

The London School of Economics and Political Science

Dynamics of policy change: Three Italian cases.

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A thesis submitted to the Department of Management of the
London School of Economics for the degree of Doctor of
Philosophy, London, April 2014

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Abstract

The common research interest of this thesis's chapters is the dynamics of policy change in the context of the Italian governmental system. The collection of three published papers each included as a chapter in the core of the thesis is preceded by an introduction explaining the theoretical approach and research strategy. The chapters are consistent in following a middle-range processual theory of the politics of public policy decisions in a country case, an event-centric approach to explaining policy choice and an elite-interviewing approach to data collection.

The first two chapters, respectively entitled "Government Innovation Policy in Italy (1993-2002): Understanding the Invention and Persistence of a Public Management Reform" and "Dynamics of Electronic Government Policies: The case of Italy (1992-2003)", examine the dynamics of public management policy change in Italy over the period of a decade, employing the case of the Policy for Government Innovation and the case of the Electronic-Government Policy. The analysis of these two newly reported cases of enduring public management reform is suited to question the argument set by previous literature; that the country's legalistic administrative culture inevitably suppresses meaningful reform. In particular, the chapters set forth two significant reservations about this argument, namely that the outcomes of public management reform initiatives are more varied than the current literature shows and the theoretical approach in the established literature attributes exaggerate causal influence to the governmental system's legalistic traditions.

The third chapter, entitled "Explaining the Unexpected Success of the Smoking Ban in Italy: Political Strategy and Transition to Practice", analyzes the episode that unfolds in a domain that addresses a general interest reform, very visible to public opinion, unlike public management reform. The chapter follows the issue beyond the pre-decisional stage, uncovering the dynamics of transition to practice: a phase between the formal passage and the full application of a law.

A concluding section compares the three chapters, explores the interactions between analytically significant features of the Italian context and the policy cycle, and distils analytical refinements to the notion of policy entrepreneurship.

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INTRODUCTION

The research interest of this dissertation lies in the dynamics of policy change in the context of the Italian governmental system. The chapters I have selected adopt the same theoretical framework, institutional processualism, and are consistent in following a middle-range processual theory of the politics of public policy decisions in a country case, an event-centric approach to explaining policy choice and an elite-interviewing approach to data collection. The dissertation, in line with its chosen format, includes three self-contained chapters, in the sense that they can be read and understood independently. Each includes its own review of the relevant literature and a brief account of the research strategy. Each analyses a different episode of policy change in the country setting of Italy.

The first two chapters, respectively focused on the policy-making process of Innovation in government (1993-2002) and of the policy for Electronic Government (1992-2003), examine the dynamics of these two instances of public management policy change in Italy over the period of a decade. The third chapter, focused on the policy process of the Smoking ban in Italy (2000-2005) analyzes an episode that unfolds in the healthcare domain and that addresses a general interest reform - very visible to public opinion.

I have organized the thesis in three main parts. The three empirical chapters represent the core of the thesis. They are preceded by an introduction, which sets the analytical premises of this work. It defines the unit of analysis - public policy and public change, it reviews theories of policy change and explains the theoretical tenets of the selected framework - institutional processualism (IP) - assessing its strengths and limitations. Next, it accounts for the methodological strategies employed to analyse the empirical cases. In particular, it explains the challenges faced when turning sheer

volumes of empirical data in a policy narrative and when constructing the corpus of data through documentary analysis and elite interviewing. It then sets the scene for the policy episodes by introducing the main elements of the Italian political and administrative system. Last, it previews the empirical cases and provides the rationale for their inclusion in the thesis.

The empirical chapters are followed by a concluding section, which compares the dynamics of policy change across the cases. The conclusion starts by spelling out the main differences between healthcare and public management and then moves to the case comparison. Last, it explores the interactions between features of the Italian context and the policy cycle and it distils analytical refinements to the notion of policy entrepreneurship.

Policy, Policy Change and Institutional Processualism

Defining policy and policy change

I am going to start with some definitional clearance. In the context of the notoriously pluralistic research on *policy* (for a review see Dye 1972; Feldman 1978; Hogwood and Gunn 1984; Pal 2010, Parsons 1995), I take as a starting point a well-known definition according to which “policy at its simplest can be conceived as a choice made by governments to undertake some course of action or inaction” (Howlett and Ramesh 2003, 3). None of the substantive terms in this formulation, however, speaks for itself and therefore I offer some commentary to elucidate the meaning it holds. First, choice here is not conceptualized as a determinant moment so much as a process through which issues and problems come to be defined and constructed (Colebatch 2002). In other words, it is a way for actors, both participants and observers, to make sense of (Majone 1989; Fischer and Forester 1993) and contribute to the governing process.

Second, understanding policy also requires a focus on inaction (Hecllo 1972) or, more precisely, on non-decisions (Hill 2005). In turn, the policy process can be analyzed from a variety of epistemological and disciplinary perspectives (for a review see Fischer 2007; Peters and Pierre 2006), which can be broadly categorized in:

- analysis *in* and *for* the policy process, i.e. employing analytical techniques, often grounded in microeconomics, and research to support problem definition, decision-making, evaluation and implementation;
- analysis *of* the policy process, which turns its attention to “*how* problems are defined, agenda set, policy formulated, decisions made and policy evaluated and implemented” (Parsons, 1995 *xvi*).

The research interest of this dissertation clearly falls within the second broad category. The need to chart the otherwise intractable complexity of the policy process has led scholars to narrow the scope of their analyses to specific components that, in turn, reflect different ontologies of policy-making. A (non-exhaustive) list of such components include power and its distribution among groups, as in the pluralist-elitist approaches; the network of relevant policy actors; the language employed in policy-making, such as in the works drawing from the theories of Foucault and Habermas; and the phases of the policy process, as in the ‘stagist approach’.

This latter approach to policy analysis, so widely adopted that it is referred to as ‘the textbook approach’ (Nakamura, 1987), considers the policy process as evolving through discrete stages. Initially put forward by Lasswell (1956) the model is comprised of seven stages: intelligence, promotion, prescription, invocation, application, termination, and appraisal. Subsequently several scholars revised and developed the model (Brewer and DeLeon 1983; Wildavsky 1978), mostly adding or specifying sub-stages. Over time these variations have coalesced in a conventional conception of the

policy process organized in the chronological stages of agenda-setting, policy formulation, decision-making, implementation, and evaluation, eventually leading to termination (Colebatch 2002; DeLeon and Martell 2006; Parsons 1995). Lastly, the input-output model has given a cyclical twist to the stages model; the outputs of policy processes perpetually feedback on inputs resulting in the so-called policy cycle (Jann and Wegrich, 2007). By simplifying the complex policy process, the stagist approach has had the uncontested merit to enable and stimulate research on the specific stages, especially agenda setting and implementation.

At the same time, the stagist approach raises analytical problems that have not remained unnoticed. Specifically, critiques have developed along two main lines. One critique contends that the stagist approach cannot be considered a theory as it falls short of providing any causal explanation of how policy moves from one stage to another (Sabatier 1988, 2005). Second, with its artificial sequencing, it fails to provide a realistic account of how policy-making unfolds. Scholars seem to agree unanimously on this second reservation. However, the conclusions they draw differ markedly. Some conclude that the approach should in fact be disregarded as its deceptive focus on top-down decisions and its narrow scope on one policy cycle at a time exacerbates the dichotomy between theory and practice (Nakamura 1987; Sabatier 1991, 2005). Others acknowledge that policy does not evolve in a clear-cut pattern and that sequences are enmeshed in an ongoing process (Howlett and Ramesh 1995; Jann and Wegrich 2007). Nevertheless, they resort to the stages as a heuristic device “persuasive because of its neatness” (Colebatch 2002, 85) that enables the construction of a model with which we can explore public policy¹. In the words of Parsons, “to imagine that public policy can

¹ Only a few scholars maintain that the *stagist* approach is not (only) a heuristic device and defend its analytical bearing, claiming that a framework’s contribution to the understanding of the policy process does not stem only from its ability to highlight causality. They suggest that the framework should be evaluated against its ability to generate insight about the nature of policymaking and stimulate discourse

be reduced to such oversimplified stages has more methodological holes than a sack-load of Swiss cheese. However it is not without its advantages and should not be abandoned lightly” (1995: 80). Since contemporary policy analysis is multi-framed, the stagist approach affords a structure within which we may adjust the multiplicity of perspectives “with the provision that, when we deploy it as a heuristic device, we remember that it has all the limitations of any map or metaphor” (Parsons 1995, 80).

Each stage provides a context within which we can deploy different frames. In particular, the stage of agenda setting has become almost a metonymy for policy change. This characterization is likely the result of the fact that change in agenda setting is “permanent and structural, because no problem can remain on an agenda forever” (Rayner 2009, 87). More often than not, the pre-decisional and decisional stages are clustered together as they complement one another (Schlager 2005). Therefore, works on agenda setting – that is to say the move of an issue from its recognition to the formal political agenda (Jann and Wegrich 2007) – also include policy adoption.

Starting in the mid-1980s, the discontinuities at the level of agenda setting started to attract scholarly attention (Dudley et Al. 2000). Three strands, namely the multiple streams theory (Kingdon 1984), the punctuated equilibrium theory (Baumgartner and Jones 1993) and the advocacy coalition framework (Sabatier 1988), have become so mainstream they are conventionally referred to as ‘theories of policy change’.

The stated research interest of my thesis, ‘dynamics of policy change’ conforms to this convention and acknowledges that the distinction between ‘normal theories’ and ‘theories of policy change’ is a fictitious one (Capano 2009). In order to understand the

about public problems (DeLeon, 1999; DeLeon and Martell 2006) and in this respect the stagist approach has proven to be a valuable framework. In the same vein, others highlight that Laswell’s approach has been unduly reduced to the identification of the stages, while his conception of policy was much more sophisticated and involved the wider context of problems, social process, values and institutional structures within which policy-making and policy analysis unfolded (Parsons 1995).

nature of change, in fact, it is also necessary to understand and explain the persistence of the object of analysis. Therefore, any theory of change ought to attend to both constancy and change (Hernes 1976).

Theories of policy change

Expectations of typical patterns of policy change in the three approaches vary and I will proceed to outline them schematically (for a review of the three approaches see Parsons 1995, 192-207; for their comparative analysis see John 2003; Nowlin 2011; and Real-Dato 2009). Policy change in the multiple streams approach (Kingdon 1984) is associated with the coupling of three independent streams flowing in parallel – problems, policy and the political context. Change depends on the opening of an opportunity window for policy entrepreneurs to adopt solutions that have typically been developed in the community of policy experts (Barzelay and Gallego 2010; Howlett 1998; Travis and Zahariadis 2002; Zahariadis 2005). In punctuated equilibrium theory (Baumgartner and Jones 1993), change results from the breakdown of institutionalized policy monopolies. Dominant participants safeguard policy monopolies by constructing positive policy images about one issue until change entrepreneurs or exogenous events subvert the issue image and the conflict expands beyond the boundaries of the policy subsystem (Baumgartner et Al. 2006; Baumgartner et Al. 2009; Givel 2006; John 2006; Jones and Baumgartner 2012; McBeth et Al. 2007; Walgrave and Vliegthart 2010; Walgrave and Varone 2008). Last, the advocacy coalition framework (Sabatier 1988) offers an account of policy change resulting from an alteration of policy beliefs shared within a constellation of actors that form a policy coalition. The alteration is normally triggered either by exogenous shocks that challenge the dominant core beliefs or by

policy learning within the coalition (Albright 2011; Matti et Al. 2011; Shanahan et Al. 2011; Weible 2007; Weible et Al. 2009).

These strands have mostly proceeded along tracks remarkably separated from one another (John 2003; Real-Dato 2009). However, their common focus is on how public policy develops over time in regards to the dynamics of policy change and policy continuity. In particular, these strands are committed to grasping the multidimensional character of public policy and “genuinely consider public policy as a complex phenomenon and not simply as an output of macro-factors” (Capano 2009, 8). In doing so they have become so mainstream (Capano 2009; Real-Dato 2009; Nowlin 2011) they have prompted some scholars to pose the provoking question: “is there life after policy streams, advocacy coalitions and punctuation?” (John 2003). The question seems to suggest that studies on policy change may have reached their climax with the three theories but, at the same time, it is also symptomatic of the discontent that has begun to emerge in the scholarship (John 2003; Howlett and Cashore 2009; Cashore and Howlett 2007; Real-Dato 2009). In particular, it raises awareness of the limitations of current theories of policy change taken separately and to the letter, such as their weak explanatory power and the substantial lack of communication (John 2003; Real-Dato 2009).

Promising signs that scholars are engaging with these frameworks, as opposed to adopting them uncritically, have started to appear. In spite of the differences among research questions and empirical settings under investigation, a strand of research has offered an alternative viewpoint in response to these theoretical challenges, i.e. “a greater degree of conceptual reconciliation among approaches” (Roness 2009, 50) previously considered, if not incompatible, at least alternative. Some scholars have attempted to overcome the relative insulation in which the three theories have incubated

for several years by including elements from each one to form a new synthesis of policy change (Nowlin 2011; Real-Dato 2009). Others have displayed a remarkable level of analytical craftsmanship in complementing one theory with components taken from parallel disciplinary traditions, e.g. historical institutionalism (Ackrill and Kay 2011; Borràs and Radaelli 2011; Eberlein and Radaelli 2010; Barzelay and Gallego 2006, 2010).

Blending theories in the social sciences is not peculiar to research on policy change (Giddens 1979; Lamont and Molnar 2002)². This debate is particularly well established in the field of organizational analysis, where Pettigrew and Reed have recommended *integrationism* (Reed 1985, 185) and *contextualism* (Pettigrew 1985, 42) as strategies to provide a more systematic account of organizational structures as the outcomes of a continuous process in which members are faced and deal with constraints that limit their design options. The same focus on process is what may have also encouraged in policy studies the development of *hybrid theories* that combine two or more explanations of change (Poole et Al. 2000). The palette of options³ include, among others, *nesting* or *complementing* theories (Hall and Taylor 1996) as well as *synthesizing* them (Campbell and Pedersen 2001, 264) in a way that blurs their boundaries. Notwithstanding some methodological differences, the underlying premises of these approaches are shared and rest on the shift of the function of theory, from *truth providing* to that of *insights-seeking* or “how much insight and understanding can be extracted from the constellation of theories generated from the several paradigms in use” (Rones 2009, 50). The European Union is undoubtedly a level of governance whose study has generated a fruitful dialogue among theories (Juppilè et Al. 2003;

² The very notion of ‘disciplined imagination’ of Weick rests on the possibility to import metaphors from other domains for theory building (for a more recent discussion see Cornelissen 2006).

³ See Rones for a taxonomy of ‘hybridization’ research strategies devised to handle theoretical diversity in political sciences (2009, pp. 45-62). See also the paragraph on *Models of theoretical dialogue* in Juppilè et Al. (2003, pp. 19-24 and the synoptic table, pp.29-30).

