

Activism among bureaucrats: creative social housing work in a conservative institutional setting

Transparency criteria and replicability

In addition to the content available in the paper's methodological section, here we provide further information and details, which are organized according to the criteria and aspects indicated by Sukumar and Metoyer (2010) and Aguinis and Solarino (2019).

It should be noted that the paper is part of a broader research work developed for my master's dissertation (SILVEIRA, 2018). In addition to the details provided in the paper and this document, more complementary information is available in the dissertation.

(1) Type of qualitative method: The study follows the pragmatist epistemology approach (ADLER; OBSTFELD, 2007; DIELEMAN, 2017; SIMPSON, 2018) and the grounded theory method (CHARMAZ, 2006). In line with the pragmatist approach, we have adopted a continuous investigation or “inquiry process” (DEWEY, 1896 apud SIMPSON, 2018), which involves a dynamic interplay between the theoretical references that guide the study and the empirical information gathered during fieldwork. Grounded theory, in turn, enabled us to create analytical categories inductively as we identified patterns in the field data.

(2) Research setting and context of the study: Fieldwork consisted in studying the social work carried out in three main slum upgrading projects promoted by the CDHU (“Pantanal”, “Serra do Mar”, and “Pimentas”), as already mentioned in the paper. Each project had a local field office, which enabled CDHU social workers, the local community, and other CDHU teams to be in continuous dialogue. Additionally, the SARU team also had a head office – located in the main building of the CDHU – in the municipality of São Paulo (in the city center). Therefore, the research was conducted in these different locations, including the central office and local or decentralized offices.

The CDHU social work team (or the SSARU team) is relatively well-known in the field for its legacy and institutional capacity for developing community participation and local development projects. In 2018 – when fieldwork was concluded – the SSARU team consisted of 37 outsourced social workers, 7 tenured public servants, and 1 appointed official/bureaucrat. Of the 37 outsourced workers, 28 are in field offices, while 9 work predominantly at the head office. The tenured public servants and the appointed bureaucrat worked in the head office (most of the time) and field offices (occasionally, as needed – i.e., in meetings with community leaders). Of the 37 outsourced social workers, 32 have worked at the SSARU for at least seven years. The longest-serving social worker has 20 years of experience, while those who entered the position more recently have three years of experience. Despite the outsourcing, the composition of the SSARU social team has been fairly stable, largely due to the SSARU’s relative autonomy in defining the teams’ makeup.

(3) The researcher’s position along the insider-outsider continuum: Since I was a social worker in the SSARU between 2014 and 2020, I was in the position of an insider in the setting under study. I started working at the SSARU in 2014, integrating the team responsible for supporting social work management, which is called “NAIC” (the Portuguese acronym for “Support Center for Information and Control”) and whose formal attribution is to manage data on social work and support management activities. I already knew most of the people I interviewed in the SSARU for my research due to my work, but I had not interacted much with them at work until then – except for those who were members of the NAIC, my co-workers. Everyone I approached was highly open to participating in the interviews: they were very willing to collaborate on the research and explain the details of policy implementation processes. The only issue was that some actors were overloaded with work, especially social managers, who were frequently interrupted to handle a request or urgent problem, both in field offices and the CDHU head office.

In general, people felt at ease sharing their perceptions, including a critical assessment of the work – most criticisms were directed at the CDHU or made a reference to the difficult interaction between the different technical areas; also, SSARU’s internal problems were mentioned several times (although such perceptions were not predominant among the interviewees).

The fact that I have worked at the SSARU and had free access to SSARU documents and information allowed me to gather various types of information, such as minutes of meetings, technical notes, databases, etc. Nevertheless, I sought to be prudent and get permission to use this information.

(4) Sampling procedures: As already mentioned in the methodology section, I used a purposive sample procedure (MERRIAM; TISDELL, 2016), which initially focused on bureaucrats (social workers) who had created participatory arenas in slum upgrading projects in the first slum upgrading project (the “Pantanal” case, one of the three aforementioned cases under study). Then, using a snowball sampling technique, we asked these first interviewees for names of other CDHU workers (SSARU social workers or workers in other CDHU sectors) or residents and local community leaders who were also directly or indirectly involved in the implementation of participatory arenas.

