bureaucrats were recognized for their ability to defend the popular participation agenda by guaranteeing the maintenance of the participatory spaces and avoiding setbacks in the achievements already obtained. These negotiation and articulation strategies, carried out by the articulators, were even more necessary when CDHU's directors questioned and threatened the social

work and the slum upgrading programs themselves. These challenges involved threats to dismiss the social workers, cut the resources intended for social work, nullify agreements previously established between the population and the different CDHU technical teams, terminate ongoing works and projects, and disregard the most vulnerable groups in the territory, among other setbacks.

The 'systematizing' bureaucrats, on the other hand, adopted articulation practices especially during the process of institutionalization of the slum upgrading projects. By knowing details of the implementation process, on the one hand, and by having a systemic perspective (attentive to the coherence of the policy design as a whole), on the other, they were important to promoting discussions among the bureaucrats of different CDHU technical teams. The dialogue among the teams allowed them to institutionalize governing workflows for upgrading and resettlement programs that took into account the need for continuous processes of popular participation and support for community organizations. As far as the bureaucrats of the 'politicizing' profile are concerned, they have adopted activist strategies of articulation within the state, although less frequently, given their focus on external social actors.

The strategies of 1b. 'network articulation at the state's borders' are more associated with bureaucrats of the politicizer, articulator, and facilitator profiles. Bureaucrats like Ana and Gabriela (politicizers and mobilizers/facilitators) used articulation strategies with social movements, local associations, arts and culture NGOs, and universities to strengthen social work. One such example was Ana's activist work to facilitate and build links between participants of a CDHU social project and the National Movement of Recyclable Materials Collectors (MNCR), in an attempt to encourage greater community autonomy and the strengthening of their collective action. At the same time, Ana held numerous meetings with city hall bureaucrats to ensure that the project was registered among the institutions qualified in the municipality to receive and sort recyclable materials.

The 'articulator' bureaucrats, in turn, also promoted activist strategies of articulation at the borders of the state, especially with community leaders and residents in the regions where projects were implemented by CDHU. Due to their connections inside and outside state organizations, the 'articulators' often also

adopted activist strategies of 04. 'mediating agreements' between community actors and state actors in CDHU. Due to frequent conflicting discussions and dynamics between community perspectives on CDHU's urban design and construction guidelines, the articulating bureaucrats frequently used mediation agreement strategies aimed at facilitating shared decisions. Although this strategy was also mentioned by bureaucrats of other profiles, the "articulators" were the main protagonists of this action repertoire. This result is in line with the argument of Olsson and Hysing (2012), who show how activist bureaucrats occupied a privileged position of mediation between networks of state and non-state actors.

The activist strategies of 02. 'experimentation with new solutions' were mentioned by different profiles of bureaucrats, especially 'politicizers', 'articulators' and 'facilitators/mobilizers.' Involving creative and collaborative efforts aimed at solving problems using the available relational and institutional resources, the experimentation strategies varied according to the profile of the bureaucrat. The 'politicizers' promoted experimentation predominantly related to the creation and functioning of participatory spaces, together with the community. Their main points of attention and action were: creating avenues for the popular choice of community representatives; creating incentives for participation and for the voicing of different perspectives by the citizens (so that these opinions could influence the implementation of the upgrading projects); and identifying and valuing local potentialities, as well as responding to challenges/needs found in the territory.

While the politicizers were responsible for several experiments linked to the creation of participatory spaces, the 'articulators' were the main agents of the gradual recognition of these spaces among the other technical teams of CDHU, as well as of the experimentation with incentives to consociated work (co-management of the programs) between social actors and the state, in its different technical areas. If conflicts of interest, the termination of actions/programs, and threats to participatory spaces were frequent in CDHU, the articulators were the actors most capable of experimenting with alternatives aimed at maintaining and institutionalizing the participatory agenda, thus facilitating communication and negotiations among the sectors. The articulators were also skilled in identifying windows of opportunity within CDHU, when the participatory

arenas could be recognized or legitimized by higher instances or institutional partners.

The experimentation strategies were also used by the 'facilitators/mobilizers.' Their actions were more focused on actions in the territory and, in general, related to local development pilot projects based on interactions with the community, community leaders, and NGO representatives. The various projects to foster local development resulted from specific and embryonic efforts that, over time, became viable and consolidated as the social team expanded its supporting coalitions and its legitimacy.

Finally, the activist strategies of 03. 'promoting adjustments' of a. 'greater or b. 'lesser visibility' were also necessary for the participatory arenas to materialize and become institutionalized, within an institutional setting adverse to participation. More or less explicit threats to social work were recurrent, either because slum upgrading was not a priority of CDHU, or because, following top management changes, social work was threatened with cuts in resources and staff by the administration. The adjustment strategies — of a. greater or b. less visibility — were used by the SSARU social team as a survival strategy, especially in the most adverse settings.