Risse 2002; Schneider and Aspinwall 2001). Illustrative of this scholarly inclination, Juppille et al. offer a magisterial account of how to complement the “real but surmountable divide” (2003, 15) between rationalism and constructivism to explain policymaking in the EU:

“Our goal is to help develop middle-range social scientific approaches and not to engage in arguments at the level of abstract meta-theory. We well appreciate that there are big and (possibly) unresolvable issues dividing some proponents of the two institutionalisms. Yet we are also well aware that [...] from a problem-driven, empirically oriented perspective, such divides rapidly begin to melt away. The starting point of the analysis moves from ‘either/or’ to ‘both/and’, with the latter pushing questions of scope and domains of application to the fore” (2003, 16).

In summary, complementing theories opens promising research avenues, often paved with more realistic assumptions than the original theories, to understand how policy processes unfold. My dissertation shares this broad orientation, for it largely draws its conceptual foundations from a framework: *institutional processualism* (Barzelay 2003; Barzelay and Gallego 2006, 2010a, 2010b), that has combined different explanatory components from various theories.

Analyzing policy change with institutional processualism

The analytical understanding of public policy change proposed by institutional processualism (IP) adopts the spirit of comparative historical analysis in the social sciences (Mahoney and Rueschemeyer 2003) and combines “Kingdon’s institutional processual theory of discrete policy-making episodes, an institutional model of ongoing policy-making in partial equilibrium situations and a processual model of organizational learning” (Barzelay and Gallego 2006, 543). In this section, I first account for my own exploration of the broader analytical debates in social sciences to clarify the theoretical

premises of the framework, then present the understandings of the scholarship committed to this particular logic of doing research on policy change. Last, I discuss some of its specific limitations.

Analytical coordinates of institutional processualism

The conceptual foundations of the selected framework chapters can be spelled out as *middle-range processual approach to explain the dynamics of policy change*. Above, I discussed the object of analysis - public policy change. Let me unpack the rest of the formulation by specifying the connotation of the component terms.

First, by embracing a *processual* approach, this work recognizes that processes are embedded in contexts, that context and action are strictly interrelated and that process analysis must be linked to the explanation of outcomes (these requirements are discussed at length in the *manifesto* for a processual analysis by Pettigrew, 1997). Correspondingly, the conceptualization of policy change is not limited to a modification in the content of a policy program as much as the overall *process of policy development*⁴.

A focus on the process of policy change entails a full appreciation of its temporal dimension (Abbott 2001; Howlett and Rayner 2006; Mahoney and Thelen 2010; Pierson 2004; Pollitt 2008). Temporality, in turn, is a term that requires qualification. Here it is not associated to the basic notion of calendar time (i.e.

⁴ A processual understanding of policy change has not always been the dominant one. Rayner characterizes the notion of policy change before the advent of new institutionalism of various types, and historical in particular: “[policy change] was understood to be anything more than the observable differences between a series of snapshots taken at different points in time – comparative statics – and was usually accommodated within the ‘general linear reality’ characteristic of positivist approaches to policy analysis” (2009, 83). In the often quoted words of Abbott, the general linear reality view of the social world “as made up of fixed, given entities with variable properties” – cases and variables – in which outcomes consist of the succession of the values of a dependent property or properties over time” (Abbott 1990: 141). Hence, policy decisions are regarded as the outcomes of stochastic processes resulting from the combination of specific sets of variables. Processes pass through time which is conceived of as a ‘frictionless medium’ (Rayner 2009, 84) and not as an explanatory factor in its own right.

chronology) as much as to periodization that “must accommodate complex emplotment involving a variety of linkages between events” (Rayner 2009, 87). Further, understanding temporality requires an appreciation of the relative magnitudes of the different temporal processes (i.e. temporal scales). The framework acknowledges that there is a “looming presence of the heavy hand of the past” (Pettigrew 1997, 341) in current policy making since antecedent conditions shape the present and the emerging future. Often actors respond to recurring enduring problems that persist over time by selecting among the options they have inherited from the past (Rayner 2009): “policy trajectories change while being embedded in previous policy legacies” (Howlett and Rayner 2006, 14). Sometimes policy memory (Kay 2006) comes as familiarity or *habitus* of the policymakers with a certain issue (Bourdieu 1984).

Institutional processualism can be defined as a *middle-range approach* (Merton 1949) which entails, by definition, coming to terms with the impossibility of identifying a grand theory that is key to explaining all social phenomena. In the words of Boudon, “middle-range means it is hopeless and quixotic to try to determine the overarching independent variable that would operate in all social processes” (1991, 519). At the same time, it signals (Geels 2007; Mills 1959) a general malaise against “mere empiricism of little worth” (Boudon 1991, 520), that is to say drafting inventories of low-level empirical propositions focused on data-collection and statistical runs to find correlations between variables. In synthesis, the academic pitching of a middle-range theory witnesses the attempt of distancing from undesirable extremes, to offer a way out from the same old idiographic-nomothetic divide and by providing a conception of theory that “explains, consolidates and federates empirical regularities which on their side would otherwise appear segregated” (Boudon 1991, 520).

The framework is set to *explain* policy dynamics. Yet, what counts as a valid explanation needs to be specified. Notwithstanding the marked differences between disciplines - above all between social-scientific and historical approaches over what is an appropriate explanation - a structure of any explanation lies on two pillars (Kay 2006; Van Parijs 1981), namely *causality* and *intelligibility*.

Causality entails identifying a causal link between facts. If we assume that the social world is made up of situated actions or social relations, phenomena are not linked to one another but are entangled in social time and social space or “interactional fields” (Abbott 2001, 123). Therefore, explanations should give us an account of how interactional fields work. This account will be combinative, searching not for an independent variable but for possible combinations of causal conditions capable of generating a specific outcome or ‘multiple conjunctural causations’ (Ragin 1987). As such, it will require that we understand the context that enables or disables specific individual causes (Ragin 2006). This account, however, cannot be ‘purely causal’ (Abbott 2001, 123) because it should include two interrelated aspects that irremediably challenge the strong determinism intrinsic to most theoretical analysis in the social sciences (Capano 2009). On the one hand, there are free action and choice (Abbott 2001) bound to some degree of unexpectedness but nevertheless prone to be analyzed and unpacked since, as submitted by Czarniawska, “unpredictability does not imply inexplicability” (2004, 13). On the other hand, we have possibility or chance that in the social sciences is generally considered “a very unwelcome guest, ubiquitous but studiously concealed, ignored and even denied the right to exist” (Boudon 1986, 179). Boudon warns us that free action and possibility are not to enter in our accounts as a set of variables but should inform our understanding of events as structural characteristics of certain causal chains.

The second pillar of any explanation is intelligibility, which enables answering the ‘why’ question by identifying the mechanism(s) through which the causal link is produced. As Kay eloquently put it, “we cannot explain without understanding, where this consists of imagining a plausible mechanism through which the fact to be explained is brought about, created or produced” (2006, 59). The plausibility or types of mechanisms vary depending on the conventions of each disciplinary field. An accepted pattern of intelligibility is an explanation resting on types of causal mechanisms conforming to the standards recognized by the academic community. In turn, causal mechanisms (Gerring 2007; Hédstrom & Swedberg 1996; Mayntz 2004) “Ontologically speaking [...] refer to recurrent processes linking specified initial conditions and a specific outcome” (Mayntz 2004, 241) or an *explanandum*. The appeal of mechanisms as “micro-foundational causal analysis” (Gerring 2007, 175) rests on their middle ground positioning between pure description and social laws (Coleman 1964; Hédstrom & Swedberg 1996). Put differently, mechanisms are more general than the phenomena they subsume. It is exactly this reference to a more general category that delivers intelligibility.

I now turn to the second task of this section, which discusses the purpose and the understandings of the selected framework.

The understandings of institutional processualism

Institutional processualism has co-evolved over the last decade with a research program on the comparative historical analysis of public management policy cycles (Barzelay 2003; Barzelay and Gallego 2006, 2010a, 2010b), focused on recent episodes of public management policymaking. These episodes are located in different administrative settings at the national level, including the US, Mexico, Brazil, Thailand, Germany,

France, Spain, and Italy and supra-national level as in the case of the EU Commission. The episodes also differ in the areas of public management object of the reform efforts, including administrative modernization, over-bureaucratization, strategic planning, streamlining, innovation and ICT in public sector, planning and control of public expenditure, and development policy. Variety is also displayed in the features of the stable context - i.e. whether the form of state is a presidential or parliamentary democracy or a constitutional monarchy - and of the context 'in motion' – whether, for example, the public sector is contracting or expanding or whether the country is undergoing devolution or a unification process.

Two journal symposia have been the milestones in terms of theoretical development and publication of empirical studies patterned on the framework⁵ and a number of articles have employed it outside those two explicitly comparative endeavors⁶. These studies represent a homogeneous *corpus* of literature from an analytical and methodological perspective⁷. Utilizing a common framework, all the contributions seek to explain the trajectories and outcomes of the selected episodes of policymaking, mostly through not exclusively in the domain of public management. The processual nature of the framework, discussed above, makes it geared to provide generalized causal accounts about how policy outcomes, the *explananda*, result from the concatenation of cause and effect relationships, where the *explanans* include joint combinations of the results of past actions, process design features, and context factors.

⁵The first milestone was a journal symposium in *IPMJ* (Barzelay 2003; Barzelay and Fuechtner 2003; Cejudo 2003; Gaetani 2003; Gallego 2003; Malee 2003; Moynihan 2003) and the second, a comparative historical analysis of public management policy change in the setting of Southern-European Countries, was published as a journal symposium in *Governance* (Barzelay and Gallego 2010a, 2010b; Corbett 2010; Mele 2010)

⁶ Asquer 2012; Barzelay and Gallego 2006; Barzelay and Schvets 2006; Barzelay and Jacobsen 2009; Butler et Al. 2010; Corbett 2005; Mele 2010; Mele and Ongaro 2014; Natalini and Stolfi 2012.

⁷ This hardly needs explanation for the studies published in the journal symposia. As for those adopting the framework without partaking in the research programs, their alignment may have been facilitated by the frequent and articulated stocktaking exercises (Barzelay 2003; Barzelay and Gallego 2006, 2010a, 2010b).

Strong analogies with the epistemological occupations of new-institutionalism in political sciences, principally with the historical strand (Mahoney and Thelen 2010; Pierson 2004; Streeck and Thelen, 2005; Thelen 2003) and moderately with the organizational-sociological strand (DiMaggio and Powell 1983; March and Olsen 1989; March 1994; Powell 1991; Sahlin-Andersson 2002) have warranted to this processualist framework the label of ‘institutional’ (for a review of the three main strands of neo-institutionalisms in political sciences see Hall and Taylor 1996; Peters 1999; Schmidt 2006)⁸.

With historical institutionalism⁹, the framework shares the research interest for the inception and development of public institutions, i.e. public policies, explained by the intended and often unintended outcomes of purposeful choices and historically unique initial conditions. The two approaches, nevertheless, differ significantly in at least two interrelated respects. First, the macro-historical level of analysis prevalent in most accounts of this strand of institutionalism can appear historically deterministic or even mechanistic where it focuses exclusively on continuities and path-dependencies (Schmidt 2006)¹⁰. Second, this level of analysis highlights structures and underplays both the micro-level events that constitute them and the individual actions that spurred

⁸ I refer to Barzelay and Gallego 2006, pp.534-536, for a discussion of the main differences between institutional processualism and rational choice institutionalism. The latter is typified by the works of Hood (2000, 2002 and 2006 with Lodge) on public service bargains.

⁹ The so called ‘historical turn’ in political science and sociology (Mahoney and Rueschemeyer 2003; Saldana 2003; Pierson 2004) reflects exactly the determination of a larger group of social scientists to ‘bring history back in’ the analysis of policy processes (Abbott 1988, 1990, 1992, 2001; Hall and Taylor, 1996; Haydu, 1998; Steinmo et al., 1992) by challenging the ahistorical temporality of social processes (Howlett and Rayner 2006). According to this view, the direction of policy outcomes is not deterministic, in a stochastic sense, but much more contingent than previously considered. The sources of contingency are structural factors such as historical timing or the “ordering” of policy-relevant events (Howlett and Rayner 2006, Pierson 2004) as well as individual actions in a given environment.

¹⁰ The emphasis on structured sequencing in historical institutionalist studies on public policy development has identified path dependency as the main alternative to stochastic models, often overlooking alternative possibilities and models which do exist (Thelen, 2003; Lieberman, 2001). Frequently, these studies even disregard whether or not the specific attributes of the path dependent model do in fact fit the reality of specific policy-making situations (Kay, 2005; Greener, 2005) as they “uncritically accept analogies from the economic literatures where it developed” (Howlett and Rayner 2006, 13).

those events. Turning to sociological institutionalism, it shares with IP the recognition of the crucial role played by the cognitive and normative components of the institutional context, as exemplified by well-known accounts of the logic-of-appropriateness (March and Olsen 1989; March 1994). Mirroring the discussion on historical institutionalism, there are some marked differences between IP and this strand that, as argued by Schmidt (2006, 2010), may appear culturally deterministic where it emphasizes the cultural routines and rituals to the exclusion of individual action which breaks out of the cultural norm. Interestingly, IP has incorporated the logic of appropriateness (Barzelay 2003; Corbett 2003, 2005; Moynihan 2003) in its repertoire of explanatory mechanisms. It has done so, however, by adding an agentic twist: “An appropriate action is one that fits the situation, given the agent’s evoked identity. As a social mechanism, the logic of appropriateness works to link a configuration of context factors—the situation—to actions or efforts, through a motivated reasoning and judgment process. [...] In seeking a partial explanation of agenda inclusion by analyzing the logic of appropriateness as a social mechanism, we therefore need to consider both actor identity and construed situation” (Barzelay 2003, 276).

In sum, the ‘institutional’ character of the selected framework, consistently with the historical and sociological strands of new institutionalism, can be located in its attention to institutional context, both cognitive and normative, to sociologically patterned identities, and to relations among actors as sources of causal factors. Specifically with historical institutionalism, IP shares the intellectual enterprise to provide historically grounded generalizations (Abbott 2001; McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 2001; Ragin 1987; Weick 2001; Yin 1994) about institutional and policy change. To perform such ‘causal reconstruction’ of social phenomena (Mayntz 2004), it employs the concept of ‘social mechanisms’ (Hedström 2005), which can be defined as

recurring causal processes that enables scholars to find a right pitch between contingency and search for causal regularities.