More precisely, the sampling process involved the following steps:

(i) In the case of the exploratory interviews, I sought people who were pioneers in developing certain SSARU social work activities (methodological frameworks) – most of them were mid-level bureaucrats, although two were street-level bureaucrats, thus a mix of tenured public servants and outsourced bureaucrats. These workers were the first to propose and develop participatory arenas where CDHU workers and the local community could jointly and constantly discuss about the upgrading slums projects, in hundreds of meetings with residents. They were also the first to propose that residents elect territorial community representatives and that training courses be offered for “community urbanization agents”. In short, they were pioneers in developing SSARU’s social work methodology – and, for this reason, they were the first people I contacted.

(ii) As for the semi-structured interviews, first I identified which were the social work activities, then I interviewed the workers in charge of executing and developing these activities, regardless of their being state actors (i.e., social workers) or non-state actors (such as community leaders). This methodological strategy allowed me to identify distinct “categories” of performance in social work

after the fieldwork had been concluded (thus without establishing *a priori* which categories or groups would be relevant to the analysis).

(iii) During the semi-structured interviews, I also asked interviewees to name some people linked to social work that would be interesting for me to contact (snowball method). These referrals allowed for this round of interviews to be carried out and concluded.

(4.1) Preliminary or pilot study: I used the exploratory interviews as a preliminary or pilot study not only to sharpen the research question but also to identify the various aspects that could be addressed in the research. This pilot study was important also because it enabled me to receive feedback for the next interviews and gather more knowledge on the three upgrading slum projects under study. Therefore, these exploratory interviews provided information about the (i) historical contexts of the slum upgrading projects (how the informal settlement and the slum upgrading project began; how community leaders organized themselves to address collective problems; how CDHU workers interacted with them) and about (ii) the different issues that social workers and the community had to address to implement participatory arenas and influence the upgrading slum project and the policy-making processes. This information – collected previously through the exploratory interviews – enabled me to adjust the subsequent interview scripts and the research design.

(5) Relative importance of the participants/cases: The final sample consisted of 58 people: 35 bureaucrats in the CDHU's social sector (social workers), 8 bureaucrats from other CDHU technical areas (sectors), 10 local community leaders, 4 citizens (local residents) who participate in CDHU social projects, and 1 representative of the partner institution. Each “type” of interviewee was a key informant on different dimensions analyzed in the research. The main group interviewed for this study was SSARU social workers, as they were most active in proposing and creating participatory arenas. However, they have done this work only because they actively got involved with state and non-state networks. Social workers engaged in networking activities with residents, community leaders, and other CDHU workers (in different sectors). Therefore, these other agents (whom I also interviewed) offered important information on how the policy implementation

process occurred. Moreover, local community leaders and residents presented their points of view concerning SSARU social workers' actions. Their perceptions improved my understanding of the implementation processes and provided different insights regarding the topics under study. Similarly, the interviews with bureaucrats from other CDHU technical areas (sectors) also helped make sense of the work and information flows between social workers and other CDHU teams.

(6) Documenting interactions with participants and making research notes: Most of the interviews were recorded (in all the cases where interviewees allowed it), totaling 105 hours of audio interviews. Most interviews ranged from 1 hour and 30 minutes to 2 hours. There were, however, shorter interviews (30 minutes), and longer interviews, of which the longest took 7 hours, due to the level of detail shared by the interviewee about the implementation of social work activities, in three different upgrading slum projects. In some interviews, I chose not to record the conversation in audio so the interviewee would feel more comfortable expressing his or her opinions, making the conversation more fluid. Before the interviews, I always informed each interviewee about the research objective and made it clear that I would protect the confidentiality of the source, a research ethics protocol. In line with a standard form of research method, I chose to keep all names anonymous, and, when referring to a specific actor, I used pseudonyms.

During the interviews, I had a notebook in which I took notes about the topics being discussed, associating them to the specific moment in the recording (in minutes) whenever the interviewee mentioned an aspect relevant to my research. After the conversations were over, I transcribed the interviews and listened again to moments in the audio that were of most interest to the research.