With regard to strategy 'a', greater visibility was given to social work as a way to highlight the reputation and legitimacy earned by SSARU over time, due to its capacity to act in the territories and solve problems. This occurred in different ways, such as publications, applications to national and international awards, strategic presentations to politicians and high decision makers in the state hierarchy, media coverage of the positive outcomes of social work, and partnerships with renowned universities and NGOs, among others. Demonstrations of institutional capacity and prestige in a particular network or political community contributed to SSARU maintaining its relative organizational autonomy and (sometimes) circumventing governmental pressures on CDHU. "We have to protect our work by giving visibility to our work", reported one SSARU bureaucrat.

In general, the strategies aimed at promoting greater visibility were used by the different profiles of bureaucrats interviewed, except for the 'systematizer' profile, whose role was more to support the 'articulators' than to lead such

strategies. The 'articulators' promoted actions of a greater visibility, especially for the directors and the top levels of the state government. The 'politicizers', in turn, reported on demonstrations of strength made through community mobilization for public protests or through advocacy in the legislature, both of which were capable of capturing the attention of the state government top managers to the reputation of SSARU's social work. The 'facilitators/mobilizers' generally promoted content about social work and grassroots participation, ranging from award entries to media reports.

Among the 'b' less visible strategies are the actions of adjustment to the current administration, or subversive actions, in which practices aimed at popular participation occurred in a less explicit way: outside the radar of top managers, in order to preserve the relative organizational autonomy of SSARU to conduct its actions. Another episode of subversive strategies being used was when social workers leaked information about public policy discontinuities to encourage the population to speak out against CDHU, which goes in the same direction as Rich's (2013) findings. The 'articulators', in general, used both subversive strategies of whistleblowing and strategies of adjustment to the administration, and adopted interaction styles focused on the construction of minimal agreements between the SSARU and other technical areas of CDHU. The 'politicizers' reported more subversive strategies of whistleblowing. The 'facilitators/mobilizers' would, at first, minimize their institutional connection to CDHU (and give less visibility to CDHU in their actions), as a way of getting closer to the community.

Despite heterogeneity in the characteristics of the bureaucrats and their activist strategies, it is thus possible to identify patterns between the profiles of the bureaucrats and the repertoires of activist action mentioned. The 'politicizers' centered their actions on the implementation of participatory arenas, and adopted more contentious repertoires of articulation at the state's borders, experimentation with solutions, and promotion of (higher) visibility adjustments. The 'facilitators/mobilizers,' who were more active in the territory, had activist repertoires similar to those of the politicizers, although in a more conciliatory and less contentious way. The 'systematizers' had a greater focus on the institutionalization of participatory arenas, through articulation strategies within the state — among CDHU's technical teams — based on conciliatory

interaction styles. Finally, the ‘articulators’ were the profiles with the most broad and diverse repertoires of activist action and the greatest incidence on policymaking (focused both on the creation and the institutionalization of participatory arenas), opting for more conciliatory actions, both inside and outside the state.

### **Closing remarks**

In order to understand how activist bureaucrats influenced the creation and institutionalization of participatory spaces, in an adverse institutional setting, this research obtained three main results. First, we identified four patterns of action of bureaucrats or four main activist strategies: 01. articulation of support in networks of state and non-state actors; 02. experimentation with new solutions; 03. promotion of adjustments of greater or lesser visibility; and 04. mediation of agreements. Second, we identified four distinct profiles of bureaucrats and their trajectories/biographies, worldviews, values, and perceptions regarding public policy.

The activist strategies of the bureaucrats stemmed from the creative use of relational and institutional resources available to their action in CDHU, leading to the production of unexpected policy outcomes, in a setting marked by the conservatism of subsequent administrations. Among the unexpected results, we highlight the creation and maintenance of participatory arenas of discussion between state and non-state actors in the implementation of public policies, in addition to the institutionalization of norms and procedures for action in informal settlements, whose policy design reorganized the decision making processes and informational flows through new deliberative forums.

Finally, this research allowed us to associate the activist strategies with certain profiles of bureaucrats. We identified that bureaucrats' worldviews, values, trajectories and biographies matter for the 01. adoption of activist strategies instead of others; 02. the greater or lesser mobilization of actors inside or outside the state; as well as 03. the use of more or less contentious interaction styles in relating to the state. In summary, ‘we argue that the characteristics of bureaucrats matter for the understanding of variations in activist repertoires’.

These findings, however, should be viewed with caution, since this research is limited to a single state organization. Future studies on institutional activism, which consider the characteristics of bureaucrats in other organizational-institutional settings, may be useful in order to analyze and test the arguments proposed here. We also highlight the need and importance of studies at the intersection of the research agendas on bureaucracy, bureaucratic activism, and state-society relations.

Translated by Thomás Abers Lourenço

Submitted on December 25, 2020

Accepted on May 03, 2022

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