A principal reference of IP is Kingdon's *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies* (1984). Kingdon's analytical trademark, typically portrayed as a public policy variation of the garbage can approach, is the recognition that three streams - problems, policy and politics flow in parallel and is their coupling, enacted by policy entrepreneurs, to determine public policy decisions. The coexistence, as opposed to the sequence of the streams, challenges the supposedly chronological ordering of the *stagist* approach. This does not prevent Kingdon from recognizing that the three sub-processes of agenda-setting, alternative specification, and coupling and deciding, require their own distinctive analysis and can be employed as heuristics for 'wrapping things up' (1984, 196-208). In the same vein, institutional processualism utilizes these sub-processes to dissect policy-making in agenda-setting, alternative specification and decision-making. Therefore, a policy cycle patterned on Kingdon's approach contains the analytically defined events of the three sub-processes. Nevertheless, the systemic perspective on the overall process of policymaking is guaranteed by acknowledging that the sub-processes may temporally cross and that there are clear sources of influence between them (Barzelay 2003). Illustrative of such concatenation, agenda-setting influences alternative specification through the framing of the issue and its assignment to distinct venues, as well as through the codification that participants make of agenda setting trajectories when deciding whether and how to contribute to alternative specifications.

Causal processes are identified within agenda setting, such as in the form of "focusing events", or between agenda setting and alternative specification, for example with "policy spillovers" between policy domains. The framework allows researchers to

account for the role of political actors and policy entrepreneurship (Ackrill and Kay 2011; Balla 2001; Mintrom 1997, 2000; Mintrom and Norman 2009; Mintrom and Vergari 1996) in determining the path and outcome of policymaking. Mechanisms such as “attribution of opportunity” explain how political actors make sense of specific occurrences based on their experience and reasoning, “actor certification” (McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly 2001) clarifies how situational conditions influence actors’ attributes – or how their identities are perceived.

Another essential determinant of the trajectory of public policy is the configuration of the policy subsystem. Borrowing from Baumgartner and Jones’ theory of punctuated equilibrium (1993), IP does not consider the policy subsystem as an immutable feature of governmental systems but rather as a reasonably stable institutional context. In particular, IP resorts to Baumgartner and Jones’ theory to explain the bursts of rapid, unpredictable policy change that ‘punctuate’ patterns of stability in government activity as the result of interlocking changes within the policy subsystem in the pre-decisional process. These are the framing of an issue, the composition of the policy subsystems in which policy is formulated, and the conceptualization of functional interdependencies of domains. Policy subsystems are also the conventional venue where IP locates policy learning, enacted through information gathering and through appraisal of previous initiatives (Bennett and Howlett 1992; Levitt and March 1988, May 1992). IP owes the conceptualization of policy learning especially to the work of Levitt and March. Building on classical studies on organizational routines, they define organizational learning as the process of “encoding inferences into routines that guide behavior” (1988, 320). In other words, the experiential insights are captured by routines in a way that enables vicarious learning, i.e. it does not require that organizations and organizational members have to go

through that experience. For example, IP has been attentive to the interplay between the configuration of the policy-subsystem (Baumgartner and Jones 1993) as well as to the availability and retrieval of experience enabled by organizational routines.

In summary, the framework complements explanatory components borrowed selectively from the theories of Kingdon (1984), Baumgartner and Jones (1993), and Levitt and March (1988). The operation of complementing offered by IP resonates with Juppille's 'domain of application' approach that "works by identifying the respective turfs and "home domains" of each theory, by specifying how each explanation works, and finally by bringing together each home turf in some larger picture" (2003, 21)¹¹. In so doing, institutional processualism has facilitated causal interpretations of recent episodes of public policy making in different countries. As discussed before, the episodes exhibit significant variety, particularly in terms of the national and supra-national administrative settings where they unfold, the themes of policy change, and the stable and transitional features of the context.

Notwithstanding such diversity, the framework lends itself to address research questions of analytical and historical significance. From an analytical point of view, the framework has equipped scholars to investigate the interplay between belief and action as experience unfolds, how the operation of processes and mechanisms can be explained by contingent context factors and how situational conditions - stationary and transitory - influence actors' properties. Using this framework, scholars have been able to address questions of historical significance and puzzles such as how a particular policy issue was conceived; how it was then introduced in an agenda, including those instances where the agenda was congested or the issue did not score high in the pre-electoral

¹¹ The view of synthesis offered by domain application is modest, i.e. there is no ambition to a Hegelian synthesis nor to transcendence defined as a marked analytical independence of the final theory from the component theories.

program; how specific ideas survived the legislative process and then became law; how an issue was maintained on the agenda despite a partisan change in the government, or how an issue was revamped after a period of dismissal from the agenda; why a new minister decided to follow different reform tactics than the predecessor; how an issue was approved amid contentious political debate or why, two periods within the same episode, had opposite policy outcomes.

Strengths and limitations of institutional processualism

In this section I have highlighted the reasons why researchers have selected institutional processualism as the framework to analyze and explain episodes of public policymaking. In stylized terms, IP enables event-centric explanations while also granting a prominent role to agency (and agents). By acknowledging the ‘human hand’ in the processes of change (Poole et Al. 2000, 25), it overcomes the ‘cultural or historical determinism’ (Schmidt 2006; Ackrill et Al. 2013). Also, by resorting to social mechanisms, it strikes a reasonable balance between the quest for causal regularities and the explanatory power of contingency, thus meeting sensibly “the challenge faced by temporally oriented policy studies of how to abstract particular historical contexts and identify the extent to which regularities across historical time and space endure” (Ackrill et Al. 2013, 878).

It is worth considering that, by ‘following the process’, the framework offers a flexible mode of inquiry, both at the theoretical and at the methodological level. As for the first implication, a focus on the process is likely to result in an intellectual openness to complementing theories, thus affording an increased explanatory power. As for the methodological implications, ‘following the process’ often entails in-depth analyses

which generate extremely rich data. The level of detail afforded by processual analyses casts the possibility of unexpected or unanticipated findings. (Poole et Al. 2000).

I am now going to chart the limitations of institutional processualism differentiating between those inherent in the analytical framework and those inherent in the research design. The first set of theoretical limitations stems from the ostensible focus of the framework on the *process* of policy-making at the expense of the attention to its content and to the selection of cases “representative of the population of policy cycles in the countries considered” (Barzelay and Gallego 2010a, 212). I am not contending that the substance of a policy has been completely disregarded by researchers adopting IP, and more in general by those interested in studying policy dynamics. For example, appreciating key attributes of the policy process such as directionality (for a critical discussion see Howlett and Cashore 2009) has prompted researchers to also analyze the modification of policy content over time. Turning to content, however, has remained a requisite to recognize whether, in the example above, change was cumulative or was an oscillation around an existing policy equilibrium. Substance, in synthesis, has mostly been conceived as a means to study process (Jones 1984; Pal 2010). *Prima facie*, this may appear a choice of research design but I am more inclined to consider it a theoretical limitation. The repertoire of causal mechanisms available, in fact, does not seem conceivably fit to offer substantive understanding of the policy content. A further implication of the marked focus on process is that the comparison of the cases of policy process in the setting of different countries “lacks interest in generalizing to the population of reform cycles within these countries” (Barzelay and Gallego 2010a, 212). This analytical choice may insulate the scholarship using IP in a subfield that finds it hard to dialogue with the broader academic community of comparative public policy (for a review see Lodge 2007, 273-288).

Further, it may confine its findings to play a marginal role in current policy debates covering the very domains and issues they are studying. Last, since the attention of scholars adopting this framework is focused on following the process of change without a comparable engagement with its substance, they are likely to ‘overstate change’ (Barzelay and Gallego 2010a) compared to the general perception of practitioners and academics, expert of that specific field and/or country setting.

As for the next theoretical limitation, it has been argued that complementing theories matches the flexible and creative mode of inquiry of IP. Nevertheless, this analytical operation also carries a number of risks. Logical coherence may be harder to achieve, as the resulting theories could be too vague and so wide-ranging that “we can see everything but also nothing” (Pettigrew 1987, 659). In addition, there have been concerns that the resulting theories do not lend themselves easily to generalizability and their eclectic nature often comes at the expense of parsimony (Rones 2009). The quest of IP for generalizability, in the guise of historically-based limited generalization, has already been accounted for in this section. To attend to the issue of parsimony I refer to a convincing counter-argument already developed by Barzelay and Gallego (2010b). Building on the epistemological premises set by Abott (2001), Hedström (2005) and Ragin (1987) they point to parsimony as only one among several ways to achieve a body of research arguments that are illuminating, and one which should not prevent scholarship to follow alternative research trajectories. The argument could be further corroborated by taking stock of discussions that have been ongoing in other disciplinary domains, from statistics to economics, as exemplified by Hirschman’s position paper on “Against parsimony. Three easy ways of complicating some categories of economic discourse” (1984). These discussions cast doubt on the opportunity to deliberately limit the complexity of a model when the problem is evidently complex.

Turning to the limitations, or better limits, of the research design, these include the narrow focus on agenda setting, onerous data-collection and the limited time frame of the policy episodes. First, studies conducted with IP as reference framework are typically based on episodes bound to the pre-decisional and decisional stages of the policy cycle – that is to say – they end with an authoritative choice being taken. This is an element IP has in common with the three streams approach and to a considerable degree, with punctuated equilibrium (Zahariadis 2005). Accounting for policy as authoritative choice is an established perspective (see for example Colebatch 2002, 39). In the words of Colebatch: “It is a very straightforward formulation which accords with ‘common sense’ understandings of government, and it is very useful in helping people to make sense of the process.” (2006, 5). By stopping at the level of an authoritative decision, however, one misses how great expectations in agenda setting are dashed in the implementation - paraphrasing Pressman and Wildavsky (1979). It should be said that the choice to focus on agenda setting is not led by the lack of empirical interest or analytical consideration for the stage of implementation¹². Rather, the scholarly division of labor, as well as feasibility are constraints (in terms of both research capacity and publication format) that have dictated a focus on agenda-setting. I attribute this limitation to the research design. IP as well as the multiple streams framework (MSF), are seen almost exclusively as explanations of the agenda setting, but they can “conceivably be extended to cover the entire process of policymaking at various levels of government” (Zahariadis 2005, 65). (Few) subsequent works, in fact, have shown that IP can be employed also beyond the decision-making phase. In particular, two studies have applied IP to the implementation phase (Asquer 2012; Barzelay and Shvets

¹² For a comprehensive review of the studies on implementation see O’Toole 2000; Hill and Hupe 2002.

2006).¹³ One of the chapters included in my thesis (Mele and Compagni 2010) is to date the only study where IP has been employed to analyse both the pre-implementation and early-implementation phase (transition to practice). In doing so, it has provided new empirical evidence and an ‘institutional processual’ backing to the notion that political dynamics and entrepreneurial activities continue after the decision has been taken (Patashnik 2003; Pressman and Wildavsky 1979). It has also witnessed that the focus on the predecisional phase of IP studies does not result from analytical shortcomings but more from considerations about the feasibility of academic projects.

The second limit of the research design is that, with its focus on both context and agency, IP requires heavy methodological ammunition. For example, capturing the agentic component of the explanation entails understanding the consequences of actions on future events as well as motives and intentions. This hermeneutic activity (Collingwood 1946) is hardly achievable without interviewing the ‘agents’. I will subsequently discuss the specific challenges of accessing, collecting and analyzing sheer volumes of data from diverse sources, but two considerations are worth mentioning here. The high toll taken by this type of research in terms of collection and analysis of information has raised concerns because “it demands access to significant amounts of information to explain without the promise of corresponding ability to predict” (Ackrill *et al* 2013, 883). Furthermore, such a hermeneutic approach has repercussions both in the way in which the case studies are selected and their boundaries are set. In fact, the choice of the cases is limited to recent episodes of policymaking and does not afford us the ability “to shed light on policy dynamics that might operate on a time scale of several decades or longer” (Barzelay 2003, 259).

¹³ Also the multiple streams framework has been employed by subsequent studies to analyze the implementation phase (Exworthy and Powell 2004; Ridde 2009).

These considerations are relevant for the next section, and in what follows I will account for some of the methodological choices that have guided my empirical analysis, in the spirit of clarifying details that have not been included in the three chapters.

Methodological Notes On My Research Journey

Each of the three chapters is an instrumental case study (Flyvbjerg 2006; Gerring 2004; Stake 1995). The inherent aspiration of instrumental cases is to contribute to the understanding of a phenomenon of which the object of analysis is an instance (Abbott 1992). To recapitulate the analytical premises discussed above, objects of analysis in this work are processes rather than entities, conceptualized as temporal phenomena and this dynamic perspective is meant to capture the unfolding of event trajectories (Barzelay and Gallego 2007). *Narrative* is the synthetic label that sociological scholarship in the traditions of the Chicago school has given to such “processual, action-driven approaches to social reality, approaches that are based on stories” (Abbott 2001, 184). The explanations rendered by narratives come often in the form of limited generalizations, or arguments travelling across contingencies (i.e. times and places): “categories and theories logically cannot take the form of unrestricted universals or of deductive axioms unqualified by considerations of time and place” (Kay 2006, 23-24).

Narratives: epistemological premises and methodological challenges

In order to make events intellegible - i.e. conveying not only information but also the understandings at the basis of any explanation - narratives recount events. Unlike chronicles or annals, however, they try to make sense of what happens as a “single coherent story, albeit with subplots” (Stone 2001, 74). They do so through *enchainment*, or the ‘narrative analogue’ of causality where it is stated that there are links between

consequent points in the narrative and *order*, meaning the narrative must proceed along a sequence that is ultimately aimed at explaining a given outcome (Abbott 1992; Howlett and Rayner 2006; Ospina and Dodge 2005).

The leap from recounting events to conveying understandings is a challenging task for researchers, and critics from different academic quarters charge narrative inquiry with excessive discretionality in this delicate passage. Despite this common concern, the remedies being proposed vary significantly. Some recommend researchers to impose more structure on their narratives, formalizing as much as possible “the mechanisms through which characteristics or events at time 1 lead to or are transformed into characteristics or events at time 2 [...] in order to avoid teleological arguments¹⁴ in which some overarching logic of development, divined by the observer, is all that ties historical events together or supports causal links (Haydu 1998, 351). Others, instead, recommend undoing the structures imposed by the narrative on the stories.¹⁵ In the words of Boje, for example, to carry out organizational research: “we should recover the polyphonic quality of storytelling [...] I long for a different storytelling that is an ante-narrational and undoes the timeframe imposed by narratives. I bet on the incoherent and the unplotted telling (2001, 6).

My work acknowledges that discretionality is an inevitable consequence of the ‘mediated coherence’ (Polkinghorne 1988) provided by the narrator and in what follows, I try to elucidate the critical assumptions on which the methodological approach of my thesis rests.

¹⁴ For a discussion of teleological temporality see “Three Temporalities: Toward an Eventful Sociology” (Sewell 1996).

¹⁵ The ‘stories’ here are conceptualized as separated from narrative, consistently with Culler (1981) who, after reviewing the Russian formalists, the American structuralists and the French structuralists, identifies a duality of narrative over story.