Additionally, at the end of each interview, whenever possible, I tried to register my impressions about that interview in my field notebook, where I considered some aspects of the conversation I had just had: reactions and important expressions by the interviewee, relevant details about the setting/situation in which we talked, aspects highlighted by the interviewee, additional questions or reflections I had after that interview, and other aspects mentioned by the interviewee that were important for answering my research question and analyzing the cases under study.

The collected data was transcribed and coded, following the procedures described below, in item 9.

As for participant observation, it involved (i) meetings in which I participated, (ii) field visits – when I followed social workers in their daily routines, and (iii) my own routine as a social worker in the CDHU head office. In the first two cases, I registered the meetings in pictures and took field notes, paying special attention to the interactions between social workers and other state and non-state actors. These notes helped me not only reach a better understanding of the interplay between SSARU social workers and other actors but also identify multiple working styles and approaches from each bureaucrat.

(7) Saturation point: The criteria adopted for saturation were twofold: (i) when the information provided by the interviewees – on the implementation of social work activities/initiatives – converged to common processes and facts (even though they have presented different perceptions of these facts); and (ii) when I had completed the interviews with all the main state and non-state actors involved in the creation and implementation of the participatory arenas.

(8) Unexpected opportunities, challenges, and other events: During fieldwork, different unexpected dynamics occurred in CDHU offices – which somehow influenced the research work. The unforeseen events included unscheduled fieldwork visits, emergency meetings due to problems on a given urban project, and several requests from residents, among other events. These unforeseen events occurred at the time of my scheduled interviews with SSARU bureaucrats. On the one hand, my research schedule was delayed by these events, but on the other hand, I could take advantage of this and accompany SSARU bureaucrats in the field (as a participant observer). Because of these unforeseen situations, I was able to observe how social workers reacted to unexpected demands from residents and community leaders, how they interacted with other CDHU technical areas/sectors, and what strategies they used to solve certain problems and defend the social participation agenda in adverse settings. Ultimately, the unforeseen situations became an opportunity that allowed me to be a participant observer and identify important procedural aspects of the implementation dynamics.

(9) Data coding and analysis: The audio recordings were transcribed, and the text was coded using the software NVIVO. In the coding process, I adopted a grounded approach, which consisted of mainly two steps.

Firstly, I conducted an open-ended coding procedure, following the interviewees' answers and perceptions of the implementation of social work activities/initiatives, according to the interview script – which is available in this document (see the Appendix section).

Secondly, I recoded the excerpts, restructuring them into the following 10 main analytical dimensions: (1) main strategies used; (2) policy learning (3) failures, difficulties, and criticisms regarding policy implementation; (4) social work activities/ implementation processes; (5) comparisons between the 3 upgrading slum projects – Pantanal, Serra do Mar, and Pimentas; (6) characteristics of slum upgrading projects; (7) territory: contextual characteristics of each project; (8) bureaucrats' profile; (9) CDHU organizational and institutional setting; (10) perceptions by citizens (concerning CDHU projects and social work). Subcategories specifying some related aspects were created for each dimension, as the coding structure shows (see Appendix).

After the coding process was concluded, data analysis consisted of a cross-analysis between bureaucrats' main profiles and their responses when implementing policies. This strategy enabled the identification of patterns of strategies according to bureaucrats' profiles, as presented in the discussion section of the paper.

(10) Data disclosure and ethical issues: The interviews were conducted following confidentiality and anonymity procedures. For this reason, the research findings are presented with the use of “vignettes”, in which we offered fictitious cases (MØLLER, 2018; HARRITS, 2016). In what concerns data disclosure, we did not publicize the raw material (transcribed interviews) used in the analysis in order to preserve confidentiality and anonymity. However, we provided contextual information, giving the reader more details on the institutional setting and actors' work or strategies.

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Appendix:

A - Interview script:

In the case of the semi-structured interviews, I followed the script transcribed below; however, depending on the circumstances (interruptions for various reasons, such as phone calls, requests from residents in the field, etc.), one or more questions were occasionally adjusted.

The questions about the “actor’s trajectory” were also adjusted if the interviewee was a non-state actor: instead of asking about their professional trajectory, I asked the agent/actor about their trajectories in their specific field of activity (community organization, union movement, etc.).