The first assumption¹⁶ relies on the notion that narratives subsume interpretive schemes (see in particular Polkinghorne 1988, pp.17-18) or *meta-narratives*. As much as narrative inquiry is often portrayed as whole-heartedly inductive, it “in fact presupposes many generalizations” (Martin 1986). Put differently, in order to understand what is happening in a story, researchers need to connect the events in a way that assumes the existence of logic that interrelate them (Cebik 1984). Interpretive schemes should “offer analytical structure at a broad level but not an over-restrictive theoretical web” (Pettigrew 1990, 293), for they make reality intelligible. Schemes act as the basic template or structure for the narrative. Consistently with Kay, in my work *policy* can be conceived as an interpretive scheme, a “heuristic concept that allows a path to be drawn through policy time and space, rather than being exclusively conceived as a natural category of investigation” (Kay 2006, 73). Specifically, I have used the policy cycle as the interpretive scheme across my three instrumental cases, and Kingdon’s meta-categories of setting the agenda, alternative specification and decision-making as the subplots of the scheme. However, in the spirit of complementing theories ‘by domain’ I have added a meta-category derived from Baumgartner and Jones on managing organizational transition within the specific policy sub-system and learning within the policy sub-system (Levitt and March 1988) for the case where the evidence collected has prompted me to do so. Furthermore, depending on the specific nature of the *explanandum*, i.e. piece of legislation *vs* program, I have adapted the meta-categories to include setting the agenda, developing the program, and deciding and launching it (Annex 1 includes the Research Schematics related to the chapter on

¹⁶ This assumption resonates with traditional debate between ontology and epistemology (see Wendt and Shapiro 1997; and Hay and Rosamond 2002) questioning whether ontology tells us what to look for (i.e. ontology precedes epistemology) or whether an epistemological refutation of ontological propositions is possible (i.e. epistemology precedes ontology).

Government Innovation, as an example of the event structure and the research questions connecting the events).

A second underlying assumption regarding my thesis is that the narrator has a license to *simplify* reality in order to avoid what Pettigrew vividly defines as “death by data asphyxiation” (1990, 281). In my thesis, the simplification of reality rested on three interrelated pillars or ‘conventions of narration’. These did not turn out to be constraints, but rather enablers of narratives: without them, and confronted with sheer volumes of data, the social scientist would have nowhere to begin. (Danto 1985; Martin 1986; White 1980, 1984, 2009).

The first pillar is the *connection of events* that, by drawing a path that consists of a series of steps between different states of the policy process, provides a structure to the narrative. In each of the chapters I have organized the time-line of the story – the ‘narrative temporality’ (Genette 1980) as a single episode of policymaking, though divided in different policy cycles (three cycles in the chapters on Innovation and E-Government respectively, two cycles in the chapter on the Smoking ban). In turn, each cycle has been organized by using the sub-plots provided by three phases of agenda-setting, alternative specification and decision making. Several of the actions organized by phase actually took place in parallel, though I narrated them through the convention of narrative temporality where “the narrator spins the thread of a story so that it appears to be a continuous strand not a series of overlapping motifs” (Martin 1986, 129).

The second pillar of simplification is the so-called *selective silencing* (Bal 2009; Buchanan and Dawson 2007) that can be considered an ‘unavoidable feature of a narrative’ (Pentland 1999, 715). Kay (2006) argues that in policy narratives, it is crucial to designate some issues and characters as salient and omit many as non significant. This is exactly what I have been doing, in the endeavor to ensure coherence to my unit

of analysis – i.e. the unfolding of policy episodes – without (excessively) dispersing the narrative with factual or biographical digressions.

The main device employed to select the evidence to be included in- and more importantly omitted from my narrative- has been the *research schematics*¹⁷ (see Annex 1). Consistently with accounts of processual research methodology, and particularly of pattern reduction (Pettigrew 1990; Strauss 1987), I have been engaging in an iterative dialogue between theory and data and, more specifically between the “deductive element of specifying theories of method and meta-level analytical frameworks and the inductive elements of data reduction, display and theoretical elaboration” (Pettigrew 1990, 284). In Annex 1, I include as an example the actual research schematics I have been using for the instrumental case on which the first chapter of the thesis is based. The *research schematics*, as well as any “sorting and classifying tools of a processual researcher” (Pettigrew 1990, 284), can be considered the material enabler of the iterative inductive and deductive processes as it specifies the analytically significant events – in the form of actions – providing the skeleton for the narration.

The research schematics I have employed included both an *event structure* and *research questions* connecting the events. The *event structure* has been organized around the events at the heart of the case. Previous, contemporaneous and related events¹⁸ are also included, as long as they were meaningful for a specific development within the main cycle. For example, a parallel policy change in another domain would be included in the related events if it influenced the main policy as a *policy spillover*.

¹⁷ The research schematics has been a fundamental tool to conduct my own research as well as to link my work to the broader research program on the *The Comparative Historical Analysis of Public Management Policy Cycles in France, Italy, and Spain*. In order to make the three ‘instances of a process’ of public management reform comparable, the researcher had to agree upon common research schematics which included: a) Event Structure, b) Research Questions and c) Narrative Outline for each case.

¹⁸ Contemporaneous and related events both unfold in parallel to the main episode. The distinction lies on the impact on the case. *Contemporaneous events* are more in the background of the case, influencing transitory structural factors (e.g. devaluation of the lira). Parallel events would be listed as *related events* when they had a direct bearing on the policy episode.

Current events have been ordered based on the meta-categories of agenda setting, alternative specification and decision-making. In particular, the *agenda-setting* phase included processes such as the emergence of a policy issue and the activities of policy entrepreneurs aimed at increasing the issue visibility and status. *Alternative specification* included the activities aimed at developing the proposals, e.g. assessing the status quo, drafting reports, gathering ideas, negotiating within and outside government agencies. The final phase included the *decision and approval* of a proposal, as well as its official launch. A remarkable aid to connect events has been provided by the historically-based *research questions*, i.e. those closely related to the case (See Annex 1). Research questions for each chapter have been ordered from the analytically significant questions to the historically based ones. The latter, in turn, were linked to specific events in the *event structure* as well as to the analytical questions they were contributing to address by providing historically-based insights.

Another narrative decision, which has led to the omission of some of the evidence collected through documentary analysis and interviews, has been the identification of eventful and uneventful periods as far as the policy episode was concerned. I should also mention that, along the timeline of my episodes, the three main meta-categories have been applied to explain the pre-decisional and decisional phase of each single cycle. In the example of the first chapter, the narrative of the episode of Innovation in government covers three policy cycles during the period 1993-2002. However, years between the end of a cycle and the beginning of the subsequent one have been only touched on¹⁹. In omitting periods that are uneventful, I have

¹⁹ For example between the launch of the first initiative (Projects for change in 1993) and the revamping of the issue for Innovation in government in 1996 that led to the approval of the second initiative (Program for change in 1998), events that happened in two years (1994 and 1995) are only mentioned *en passant*. Similarly, the years between 1998 and 2001, when the issue was revamped and led to the approval of the third initiative (Construction Sites for change in 2002) are only hinted at but not analyzed in depth.

followed an established convention of writing narratives. Chronological gaps are functional in the narrative that, unlike chronicles, must include *ellipses*, i.e. temporal periods left out from narration (Martin 1986). Ellipses are in line with the instrumental character of my case studies, aimed at illuminating the basic facts that support the analysis without cluttering the narrative with details that remain unexplained in the analytical section.

The last pillar requires devising and mixing different *types of narrative discourse*. This is particularly challenging when the framework, such as in my work, emphasizes the volitional conduct of actors. By granting a role to ‘choice’ in the policy process (Kay 2006), in fact, the narrative must ensure ‘access to consciousness’ (Martin 1986, 131) of the actors without turning an event-centric narrative into the motives and intentions of ‘great men’, i.e. the policy entrepreneurs. In my policy narrative, I strove to find the right balance between the advantages of third person narration, typically smooth and easier to follow, and the authenticity secured by first person quotations. I was faced with the task of compacting years of events and many details about personal interactions afforded by the transcripts of my in-depth interviews. Therefore, I decided to rely predominantly on the third person – i.e. the authorial voice – and to allow my main characters to speak in first person only in special circumstances, such as expressing a personal view on the events or when they were referring to their inner motives.²⁰

Overall, I set the methodological assumptions and their relative implications on the narrative strategy (i.e. connecting the events, selective silencing and ellipses, and

²⁰ A quote expressing a personal view on the events is exemplified by this comment of an interviewee reported in the first chapter: “The role of the Minister moved from *expenditure advocate* to *treasury guardian*.” A quote indicating the inner motives of a policy entrepreneur is exemplified by the reference to a ‘moral duty, both as an oncologist and as a Minister’ (third chapter).

type of narrative discourse) trying to strike a balance between the feasibility of the research endeavor and my, unavoidable, intrusiveness in the sources' evidence.

Data gathering

Turning now to some common elements of data gathering, the main methodological device that I have used to elicit narratives is interviews, and in particular those that allow the collection of first-hand testimony from direct participants and witnesses of the policy-making process: *elite interviewing* (Berry 2002; Tansey 2007). In order to identify the interviewees I adopted a snowball or chain referral sampling using both positional criteria and reputational criteria (e.g. influential actors that might otherwise have been ignored) to identify respondents (Tansey 2007). In particular, for the research project on public management reform, both snowballing and access has been facilitated by my previous work as consultant to the Department of Public Administration (1999-2000). At the time of writing I was not under contract and did not face any restricting conditions or a non-disclosure clause. As the main criterion for selection, for each episode I chose informants with a different perspective on the *explanandum*, i.e. policy entrepreneurs, civil servants and consultants, and academics with a profound knowledge of the policy domain and ministerial activities (e.g. academics which had also served as consultants for the Ministry during the period under analysis). Annex 2 lists the interviewees for each case divided by background (i.e. policy-makers, top bureaucrats, experts or consultants, and relevant external stakeholders).

The specific requirements for elite interviewing do not include only attending to extraordinary challenges in rapport building and interview scheduling (Bauer and Gaskell 2000). More importantly, interviewing political elites entails recognizing and dealing with the logic of 'representation' (Czarniawska 1999) or of 'officialization'

(Bourdieu 1990). In my experience this often prompted respondents to account for what should have happened instead of what did happen. Similarly to what was described by Czarniawska: “the logic of representation is used by everybody in positions that require official accounting for organizational practices [...] it is rhetorically skillful and self-conscious” (2004, 53). I often received accounts grounded in theory complementing or even substituting answers grounded in practice. In other words, the interviewees would provide ex post rationalization and legitimating reconstructions of their choices and of the resulting events.

It took me a few initial interviews during the first research project²¹ to realize that a peculiar type of logic of appropriateness was at work and to devise corrective measures to what was a potential source of ambiguity when reconstructing ‘facts’. Triangulation with other sources was obviously a key strategy to limit informant bias and improve construct validity. Therefore, interviews were conducted for each episode with informants who viewed the project from diverse perspectives: policy entrepreneurs, civil servants, former consultants, and academics with a profound knowledge of the policy domain under analysis for each of the chapters. Interviews were also prepared with, and corroborated by documentary analysis of official policy statements (e.g. white papers or policy briefs), parliamentary hearings, media coverage (available within the Ministry archives) and meeting minutes. Special mention perhaps should go to an early and rudimentary methodological attempt to attenuate the biases of that *officialization* I intuitively detected, namely a focus group. I used the focus group to bring together top bureaucrats and consultants who worked in different phases of a policy episode, with different political loyalties and known for their contribution to the debate on public management reform. What I was seeking was some degree of

²¹ The comparative research project on Public Management Reforms in Napoleonic Countries was coordinated by Barzelay and Gallego.

confidence that both the case boundaries (Abbott 2001) and the milestones of the policy episodes that I had identified (the *explananda*) were somewhat shared by the relevant policy community.

Over time, I developed more fine-grained skills. When parts of interviews and even written policy statements were in an obvious ‘officialized’ mode, I would spot and employ them as inputs to figure out the dominant or the alternative political discourse in the traditions of interpretive public policy and the view on policy change as a discursive problem (Foucault 1971; Zittoun 2009). I became aware, in other words, that policy statements are not “a representation of the problem, its consequences and possible solutions to solve it” (Muller 2004: 371), but pragmatic and discursive constructions (Fischer 2003) which transform and stabilize problems, and associate them to solutions, devices, arguments, publics and participants (Deleuze 1986, Latour 2006). Still, at times I needed to get the facts straight. Especially, I needed to uncover the political processes behind the scene, the “hidden elements of the political action [...] that lack an accompanying body of documentation” (Tansey 2007, 767) either because they are exquisitely informal or because they are too sensitive to document in written forms. For this purpose, I devised subtle correctives to my interviewing style. I would prepare myself with a preliminary draft of the policy plot and how media had reported it. Consistently with Czarniawska’s recommendation to ‘aid memory’ (2004), I noticed that displaying precise knowledge of dates and participants as well as recollecting specific media coverage was very helpful in bringing the interviewee on track and to focus on filling the gaps of my narratives.

Data analysis

I analyzed the interview transcripts and the documents collected (see the methodological section in each chapter for the list of interviews and a description of the

main types of documents used) using the *event structure* in the *research schematics* – that is to say, for each chapter I used as categories to organize my data:

- previous events, contemporaneous and related events;
- the main events in my episode divided by the policy cycles under analysis (three in the first two chapters, two in the third chapter).

In turn, for each episode, I used, first, the Kingdon meta-categories of agenda-setting, alternative specification and decision-making to organize the evidence (interviews and documents).

The first iterations between the meta-categories related to three stages and data enabled me to adapt the meta-categories to my data²². Further iterations enabled me to add, as categories for the analysis, the causal mechanisms that were emerging from the evidence and I could relate to the repertoire offered by the framework (e.g. actor certification, attribution of opportunity, policy-spillover, etc.). Then for each meta-category, associated with a code (e.g. agenda setting or actor certification), I tabulated quotes.

In two out of three chapters, in order to organize materials – collecting, retrieving and coding – I used a software program (*Atlas.ti*). I uploaded all the documents on the software and directly coded them on file, except for the meeting minutes, for which I was given only a paper copy. For this set of documents, I selected and transcribed the quotes relevant for my analysis and then uploaded them. Compared to the chapter (Innovation in government) where this work has been done manually (see Annex 1), I admit that it was a very helpful tool to physically organize, store and recover diverse sources when drafting the deep narratives that provide the empirical

²² As discussed above, in the first chapter I adapted the meta-categories to reflect the programmatic, as opposed to legislative, nature of the policy output (the *explanandum*). In the third chapter on the Smoking ban, I also added a meta-category labelled ‘transition to practice’ which included activities undergoing between the passage of the legislation and its actual enforcement.

basis for the chapters. After discussing the theoretical and methodological tenets of the thesis, I am now going to introduce the main elements of the Italian political and administrative context.

The Italian Political And Administrative Context

In the three chapters of this collection, episodes of policy-making unfold in the context of the Italian governmental sector, during three periods that, at least partially, overlap²³. Each chapter introduces in the narrative those changes in the political and administrative setting that had a direct influence on the policy episodes. In what follows, instead, I set the scene of the country context by presenting some general features of the Italian political and administrative system that I deem relevant for my episodes, namely the *political context*, the *administrative context*, the *law-making process* and *legalism*, a prominent feature of the Italian state traditions.

Political context

In the early 1990s, the Italian party system, which had been stable for almost half a century with the coalition governments always formed around the dominant Christian Democracy (DC) party, underwent a profound transformation²⁴. Afterwards, except for the technocratic interludes²⁵, alternative coalitions of the right or the left have prevailed. Yet, despite the bipolar alternation, it is a widely held opinion (Bull and Rhodes 1997; 2007; Diamanti 2007; Vassallo 2007) that the Italian political system is still ‘blocked’

²³ The policy cycle in the first chapter unfolds during the period 1993-2002, in the second chapter 1992-2003, and in the third 2000-2005. Therefore, I have tried to identify significant elements of the administrative and political context in the period 1992-2005.

²⁴ Morlino and Tarchi explain: “in 1991, the old Communist Party (PCI) changed its name and its logo, becoming the Party of the Democratic Left (PDS) and later, in 1994, even changed its leadership. A new protest party, the Northern League, emerged from the unification of various local, autonomist lists. In the 1992 elections, the crisis of the Christian Democracy became evident and the protest in Northern Italy found a strong manifestation in the success of the League” (1996, 41).

²⁵ On p.43 I explain more in details what are ‘technical governments’.

and one where intra-coalition competition has impeded the political system from moving from a centrifugal to a centripetal tension (Bardi 2007). As Bull and Rhodes put it²⁶: “Fragmented and unstable bipolarism works for winning elections, but becomes a setback when governing” (Bull and Rhodes 2007, 665).

Notwithstanding the changes of the early ‘90s,²⁷ the litmus test that Italy has remained in many respects an “incomplete and poorly performing democracy” (Bull and Rhodes 2007, 658) is provided by the length of governments: no government²⁸ in Italy has ever lasted for an entire parliamentary term of five years (Cotta and Verzichelli 2007). The fall of governments is typically due to internal problems within the coalition, instead of a parliamentary vote against the ruling majority moved by the opposition, as may be the case in other parliamentary democracies. Prime ministers resign when they realize their majority is not holding together – e.g. one or more negative votes in the legislative proceedings. The premature fall of Cabinets results in negotiations to form a government not only in the aftermath of the elections, but at virtually any point in time of a legislature. I refer to this frequent Cabinet turnover as political instability, i.e. “a basic source of variation in institutions and policies [... whose] frequency and character depend on voter preferences, political institutions, or salient events and issues” (Horowitz, Hoff, and Milanovic 2009, 1). In turn, this definition is based on the conception of political stability as government longevity, that is to say the duration of government expressed as a percentage of its maximum institutional life (Dowding and Kimber 1983)²⁹.

²⁶ In their introduction on a special issue of Western European Politics on Italy as a contested polity, issued ten years after the last special issue of this journal in the Italian politics. In this section, I also quote Bardi (2007), Diamanti (2007) and Vassallo (2007), who have authored articles in the same special issue.

²⁷ During the decades of the Christian Democracy (DC) leadership the instability of Cabinets was tempered by the constant presence of the same party - DC – in every Cabinet and the fact that many ministers would often remain constant from one Cabinet to another.

²⁸ I use Cabinet, government and Executive synonymously.

²⁹ The literature has analyzed political stability from perspectives different from the one adopted in my work of Government longevity. Hurwitz (1973) for example identified five distinct approaches to

In this work, the political background of the policy episodes (1992-2005) is one characterized by political instability. There is an alternation of nine governments determined only once by the natural deadline of the legislature (2001) and more often by political crises resulting in two anticipated general elections (1994, 1996), in six government reshufflings with (1992, 1993, 1995, 1998, 2000) or without (1999) the appointment of a new Prime Minister (in the Annex 3 I have included a table with the list of the governments and the ministers in the three domains where the episodes unfold). Four of these reshufflings (1992, 1993, 1995, 2000) have resulted in the appointment of ‘technical governments³⁰’. This term refers to an Executive that is appointed, as opposed to elected, in times of political crises or extraordinarily difficult economic conjunctures. In these supposedly exceptional circumstances, the parliament appoints a government, normally composed by a non-elected group of experts. By virtue of its feeble political identity, a technical government normally eschew vetoes and receives reasonable levels of support from parties.

Overall, this political setting is a challenging scenario for governing, and even more so for reforming efforts. The general view, in fact, considers instability as conducive to waning government performance. Cotta and Verzichelli argue that the short term perspective of every Cabinet and of most of the prime ministers has been “undoubtedly a serious limiting factor in their ability to effectively conduct the governmental mission and this was particularly so when it was time to introduce significant reforms” (2007, 129-130). In addition, the two principal contributions (Milio 2008; Piattoni and Smyrl 2002) that have analyzed the effects of the Italian political

political stability: absence of violence, existence of a legitimate constitutional order, absence of structural change, multifaceted societal attributes, and government longevity.

³⁰ A technical government in Italy is also referred to as a ‘transitional’ or ‘current affairs’ or ‘bridge’ government.

turbulence on its administrative capacity reaffirm the importance of political stability as a precondition for adequate government performance³¹.

The Italian public administration

In their book *Political institutions in Italy*, Cotta and Verzichelli begin their chapter on the analysis of bureaucracy (2007, chapter VII) with this effective opening:

“Slowness, heaviness, disorganization and patronage have no doubt been long-established problems for the Italian public administration, and they still represent some of the most common stereotypes of Italy abroad. It is easy to find evidence to justify these stereotypes” (2007, 202).

The subtitle of this chapter on bureaucracy - “From immobility to permanent reforms” – captures the perpetual effort to transform and improve the performance of public offices in which, since World War II, Italian governments have engaged.

The reform cycle in itself has become a subject of study, almost a sub-discipline of administrative sciences, from historical (Melis 1996; Rugge 1995), legal (Cassese, 1994), policy (Capano, 1992, 2003; Dente, 1995; Cerase, 1990; Lippi, 2003) and managerial (Borgonovi et al. 2008, Reborra 1999) perspectives. The incessant attempts at reform provide evidence of the misalignment between the administrative machine and the country’s needs. This misalignment is often referred to as *maladministration* (Cassese 1993, see also Mele and Ongaro 2014).

A phenomenon in Italy that ended up being associated with *maladministration* is the steady increase in the number of public administrations³², and of civil servants³³.

³¹ For example, by analyzing the management of EU Structural Funds (an EU program aimed at sustaining regional development) in different Italian regions, Piattoni and Smyrl identify the main determinant of policy efficiency in the “different capacity of the political class to allocate the costs and benefits of economic development, in turn explained by its stability and commitment” (2002, 136). Similarly, Milio (2008) argues that continuity in key positions favored the coherence and regularity of the EU “Structural Funds” program management and generalizes that stable party coalitions shield political leaders from the constant undermining of their mandate and project paralysis due to the partisan use of veto power.

Such expansion in the number and size of public organizations is commonly considered by scholars and experts of the Italian administrative system, as a practice of the ruling majority to gain the political consensus of the beneficiary constituencies, and obviously detrimental to efficiency or effectiveness. Other associated phenomena include the weakness (Melis 2005), or according to some scholars, the absence (Cassese 1993, 1999) of an administrative elite, and the ambiguous linkages, at times, between politicians and administrators, developed from the outset of the unitarian state (Sepe and Crobe 2008). This conspiracy of sorts, stigmatized by Cassese as *pactum sceleris* resulted in a systematic exchange between stability ensured to civil servants and power maintained in the hands of political parties (Cassese 1993). Since the beginning of the nineties, while the entire Italian political context was undergoing a dramatic crisis, the administrative reform attempts of the previous years were replaced by a “permanent cycle of reform” (Capano 2003, 787). The administrative context between the early nineties and the early 2000s is especially salient for the first two chapters of the thesis, focused respectively on the policy for innovation in government and on the policy for Electronic Government.

Two features of the administrative context recurrently enter the policy scene in all three chapters, i.e. the process of *decentralization* and the process of *EU integration* and I am going to account briefly for them. In the period under analysis, Italy has

³² Especially in the so-called *parastato*, the vast array of public entities, state-owned companies, etc. that quite often became an instrument of political consensus through the large recourse to public employment. Also, the number of local governments, especially the Provincial level (the second tier of local government in Italy), has steadily increased since their establishment, and it is commonly held opinion among commentators that one of the drivers for this has been the search for consensus. This process of multiplication of public entities has to be distinguished from the establishment of an entirely new level of government, the regions. Granted political autonomy by the Italian constitution in 1948 and implemented in 1970, regional governments have brought some degree of decentralization to the national governmental machinery especially since the mid ‘90s, as I discuss in this section.

³³ This is due to the new tasks taken up by the government over the 20th century, but also due to malpractices like ‘titularization’ (Cassese 1993; Sotiropoulos 2004), a process that involves hiring personnel to meet temporary labor shortages in the public sector and then granting to these personnel the status of civil servant or the functional equivalent.

undergone a process of progressive decentralization. According to Cotta and Verzichelli (2007, 174-177) Italy has a system of ‘territorial cleavages’, a concept that captures both the salience of the different polity levels (over 8100 municipalities – more than half of which have less than 3000 inhabitants, 10 large metropolitan cities, over 100 provincial units, 20 regions) and the different degree of relevance attributed to these sub-national communities, in comparison with the idea of nation-state. In the background of my policy episodes, we see efforts aimed at devolving decisional autonomy and institutional capacity, especially to the intermediate tier of the administrative system: the regions. Two crucial reforms aimed at decentralizing powers to the regions were pushed through respectively by the centre-left and the centre-right (Ongaro 2006). The first attempt was performed in 1997 by Bassanini. His corpus of reforms transferred new competencies to the regions, strengthened mechanisms for intergovernmental dialogue and sought to clarify the distribution of powers and the legislative role of regions. A further step in this direction was a constitutional reform approved during the Berlusconi government in 2001. Potentially radical, this reform introduced the principle of ‘inverse subsidiarity’, i.e. specifying only the areas in which central administration had to retain the mandate and assigned anything else to the regions by default. In terms of results Keating submits that:

“a decade of regional reform in Italy has produced rather little of substance. There has been some real devolution in the management of health and social services, but no proper fiscal reform. Bold declarations in constitutional reforms or laws have not been followed up with the necessary implementing laws and decrees, while the central parliament has continued often to legislate as though nothing had happened” (2009, 8).

Turning to the process of European integration, it is safe to state that it has played a prominent role in political change (Radaelli and Franchino 2004), especially but not exclusively due to pressure exerted by the treaty provisions on economic and monetary union (EMU). Some scholars, owing it to their focus on domestic political change, assign the European-level variable the status of an exogenous variable. Others explain the changes in the Italian state as a direct effect of the process of integration, specifically through the alteration of power relations between technocrats and politicians, as well as between government as a whole and the parliament (See chapters 10-12 in Dyson and Featherstone 1999). Overall, however, there seems to be agreement that the process of Europeanization has represented more of a resource than a threat for the political system. On the one hand, it has strengthened institutional capacities and policy-making technical capabilities (Ferrera and Gualmini 2000). On the other hand, domestic policy entrepreneurs have used it to widen their window of opportunity for reforms (Natali 2004; see also Quaglia, 2004 on the EMU conceptualized as an 'ideational construct').

Law-making in Italy

In the policy episodes included in my thesis the role of policy entrepreneurs is typically played by ministers. They push for an item to be included not only in the governmental agenda but also in the parliamentary one, thus leading to a formal approval in the cases where the policy outcome had to take the guise of a piece of legislation. Therefore, it might be useful to provide a brief background of the law-making process in the country.

First, Italy is a parliamentary republic with co-equal bicameralism. The fact that both chambers are on equal footing makes ordinary legislation quite a complex procedure (for a clear and detailed schema of ordinary law-making see Cotta and

Verzichelli 2007, p.145). Both chambers analyze each proposal through an ad-hoc committee, they also vote on each single article and then both chambers have to issue a final vote on all bills. The back and forth between chambers – the *navette* – must be repeated as many times as necessary to ensure that the same text is passed by a formal vote by both chambers. Second, government legislation does not enjoy any constitutionally based special treatment in its passage through Parliament (see the section on ‘Legislature and the executive’, Hine 1993, 149-150).³⁴ Over time, the procedural length of ordinary legislation together with the relatively weak institutional role of the government compared to the parliament, even more so when considering the average short-term perspective of each cabinet, have induced the government to try to reduce the influence or to bypass the power of the parliament. This attempt has been enacted in two ways. One is the increasing reliance on the government’s entitlement to issue decrees with the same status as acts of parliament. This ‘privilege’ has become an issue of contention since by constitutional provision they should have the character of genuine urgency, while they have been increasingly employed as ordinary legislative shortcuts. Their number has grown exponentially over the years and - since the early nineties - they are considered ordinary governmental devices to force a wide range of issues ranging from taxation to energy policy to public sector reforms on the parliamentary agenda. Another way has been to request an growing number of delegating laws, through which the parliament defines the general principles and then empowers government to regulate a certain area (Vassallo 2007).

A striking feature of the Italian ‘legislative behavior’ in comparative terms (Hine 1993) is the quantity of individual items of legislation that are approved every year. Such ‘legislative hypertrophy’ (Vesperini 1998) can be attributed to three, partially

³⁴ Special provisions may include restrictions on the amendments that Parliament can issue to government legislation or restrictions on the possibility for individual members of the parliament to issue legislation.

interrelated, factors. First, a large share of such legislation is a so-called micro-sectional legislation, limited in scope to local communities or to selected categories of welfare services' recipients or public employees (Hine 1993). This, in turn, may be ascribed to the often-cited phenomena of political patronage (Golden 2003) and clientelism (Piattoni 2001). Second, it may also reflect the frequent political turnover discussed above. Specifically, the impossibility to agree upon clear-cut government programs results in an excessive legislative incrementalism that frequently crowds out major reforms to focus on a plethora of minor issues (Borghetto and Giuliani 2012).

Third, there is wide consensus that overlegislation is encouraged by the 'legalism' of Italian policy-making. Hine argues that the very constitution in Italy is infused with checks and balances, which are intended as guarantees against the abuse of power by any branch but that results in a system that operates through institutional bargaining, mutual vetoes and legalism (on the origins of the *stato di diritto* see Hine 1993, 233-236).