Main script:

1. Tell me a little about your professional trajectory (before and after joining the SSARU social team).
2. What are your current daily responsibilities/activities?
3. Do you have the autonomy to act creatively?
4. Have you suggested new practices and methodologies for social work? How was this embedded into the daily work procedures?
5. How do you see your role in the context of the social work and slum upgrading projects as a whole?
6. In your perception, what are the main issues regarding social participation, concerning: (i) the discussion of upgrading slum projects, (ii) resettlement processes, and (iii) activities for local development.
7. What are the main demands, criticisms, and expectations of the population in these different territories, in your perception?
8. What qualities/skills, your professional characteristics, do you consider relevant for the implementation of social work activities?
9. What are the objectives of social work in your perception? How did the SSARU team implement the social work activities, and how social work activities could be improved, in your opinion?

10. What are the main aspects that hinder or limit your performance?
Describe a conflict situation in the social work context, where things did not turn out as you expected.
11. How is, in your perception, the relationship/interface between the different CDHU technical areas? What are the main difficulties?
12. Is there anything else you would like to comment on?

B - Coding structure:

Categories	Subcategories
1) Bureaucrats' strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mobilizing support from other actors Experimentation Promoting visibility adjustments Mediating or brokering agreements Adjustments to the administration / avoiding confrontation with top managers
2) Policy learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learning related to policy methodologies (social work) Peer-to-peer learning and ways to approach citizens Institution building Policy diffusion Experiences and learning from each of the 3 projects (Pantanal, Serra do Mar, and Pimentas) Experimentation and incrementalism (gradual change) Exchange of ideas between projects Learnings on how to promote social participation Work planning according to community/local needs Learnings that take place in the relations with other CDHU sectors/technical areas
3) Failures, difficulties, and criticisms regarding policy implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Standardized attendance Problems related to the exit of SSARU bureaucrats and managers Problems related to the resettlement of families Lack of integration between the SSARU and other technical areas Challenges related to the existence of heterogeneous local community interests CDHU higher managers not committed to participatory arenas Citizens' dissatisfaction Issues related to participatory activities' dates and times
4) Social work activities/ implementation processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social diagnosis studies (first registry of the population who lived in the territory before the CDHU project began) Daily attendance Community agent training Community agents and community leaders Social workers' skills Social work database (registry of social workers' interactions with families) Community communication Consolidation of the social work methodology over time Community leaders' territorial election Strengthening community networks Building participatory instances (processes and difficulties) Social workers' innovations Urbanization Operational Nucleus (NOU) implementation processes Local development projects promoted by the SSARU Support for landholding regularization

Categories	Subcategories
	Resettlement of families
	Meetings with citizens
5) Comparisons between the 3 projects	Favorable conditions in Pantanal slum upgrading project
	Favorable conditions in Serra do Mar slum upgrading project
	Project adjustments
6) Characteristics of slum upgrading projects	Positive project outcomes
	Negative project outcomes
7) Territory: contextual characteristics of each project	Pantanal's context and history
	Serra do Mar's context and history
	Pimentas' context and history
	Historical processes of community organization
	Historical processes of conflicts in the areas (between interest groups)
	Trajectory / biography
8) Bureaucrats' profiles	Background and professionalism
	Social workers' perceptions of their roles in the public policy
	Social workers' perceptions of Social Work goals
	Social workers' relational skills
	Social workers' values and beliefs
	Social workers' practices
	Specificities of mid-level bureaucrats
	Specificities of street-level bureaucrats
	Relations among bureaucrats
	Interaction styles
	Social workers' practices
	Organizational and institutional factors inside the SSARU sector
9) CDHU organizational and institutional setting	Relations between other CDHU sectors
	Relations between bureaucrats and political appointees
	Influence by the federal government (regarding upgrading slum projects)
	Influence by international organizations (regarding upgrading slum projects)
	Positive and negative perceptions of the upgrading slum projects
10) Perceptions by citizens (concerning CDHU projects and social work)	Criticisms and distrust of the government or state actors
	Issues related to the resettlement of families
	Issues related to social work activities
	Concerns about the maintenance of the new public spaces after construction work is completed.