Legalism

Legalism is often indicated as the most striking feature of the Italian administrative traditions, which, in turn, can be defined as "an historically based set of values, structures and relationships with other institutions that defines the nature of appropriate public administration within society" (Peters 2008, 118). Scholarship focusing on administrative traditions has tried to identify the *long durée* effects of historical legacies on policy processes and outcomes of administrative reforms (for a review see Meyer-Sahling and Yesilkagit 2011) and has grouped countries accordingly (Castles 1993; Kickert 2005; Knill 2001; Painter and Peters 2010, Peters 2008; Rugge 2007).³⁵

³⁵ The dominant trait of this perspective is path dependence: traditions are typically argued to block, delay or filter the reform proposals of political and administrative reformers (Christensen and Laegreid 2001).

In this wider comparative perspective, Italy fits squarely with the Napoleonic administrative traditions – characterized, among the others, by a conception of law as an instrument for intervening in society rather than as a means of conflict resolution between different societal actors (Knill 2001; Ongaro 2011; Ongaro and Valotti 2008; Painter and Peters 2010 chapter 2; Sotiropoulos 2004). Scholars have pointed to a dominance of legalism in the Italian administrative community (Capano 2003) or to a monopoly of administrative lawyers and legalistic thinking in the public sector (Kickert 2005). Legalism is broadly considered to have adverse consequences on the reforming efforts, in particular when these efforts are aimed at modernizing the public sector. A set of studies points to mechanisms that ‘hollow out’ the substance of reforms (Ongaro 2011). For example, Panozzo (2000) argues that a movement to introduce managerial accounting systems as a means to promote performance-oriented organizational practice became disabled for both the institutional and cultural components of legalism. On one hand, fragmentation of law-making determines a piecemeal type of reforms where the main purpose and vision becomes diluted in a series of sectoral laws. On the other hand, once agents of the legalistic administrative culture codify the innovative practice in legal norms, it becomes a compliance requirement, instead of a mechanism to enable change.

Likewise, Capano (2003) contends that the progressive institutionalization of a hegemonic administrative law paradigm describes the course of Italy’s modern history of public administration. Accordingly, the conditions for a secure movement supporting a rival paradigm have never been established. In the same vein, Gualmini submits that “in Italy...the legal and juridical culture prevented the implementation of extensive reforms” and that the delay in adopting managerial reforms, compared to other

The divergence between groups of countries is explained by reference to the existence of some sort of a common logic of appropriateness among countries with historical, geographical and cultural ties.

countries, can be attributed to the “dominance of a red-tape philosophy, to the traditional compliance with formal rules and to the extensive presence of ex-ante controls” (2008, 92). Similar pernicious effects of legalism have been devised by Lippi, according to which “a superfluity of laws on the same subject enacted at different times has generated greater ambiguity rather than reducing it” (Lippi 2003, 160). He argues further that reforms based as a legal obligation instead of as a voluntary choice, are likely to be conducive to a formal implementation of reforms, without changing the standard operating procedures (Kuhlmann 2010).

Preview of the empirical chapters and case selection.

The chapters in this ‘Italian collection’ are intended to contribute both to their respective specialized literatures and to the broader scholarship on the dynamics of public policy change.

The chapter on “Government Innovation Policy in Italy (1993-2002): Understanding the Invention and Persistence of a Public Management Reform”³⁶ has advanced the studies on public management reform in Italy. By showing that the initiatives aimed at promoting government innovation in Italy between 1993 and 2002 enjoyed relative continuity and a consistent direction, the chapter has questioned the established view that efforts aimed at administrative modernization are bound to fail due to the insurmountable barriers posed by the country’s state traditions. The chapter concludes that not only the outcomes of public management reform initiatives are more varied than the current literature demonstrates, but also that the theoretical approach in

³⁶ The chapter has been published as a paper included in a journal symposium resulting from a research project on “Comparative historical analysis of public management policy cycles in France, Italy and Spain.” (Barzelay and Gallego 2010a; Barzelay and Gallego 2010b; Corbett 2010; Mele 2010).

the established literature attributes excessive causal influence to the governmental system's legalistic traditions.

The chapter "Dynamics of Electronic Government Policies: The case of Italy (1992-2003)"³⁷ has expanded the empirical scope of the comparative research on public management policy change with a study set in a domain that had not been previously investigated with this analytical lens. More importantly, the chapter has contributed to advance the literature on E-government by focusing on the dynamics of policy change. Providing explanatory claims that combine actor-centric and event-centric explanations of an E-government policy cycle trajectory, the chapter has responded to recent calls for the theoretical anchorage of E-government research in established public policy frameworks.

The third chapter of this collection, entitled "Explaining the Unexpected Success of the Smoking Ban in Italy: Political Strategy and Transition to Practice", unfolds in a markedly different policy domain, healthcare, and deals with an issue highly visible to public opinion (Hilgartner and Bosk 1998). The chapter reveals the subtle strategies policy entrepreneurs can employ in managing political feasibility, thus increasing their chance of success in highly legalistic administrative settings. The chapter has followed the policy cycle beyond the final decision stage to include an early phase of implementation. This phase, labeled 'transition to practice', requires actions such as maintenance of political consensus and intergovernmental coordinating mechanisms, especially in countries where formal approval ought to be translated into regulatory documents. The vast majority of studies patterned on institutional processualism stop at the decisional stage, with scant examples of the adoption of IP to understand implementation (Asquer 2012; Barzelay and Shvets 2006). To my knowledge, this is the

³⁷ The chapter has been published as a paper included in a journal symposium on "Public service innovation" (Farneti and Young 2008; Korteland and Bekkers 2008; Mele 2008; Moore and Hartley 2008; Osborne et al. 2008; Samaratunge et al. 2008).

only study that combines, at least partially, the pre-implementation and the early implementation phase. The policy episode includes two cycles: one that stops before the decision is taken and one resulting in the approval of the ban. This allows to compare through an IP framework a case of decision and one of non-decision and, in doing so, it also responds to the call for a focus of policy studies on both decision and non-decisions (Hill 2005, Kay 2006). These two features of the case help us better understand the analytical potential of IP, while differentiating between the choices of the research design and its intrinsic limitations.

In the conclusion I will account for the potential differences between policy domains. However, I anticipate that in all three cases the image of the policy issue is bipartisan, that is to say it does not split the public opinion nor the political spectrum between left and right wing. This common feature attenuates what may otherwise be an intractable difference. It also provides some interesting analytical insights through the case comparison.

Last, the three cases share the same country setting. Italy, as I have discussed in the previous section, has been mostly on the radar of public policy scholars with an ‘administrative traditions’ perspective, which has explored the adverse consequences of an highly legalistic, Napoleonic culture on reform efforts. The case comparison takes issue with the notion of state tradition. However, the selected framework allows me to explore the interplay between entrepreneurship and legalism to offer more fine-grained views of the policy dynamics activated in this setting. The Italian administrative setting offers another particularity, i.e. the short duration of governments, whose mandate is interrupted by frequent turnovers. This specificity can be exploited to refine our understanding of key concepts such as the policy window and the interdependencies between streams, and the concluding section aims to do so.

1. GOVERNMENT INNOVATION POLICY IN ITALY (1993-2002): UNDERSTANDING THE INVENTION AND PERSISTENCE OF A PUBLIC MANAGEMENT REFORM*

Introduction

Understanding how political conditions and processes influence public management institutions, policies, and routines is a significant field-level research enterprise in executive politics and public administration. A strong tendency within this enterprise is to report and analyze public management reform at the level of countries, whether considered significant cases in themselves (Benz and Goetz 1996; Campbell and Halligan 1992; Pusey 1991) or as a basis for comparative analysis (Barzelay 2001, Pollitt and Bouckaert 2000; Zifcak 1994). Reflecting this tendency, research literature on public management reform in Italy has developed over the past decade (Panozzo 2000, Capano 2003; Gualmini 2008; Ongaro 2006; Ongaro and Valotti 2008). Most of this scholarship has looked at Italy as an instance of a Napoleonic country (Ongaro and Valotti 2008). In stylized terms³⁸, the highly legalistic state traditions are broadly held accountable for disabling reform efforts (Capano 2003; Gualmini 2008; Lippi 2000; Panozzo 2000). The argument that Italy's legalistic public administration tradition is such a powerful and pervasive force that public management policy and practice remain stable would thus appear to have become established knowledge. However, this chapter sets forth two significant reservations about it. The first reservation is that outcomes of public management reform initiatives are empirically more varied in Italy than the current literature allows – as documented by this chapter's in-depth case study of Italy's episode involving the issue of government innovation. The second reservation is that the

*Mele, V. 2010. 'Government Innovation Policy in Italy (1993-2002). Understanding the Invention and Persistence of a Public Management Reform'. *Governance* 23(2).

³⁸ See the introductory chapter for a more extensive discussion

theoretical approach in the established literature attributes questionable causal influence to the governmental system's legalistic tradition of public administration.

This chapter presents a variation-finding case study (Ragin 1987, McAdam, Tilly, and Tarrow 2001). The case is the career of the public management issue of government innovation policy from its inception in 1993 through 2002, when the analysis concludes. During the first one-year interval of this policy cycle, top-level policy-makers formulated and championed the issue of "government innovation" and developed, as well as instituted, a policy initiative called the *Projects for Change* program. The second interval of policy-making occurred in 1997-8, leading to the launch of the *Programme for Change*, and pursued similar change objectives by somewhat different means. The third interval occurred in 2002, leading to the inauguration of *Construction Sites for Change*. The policy issue of government innovation thus enjoyed an extended career between 1993 and 2002 – with three intervals of policy-making, each altering the design of programs to promote government innovation. Overall, the series of three policy-making intervals constituted an issue career characterized by the same direction of public management policy choices on a decadal time-scale. Because of this series of policy choices, novel public management policy and practice effectively became normalized. In this respect, among others, the case of government innovation policy is analytically different from those on which the established literature appears to be based.

This chapter considers the career of the government innovation policy from 1993-2002 as a single cycle of public management policy-making. The overall arc of this policy cycle is that of a progressive development of policy and practice, rather than that of an initiative that decayed in the face of deeply-rooted structural tendencies.

The policy cycle is divided into three intervals. The first concluded with the choice to institute the *Projects for Change* program, mentioned above. The second included the choice to institute the *Programme for Change*, and the third interval included the choice to institute the *Construction Sites for Change* program. The chapter reports the three-interval policy cycle narratively before presenting a research argument that explains its various trajectories and outcomes. More specifically, with respect to the first interval, the chapter explains why the issue of innovation was introduced into the policy agenda and why the design of the *Projects for Change* program came about. With respect to the second and third intervals, the chapter explains why the direction of policy choices remained stable and how follow-up programs for government innovation were instituted.

On the basis of this analysis, the chapter qualifies the established literature on the politics of public management policy making in Italy, and it does so by challenging the theoretical case that the country's state tradition and legalistic culture operates as an indomitable structural constraint on public management reform. In the chapter, actor-centric forms of explanation include the conduct of executive and legislative politicians that actively discredited these traditions, influencing the path and outcome of agenda-setting in the innovation policy. Event-centric forms of causal explanation include the stability of Ministry jurisdiction, the bi-partisan issue image of government innovation, the ability of the policy community to manage the frequent political transitions and to routinize the initiative upgrades. Consequently, the research argument shows how the characteristics of meso-structures (e.g. policy subsystems) are deeply implicated in public management reform.

This chapter's research design includes Kingdon's (1984) framework for describing conditions and occurrences as belonging within three parts of a policy cycle

– agenda-setting, alternative-specification, and decision-making. The description of the political-governmental system includes what Kingdon calls the political stream and what Baumgartner and Jones (1994) call policy subsystems. The time-path of certain agenda issue properties, as well as those of policy alternatives, are among the explananda of the historical research argument. This explanatory argument is structured as a narrative (Abell 2004); combining event-centric forms of causal explanation along with actor-centric forms of intentionalist explanation (Hedström 2005). Some of the specific explanatory claims draw on theoretically defined social mechanisms, including organizational learning and commitment dynamics (Kelman 2005; Levitt and March 1988).

Data collection for this research project followed a triangulation strategy to draw on the particular strengths of various data sources in order to validate the findings and conclusions (Creswell 1994; Marshall and Rossman 1995). Three sources of data were used: in-depth interviews (See Appendix A), written documents and archival reports. During the field research (2003-2005) access to both internal documents and to the interviewees was facilitated by the author's work as a consultant for the Public Administration Department within the Prime Minister Council (1999 and 2000). All interviews were transcribed and subsequently coded using ATLAS software for qualitative data analysis according to the theory-driven meta-categories of the research framework. Based on the interviews and corroborated by analysis of the documents, the thick narrative was drafted and, in a subsequent phase, analysed using the theoretical framework developed for the research project. An iterative process, which required strong coordination efforts with the authors conducting the parallel cases, cycled back and forth between the data and the emerging analysis and theory, leading to a constant refinement of the findings.

Narrating Innovation Policy in Italy

The Long Wave of Government Innovation Programs in Italy

Administrative reform has been an issue in Italy ever since the establishment of the modern nation-state following reunification in 1861. This reformist vocation was evident as early as 1865, when a senator spoke of Italy's "uncontainable aspiration to reform" (Sepe 1996, 81); it reappeared in the post-WWII period. A first interval of reform in the post-war reconstruction period was carried out in the name of adjusting the public sector to the Constitution's democratic principles. This interval generated a stable institutional base in the Office for Bureaucratic Reform in 1948. A second reform interval, extending from 1961 to 1972, instead was guided by an agenda of planning and efficiency.

Projects for Change

The beginning of the Italian government's novel policy to promote innovation in public administration was marked by the launch of an initiative called *Projects for Change*³⁹. The initiative was developed and proposed by the Ministry of Public Administration during 1993, and was approved by the Council of Ministers in the same year. In advocating for this initiative, the Public Administration Minister, Sabino Cassese, claimed that it would not only help modernize the central administration, but would also reduce public expenditure. To understand the genesis of *Projects for Change* and the government innovation policy, the early stages of this interval of the policy episode need to be set in the historical context of the early 1990s, including a massive shake-up in Italian politics and macroeconomic instability.

³⁹ The original title of the initiative *Projects for Change* was *Progetti Finalizzati a sperimentare soluzioni innovative per migliorare la funzionalità e l'efficienza delle prestazioni delle Pubbliche Amministrazioni, con particolare riguardo a quelle aventi immediata rilevanza per gli utenti* (Projects finalised at experimenting innovative solutions to improve the functionality and the effectiveness of the Public Administrations' services, with specific regard to the ones with immediate impact on the final users).

Setting the Agenda

The political shake-up began partly by design: a referendum in 1991 introduced an electoral reform, which came to undermine the hegemonic position of the Christian Democratic Party. The electoral reform was followed by the so-called ‘clean-hands scandal’, which intensified as the media revealed prodigious evidence of political corruption, including bribery, which judicial authorities had been taking advantage of for years. The ‘clean-hands’ scandal led to the collapse of the government in 1992, removing the Christian Democrats from power and allowing other parties to regroup and reposition themselves. For example, the Communist Party reinvented itself as the Italian Democratic Party of the Left.

A government headed by Giuliano Amato (1992-1993) was followed by one headed by Carlo Ciampi (1993-94). These governments incorporated experts, including academics, many of whom had no formal political affiliation. “There was the opportunity to create a new political class, one that knew what it was talking about” (Interview with Bruno Dente, June 2005). Ciampi’s own career had been based in the central bank, where he rose to the most senior office. In assembling his council of ministers, Ciampi appointed Sabino Cassese as Minister of Public Administration. A well-known professor of administrative law, Cassese had established his credentials as an expert on the public administration’s functioning through his participation in writing the so-called Giannini Report, back in the 1970s.

Prime Minister Ciampi faced widespread public discontent with state institutions when he became Prime Minister in April 1993, along with a need to stabilize the economy. In his investiture speech⁴⁰ before Parliament on May 6, 1993, the new Prime Minister sought to reassure the public that “economic recovery does not mean the end

⁴⁰ This speech is a formal requirement for the candidate President, shortly before being officially designated. In his address, he asks for the support of the Parliament that will appoint him.

of the welfare state.” In order to cushion the impact of the economic crisis on the welfare state, Ciampi called for the modernization and rationalization of the central administration, in the following terms: “We need to prepare the action of the future administrations for their modernization, which cannot be deferred further (...). We consider a priority interventions aimed at making each lira of public expenditure more efficient and rationalizing public procurement.”

The enhanced role of the Ministry of Public Administration began to become evident at this early stage of the Ciampi government. The signals came in the form of a prime ministerial announcement in May 1993 on how formulation of the 1994-96 state budget would now proceed. Three changes were indicated. First, the Ministry for Public Administration was allowed to participate in the process, for the first time. This process had previously been limited to the Prime Minister, the Ministry of Finance, the budget ministries and the State’s General Accountant. Second, the Prime Minister directed all ministries to critically review their costs in order to reduce spending through the rationalization of the public administration’s organization and functioning. Third, Ciampi authorized the Ministry for Public Administration to steer, coordinate and regulate all the matters concerning the public sector and the civil servants, and he made a specific request that the ministry draw up a report on the conditions of the Italian bureaucracy and guidelines on how to modernize the bureaucracy, for consideration by the Council of Ministers. This request served as a mandate for the study led by Cassese, using the model of his distant but familiar predecessor, Massimo Giannini.

In order to understand the actions and events in 1993, it is important to look back more than fifteen years to the end of the 1970s, when Cassese and others participated in studies leading to the publication of the *Rapporto Giannini*. At the end of the 1970’s, the mechanisms of government were reorganized to establish a Ministry for

Public Administration, and the Office for Bureaucratic Reform ceased to exist. The new ministry was intended to function as a general management agency for the entire central administration, with specific authority over public personnel regulation. In its early days, the ministry began an extensive survey of problems in Italy's central administration, led directly by the minister, Massimo Giannini. The overall study was organized in four commissions, on administrative techniques, urban planning and information technology, personnel, and restructuring the central administration to suit regional devolution, respectively. The results of the study were published in a major report, known even today as the *Rapporto Giannini*. The report did not, however, lead to the enactment or implementation of reforms, as Giannini failed to survive a change in government in 1980. Nonetheless, the study influenced an entire class of public leaders and academics in matters of public administration. A common conviction of these participants was that organizational improvement did not have to depend only on legislative reforms because steps could also be taken through administrative tools. Giannini was convinced that, "this new approach to reform obviously required continuity of action, of decision making, of encouragement and of evaluation" (Giannini 1982, 720). The full flowering of this approach awaited the effort to reform the Italian state following the breakdown of the post-war political order in the early 1990's.

In 1993, Cassese organized and led a team of experts from outside the Ministry to assess the conditions of public administration in Italy, and to develop possible solutions soon after the mandate was received. The project offered a means for intervening in what was considered a malfunctioning bureaucratic apparatus. The first report on "The Conditions of the Italian Bureaucracy" focused on problems. Specifically, it mapped the sectors and the services with the highest levels of citizen dissatisfaction and the public functions with inadequate planning. It included critical

factors that demonstrated incomplete or, on the contrary, redundant organization, the deficiencies in managing, recruiting, and allocating public personnel. The survey listed the weaknesses of decision-making processes characterized by fragmentary and ineffective procedures and the constraints in distributing and using resources. The second report focused on solutions. Entitled, “Guidelines for Modernizing the Public Administration,” the report called for seven lines of improvement, including serving citizens through public offices, making the bureaucracy less centralized and closer to the communities. This entailed simplifying the structures of the public administration to make them less cost-intensive and easier to access and understand; introducing more effective control systems, and making the administration more “European.” By issuing the two reports from the project, Cassese and his team tried to prompt debate within the Council of Ministers, the Parliament, the public administration, and public opinion.

At the same time the Ministry for Public Administration, in charge of steering the rationalization of the whole public administration, was requested to examine its own expenditure. This process was conducted by Cassese in conjunction with the rest of the Council of Ministers and, for the first time, the Ministry of Public Administration moved from the traditional role of “expenditure advocate” in defense of the civil servants’ interests, to one of “treasury guardian” (Interview with Pia Marconi, March 2005). The negotiations within the Council of Ministers were thereby eased.

Developing “Projects for Change”

Drafting the report had another crucial impact on the formulation of government innovation policy. Faced with the evidence of 3,600,000 employees and several thousand public entities, the team concluded on the one hand, that neither the Parliament nor the government had the power to reform this bureaucratic machine

entirely and immediately. On the other hand, only few administrations, particularly at the local level, had already addressed thorny problems, such as citizen satisfaction, accounting and reporting methods or performance pay systems, pioneering innovative solutions. As a result, the team decided to focus on experimenting with new practices in public organizations, preferring the “bottom-up versus top-down approach to the reform.” The next step was to translate this idea into an initiative aimed at supporting the large reform efforts with specific projects, at the central and local level, which could be tested, introduced and then spread throughout the administration.

After benchmarking programs for change in the UK, France, Spain, the US, and elsewhere, Cassese decided to build on a model that had been developed in Italy a few years before the political change had brought about the “government of professors.” The model had its genesis in a 1988 law that established a fund to undertake projects aimed at improving public efficiency. In assessing these projects, Cassese’s team identified severe shortcomings of the scheme. The inadequacies included the lack of visibility of the initiative as a whole. Beyond this, none of the projects had been presented by a public administration, but rather by consulting firms and information technology vendors. As a consequence, some of the projects were aimed exclusively at buying hardware and software. Those that did not include a role for public personnel were carried out by external consultants. Some projects were geared towards acquiring funds to reduce work backlogs; others took for granted the collaboration of various administrations, which in practice did not cooperate. “All in all, the scheme was viewed as having been poorly implemented.” (Interview with Pia Marconi, March 2005).

Cassese’s expert group decided that the concept of orchestrating pilot projects still provided the most promising means to pursue a bottom-up strategy of reforming practices in Italy’s public administration at the time. They sought to avoid the problems

that had beset the earlier iteration by modifying selection criteria and processes. The eligibility criteria aimed to exclude projects that solved contingent problems and to conduct straightforward studies. Furthermore, the criteria were geared to accepting projects that would be carried out under the direction of public employees and that could be replicated.

Finalizing and Launching “Projects for Change”

Negotiations within the Council of Ministers and the new deal of the expenditure planning phase, which had linked the administrative reform to the goal of deficit reduction created the conditions for the inclusion of the pilot projects in the 1994 state budget. However, two circumstances determined a sharp revision of the initiative. Meetings with the Finance Ministry and with the State General Accounting Office between July and October 1993 led to severe scrutiny of the projects already in place. The financial law included an article on the discipline of the pilot projects: the previously appropriated funds were significantly reduced for years to come and a detailed annex stated the differences between the old and the new initiative.⁴¹ The article was approved with minor amendments by Parliament, and the entire financial law was issued in late December 1993.

Early in 1994, the Ministry decided to launch the new version of the pilot projects in order to ensure visibility of the initiative. The Ministry of Public Administration, carrying out its original mission, was in charge of promoting, selecting and controlling the projects through an *ad hoc* Team (*Nucleo Progetti Finalizzati*) and a scientific committee. The Team was expected to sustain the administrations throughout the phases and to disseminate the results. More importantly, the Ministry was

⁴¹ The reduction was 14 billion Lire, approximately 7 million euros.

responsible for removing normative and procedural barriers, which could impede the full-fledged development of the projects.

Three elements of the 1993 *Projects for Change* were novel. The first was the inclusion of the initiative in the bigger picture of government rationalization and in the deficit cutting process. The second was the choice to sustain innovative administrations in the planning and implementation phase. The third was the recognition of the limitations of previous attempts to change the bureaucracy, based on top-down legal reforms. These elements determined the beginning of a new policy cycle in 1993. Let us now move to the second interval of the policy episode, resulting in the launch of the Program for Change.

Program for Change

Setting the agenda

After *Projects for Change* was launched early in 1994, the implementation process progressed slowly. The policy for government innovation had not been a priority for the two governments that ruled the country in 1994 and 1995. The government innovation policy continued as a low priority when Romano Prodi was elected Prime Minister in April 1996. The political program of the first Left coalition emphasized building consensus between the government, business and trade unions, maintaining a strong stand in fiscal policy to meet European Monetary Union criteria, promoting privatization, and completing electoral reforms.

Prodi named Franco Bassanini as minister of public administration in May. A professor of constitutional law and member of the Parliament since 1979, Bassanini came from the group of experts, who had worked on the Giannini Report in the late seventies. Between the 1970's and the early 80's, Bassanini directed several ministerial

commissions on the decentralization of functions from the central state to the regions. Once the Left Democratic Party was established in 1992, he became its leader on state, regions and constitutional reforms.

Though the issue of government innovation had not scored high in the political program of the Left coalition it was revived by Bassanini. Improving the country's economic performance without raising taxes or decreasing the services became an overall challenge faced by the new government. Recalling this time, Bassanini commented on how this overall challenge translated into an agenda for changing the orientation of public administration toward efficiency and service quality:

“In the mid nineties it was evident to me that government innovation couldn't be just a matter of costs, but rather quality of public services as a competitiveness factor. Globalization, the rise of information society and the European Union were phenomena that could be dealt with only with the quality of services. The administrative costs we had in Italy were not to be assessed only in terms of GDP percentage, but in terms of general impacts on the country. Too much bureaucracy was negative for businesses, and negative for citizens”. (Interview with Bassanini, May 2005)

In 1996, Bassanini began to prepare a comprehensive and government-wide reform aimed at modernizing practices and organizational structures. The reform was conceived in terms of the three building blocks of administrative simplification, of introduction of managerial tools, and of functional devolution to local administrations. The case for simplification had been made by the Confederation of Italian Industry-*Confindustria*, among other actors. The case for introduction of managerial tools had long been accepted by experts on administration, stretching at least as far back as the *Rapporto Giannini*. The third element came from the recently accelerated devolution process. The introduction a few years prior, of the direct elections for municipalities and

provinces, had given actors within the recently formed Northern League party and from the Left Democrats their first opportunities to hold office. Local administrations demanded more autonomy, irrespective of their political affiliation. As they were eager to show a focus on decentralization and modernization, these otherwise opposing actors each endorsed the issue of government innovation. The agenda for modernizing practices and organizational structures gained support from each of the four left-wing governments that led the country during the 1996-2001 legislature, as well as from the parliamentary opposition.⁴²

The main reason was that this agenda was perceived as bi-partisan, given consensus on simplification and devolution. The issue of government innovation and of the need to establish an ad-hoc initiative also enjoyed a relative continuity because of Bassanini's ability to survive government reshuffles. However, this ability was not absolute: Bassanini vacated the post of Minister for a year and a half in the middle of the parliamentary mandate. Nonetheless, Bassanini continued to play the role of reform champion during this interlude, as the Secretary of the Council of Ministers. This relative continuity also allowed for the progressive creation of a reform-oriented team within the Public Administration Ministry. Most of the top civil servants directing the Ministry were substituted by a team of public managers selected for their profile of innovators and on average twenty years younger than the previous ones. For instance, Pia Marconi, a young manager from the private sector who had been working as a consultant for the ministry in 1993 under Cassese, was appointed Director General of the Office for Procedures and Administrative Efficiency.

⁴² Prodi, D'Alema (I), D'Alema (II) and Amato led the four executives between 1996 and 2001. Bassanini in his speech to the Fifth Global Forum on Reinventing Government, 3-7 November 2003 (p.5-6) stated that, "the strong political support that the three Prime Ministers in charge provided, in my capacity as Cabinet Minister responsible for Public Administration and to the Reform, proved to be, in my experience, the trump card permitting me to win the game or, at least, to avoid failure."

Developing the Program for Change

The staff of the Office for Procedures and Administrative Efficiency calculated that the resources needed to carry out a reform included large investments in information and communication technology (ICT), training and education and the recruitment of 50,000-100,000 young employees, able to introduce fresh professional skills. However, during a period in which the government was striving to reduce the state debt and to cut spending, the appropriation of funds to advance the reform was considered unfeasible. In Bassanini's words (May 2005), "We were not in the condition to ask the finance ministry for billions of lire. So, we had to make a wedding banquet with dried figs."

After realizing that the resource scarcity would impede structural investment, the team considered launching new initiatives aimed at sustaining the innovation in the Italian public administration. Their review of the experience of *Projects for Change* led to the conclusion that this ongoing initiative was a viable model. In addition, the fundamental idea of a central agency responsible for igniting, supporting and spreading innovation throughout the public administration, which had inspired the *Projects for Change* in 1993, perfectly matched the current vision of the wider administrative reform.

The team evaluated the experience with *Projects for Change* to improve on its design and operation. They observed that some of the available funds had been allocated to central and local administrations willing to experiment with new ideas. Some critical concepts emerged from the evaluation of the funded projects. There was general agreement that funds had been given to innovative projects, albeit of a diverse nature. The project selection was poorly managed, "by giving incentives to the administrations simply for experimenting, without defining the priorities, without a strategic vision on innovation" (Interview with Mauro Bonaretti and Renato Tasca,

May 2005). Overall, the view was that allocation of funds had been based more on distributional than instrumental criteria.

In March 1997, the Public Administration Ministry obtained the government's support for cancelling the funds appropriated to projects deemed to be out of alignment with the modernization policy, in order to release resources for projects aligned with the new innovation objectives. The Parliament ratified this solution with minor amendments.⁴³ A scientific committee composed of top civil servants, academics and consultants was created to evaluate the projects and identify those that did not achieve the expected results and those projects whose results were unlikely to be replicable.

The latter specification had been the result of a debate in the community of experts that was progressively coalescing within and around the Ministry. The academic studies on government reform and innovation intensified, the ministerial staffs were frequently exposed to international networks and the ex-post analysis of the previous initiatives highlighted strengths and weaknesses of innovation practices. As a result, the team gained greater awareness of the skills and leadership attached to innovation and to the practice of innovating. Spreading and sustaining change started to be considered as a process rather than as an event. As such, they needed constant managerial efforts.

The lessons learned through the examination of domestic and international practices were mainly focused on the spectrum of the projects to be funded. Leaving the concept of government innovation excessively broad could confirm the reputation of an initiative that distributed funds in a non-targeted way. Subsidizing too many and very diverse projects increased the risks of dispersing the resources. Organizing the selection with a call for funds increased the risk of collecting applications from administrations that did not represent the core target of the policy. These shortcomings had a common

⁴³ Parliamentary Meeting 17 January 1997.

denominator, and the community of practice progressively recognized it in the lack of central management.

Finalizing and Launching Program for Change

In July 1998, the policy for government innovation entered a new phase. In the context of a comprehensive plan for the bureaucratic reform, with a group of skilled people and a secured knowledge of the issue, the Ministry for Public Administration issued a new directive for regulating the pilot projects. The initiative *Projects for Change* was relabelled *Program for Change*,⁴⁴ in order to signal the centrally coordinated efforts. Unlike the previous initiative, *Program for Change* was to fund a limited number of projects, all keyed to issues directly related to the three reform pillars that the ministry considered strategic and therefore of high priority. Also, unlike the previous initiative, the projects were conceived of and promoted directly by the Ministry. Furthermore, the projects were designed to include local and central administrations, considered as “partner organizations.” The spirit of the new initiative was expressed in the following terms:

“Program for change was based on the concept of collective learning and cultural growth. It did not just help the administrations to implement the reform, but also had a genuine impact on the bureaucratic system. It was not just training, but a systematization of the experiences of the administrations.” (Interview with Mauro Bonaretti, May 2005)

The Program started to run in January 1998, after six (out of the eight) projects initially planned for had been selected. The six projects included in the *Program for Change* concerned, respectively, procedural simplification, new forms of public

⁴⁴ In 1998 the initiative *Progetti Finalizzati a sperimentare soluzioni innovative per migliorare la funzionalità e l'efficienza delle prestazioni delle Pubbliche Amministrazioni, con particolare riguardo a quelle aventi immediata rilevanza per gli utenti*, commonly known as *Progetti Finalizzati* was re-labelled *Programma Progetti Finalizzati*.

contracting, integrated communication of the reform, regulatory impact analysis, best practices in managerial control and flexibility of public employment.⁴⁵ By March 1999 all six projects had been launched. A small team of external experts, mainly consultants and academics contracted on an *ad hoc* basis by the Ministry, managed each of the six projects. For each of these, the Ministry established agreements with local and central administrations in order to develop and test new solutions. The Office for the Procedure and Administrative Efficiency, under the direction of Pia Marconi, supervised all of the teams. The projects began to be wrapped up as general elections approached.

While the projects were under way, the Office for Procedures and Administrative Efficiency was renamed as the Office for Innovation in Public Administration, with Marconi continuing to act as director. One role of the office was to bring together academics, consultants and civil servants and to form a community of practice. The first “Innovation Day” demonstrated the visibility reached by the issue of innovation, during the same month as general elections were held.

Construction Sites for Change

Following a government turnover, with the victory of Silvio Berlusconi’s House of Freedom electoral coalition in May 2001, the government innovation policy cycle entered a third phase. While the issue of government innovation was not mentioned in the coalition’s electoral program, Berlusconi’s government seemed eager to signal

⁴⁵ The projects were crafted to collect experiences and to develop new skills around the three pillars of the Bassanini grand plan to reform the administration. In particular, the projects ‘procedural simplification’ and ‘regulatory impact analysis’ were aimed at experimenting solutions and developing skills with reference to the reform goal of administrative simplification. The project ‘new forms of public contracting’, ‘best practices in managerial control’ and ‘flexibility of public employment’ were instrumental to the reform goal of introducing managerial tools. All these projects gave specific emphasis to the role and the inclusion of local administrations, in accordance to the third reform pillar of functional devolution to local administrations. Last, the project ‘integrated communication of the reform’ was aimed at raising awareness among public sector organizations about the changes connected to the reform, as well as to collect feedbacks on the reform implementation among selected key targets, i.e. private entrepreneurs, civil servants and journalists.

discontinuity with its predecessor in any and all policy domains. Nonetheless, a new ministerial initiative, *Construction Sites for Change* came to be supported both by the Council of Ministers and by the pre-existing community of practice.⁴⁶

Setting the Agenda

The issue of government innovation did not score highly in the political agenda of the new government. The week before the 2001 elections, Berlusconi appeared on television to sign a "contract with the Italian people," promising to enact a large tax cut, change the policing of urban centers, increase minimum pensions, cut unemployment by 50 per cent, and rebuild Italian infrastructures. In several public discourses, however, the issue of reforming the public administration had been mentioned in terms of making life easier for citizens and businesses, particularly through the use of information and communication technologies (ICT's). This issue was receiving growing attention since 2000, when Bassanini launched the Electronic Government Action Plan.

The Executive marked the definitive separation between the issue of Electronic Government and the issue of government innovation. The first became a task of the newly established Ministry for Innovation and New Technologies, while the second remained a task of the Ministry for Public Administration, under the leadership of Franco Frattini. The new minister for public administration was familiar with the issue of government innovation and with the evolution of the associated initiatives launched by the Ministry. He had already been in charge of this office, for approximately one year, during the 1995 transitional government, managing the funds allocation of *Projects for Change*. Afterwards, he had actively participated as a minority member to

⁴⁶ The new initiative was labelled "*Cantieri per il cambiamento nelle Amministrazioni Pubbliche*" (Construction Sites for Change in Public Administrations) and became commonly known as *Cantieri* (Construction Sites).

the parliamentary debates on the bureaucratic reform and on the *Program for Change* in 1997.⁴⁷

From the previous government, Frattini inherited an organizational unit in charge of innovating: the Office for Innovation in Public Administration. The six projects included in the *Program for Change* were being systematically completed by the office. Early in his tenure, Frattini confirmed the office's place in the Ministry's structure as well as Marconi as director.

The issue, though familiar to the new minister, was not easy to reformulate in accordance with the three distinct viewpoints within the ruling coalition. *Forza Italia*, consistent with conventional right-wing rhetoric, conceived of innovation as shrinking the state in favor of the private sphere and business freedom. For the Northern League⁴⁸, government innovation implied a federalist form of state where the bulk of public activities ought to be planned and carried out at the local level. These two visions had to be combined with the conservative view of the National Alliance, a party that enlisted civil servants among its main constituencies.

A synthesis of these perspectives started to emerge in late 2001, during the meetings between the new minister and his staff. The issue of government innovation was shaped as a process aimed at delivering benefits, long lasting and visible, directly to citizens and businesses. Government innovation was not an issue that concerned public

⁴⁷ See, for example, the intervention of Franco Frattini to the parliamentary discussion on the amendments proposed by the Executive on Article 16 concerning the possibility to withdraw funding to the Projects for Change not in line with the Law on public sector reform and administrative simplification. Acts of the Parliamentary Meeting n. 139, 30 January 1997, p.11472.

⁴⁸ In the late 1980s this political movement with roots in Milan and its hinterland merged other northern leagues from Piedmont, the Veneto and elsewhere in 1991, and formed the Northern League (*Lega Nord*). In the early 1990s, it represented itself as the agent of the "North that produces" against an Italian South "that consumes" at the North's expense. "At bottom, the League represents the Italy of producers, whose capital is Milan, in counterpoint to Rome, capital of the old party system (*partitocrazia*) and of state centralism" (Diamanti and Mannheim, 1994, p.ix).

administration as a whole, but, rather, the single units and agencies. It was based on the concept of empowerment and it was intended as bottom-up innovation.

In late 2001 the issue definition was completed. While *Program for Change* had been implemented on the principles introduced by the extensive reform of 1997, the new Ministry could not introduce further regulation into the system. The negotiations and the debate about the next steps of the Office for Government Innovation moved from the acknowledgement that a “legal moratorium was needed, and that any new initiative had not to be considered instrumental to the legal reforms” (Interview with Pia Marconi, March 2005).

Developing Construction Sites for Change

The office started to develop the new initiative in late 2001. Under Frattini and Marconi’s direction, the Office for Innovation in Public Administration and the external experts that had worked on the previous initiative exchanged ideas and experiences. It was clear from the beginning that the resources available for any initiative related to the issue of government innovation were scarce, at least compared to other public management programs⁴⁹.

An *ex post* analysis of *Program for Change* conducted by the Office for Innovation highlighted some of its limitations and some of the aspects that had to be better implemented. Important insights into formulating the new initiative, such as local administration empowerment and knowledge management, also came from Marconi’s work as a member of the OECD’s Public Management Committee, which in 2002 issued “Government Modernization: A New Agenda.” This report presented a critical

⁴⁹ E.g. the *Governance Program* was allocated 35 million Euro for a five year period, while the *Construction Sites for Change Initiative* was allocated 1 million Euros.

analysis of New Public Management principles and cases, and proposed strategies and tools available to improve government adaptability to the changing context.

A round of negotiations on business-government relations also shaped the new initiative. The Ministry for Public Administration and the Italian Industrial Association signed an agreement in November 2001, aimed at encouraging the cooperation between public and private sectors to innovate “the public administration according to the demands of the business world, improving managerial practices in public administrations.”⁵⁰ Further negotiations took place between the office and the Italian Institute for Public Administration Training and Studies. The previous government had restructured the institute and had created CIPA, a spin-off on government cohesion and innovation, whose mandate included the provision of human and financial resources for the new initiative.

Finally, the office conducted several meetings with local administrations to share ideas and expectations. They convened some of the local administrations that had been particularly active in experimenting with the pilot projects, and collected their suggestions through the “Unified Conference between Central State and Local Entities”. In addition to the consultation with this official Board, meetings with two associations - the National Association of the Italian Municipalities and the Union of the Italian Provinces - were also organized. While these administrations agreed with the Ministry on the need to receive support for innovation, they expected more autonomy in defining priorities and solutions.

Local administrations recognized, since the beginning, that the new initiative was not a channel to receive significant amounts of funding or media coverage. The issue of Electronic Government, instead, was catalyzing the interest of politicians and

⁵⁰ Protocol of Understanding 6/11/2001 between Confindustria and Ministry for Public Administration, “Shared actions for the efficiency and quality of public administrations”.

public opinion (Mele, 2008), as well as the resources.⁵¹ As a result, the initiative was crafted as a central service to the individual administrations willing to innovate.

Finalizing and Launching Construction Sites for Change

In two months, the Office for Innovation, supported by the external experts, finalized “Proposals for Change”, the position document aimed at launching the new phase of government innovation. The document drew heavily from the works and perspective of the Public Management Committee of OECD. It took into consideration the political inputs of the ruling coalition, agreement with the Industrial Associations and exchange with the local administrations. The authors were the same ministerial staff members⁵², academics⁵³ and consultants⁵⁴ that had been developing *Program for Change*.

In February 2002, the Minister presented to the public and to the press the document “Proposals for Change”, which officially launched the new initiative “Construction Sites for Change”, aimed at supporting government innovation through the institutional empowerment of the single administrations. Each “construction site” was going to provide research, shared guidelines and manuals developed with the public organizations willing to participate. The construction sites were based on a sophisticated system of knowledge management and were aimed at increasing the social capital of the single administrations. In May 2002, the office organized a second “Innovation Day,” during which Frattini and Marconi presented the details of *Construction Sites for*

⁵¹ The previous government had appropriated the income of the UMTS (Universal Mobile Telecommunications Systems) Auction for Electronic Government development.

⁵² Sabina Bellotti, Carlo D’Orta, Pia Marconi and Paolo Testa.

⁵³ Prof Capano, Prof Meneguzzo, Prof Mussari and Prof La Spina.

⁵⁴ Mauro Bonaretti, Marco Mena and Renato Tasca.

Change to an audience including 1,700 civil servants. The launch of this initiative represented a further evolution of the policy cycle on government innovation.

Understanding The Genesis And Dynamics Of Government Innovation Policy In Italy

The episode analyzed here includes the three intervals of the policy episode of government innovation policy making in Italy between 1993 and 2002. This section attempts to give a process account of why the issue of innovation was introduced into the policy agenda and how the design of *Projects for Change* came to be decided - with respect to the first interval. With respect to the second and third intervals, the section examines why the direction of policy choices remained stable, and how follow-up programs for government innovation were instituted. The following analysis is organized around the answers to these questions for each of the three intervals.

Projects for Change

The first question addressed here is why the issue of innovation was introduced in the policy agenda, resulting in the launch of the *Projects for Change* in 1993. The political crisis of 1992 led to an abrupt turnover of the whole establishment. The system was going through a deep transformation and while the Christian Democrats and the Socialists were collapsing under the allegations of bribery, the former Communist party was trying to reposition its ideology and discourse. The numerous corruption scandals that coincided with the struggle to meet the Maastricht standards brought about a new interest by the public in the functioning of the public sector. The national mood was definitively anti-government, as indicated by impressive levels of participation in the referendum that exposed the state's functioning to the voters' opinion.

Members of the Executive were co-opted from the university. The experts who had participated in the Commissions for the Reform of Public Administration in the late seventies (the Giannini report) were given important positions in the so-called “technical” government, the prime example of this being the Minister for Public Administration, Sabino Cassese. The common background of the members generated a collective belief about the agenda priorities.

Government innovation was introduced by the Left in the issue package, which signaled a modern and reformist approach to socio-economic problems. The implications of this approach for reforms in the public sector were broadly outlined in the Prime Ministerial investiture speech of Carlo A. Ciampi in 1993. He also certified Cassese, the Minister for Public Administration, as a policy entrepreneur by delegating to him the analysis of public sector problems and subsequent proposal development for solutions. Cassese promoted the specific issue of government innovation. Its intrinsic “technical” nature made it a natural candidate to rank high on the technocrat government agenda, and to complement other issues on the political government agenda. In doing so, he kept a keen eye on the expectations of the finance ministry, while distancing himself from his own ministry’s natural constituency of civil servants. Consequently, the issue of government innovation was included on the government agenda and packaged mainly as being instrumental to austerity measures. The nature of the issue was decisive in extracting the policy issue from the process of legal enactment, and parceling it out to the specialized agenda of the policy sub-domain.

Here we have to account for the act of conceiving government innovation as a policy issue, which was done by Sabino Cassese - the Public Administration Minister - and his close collaborators during the first policy cycle. The temporal context represents an important class of explanatory factors. Within this class, a crucial factor was the

broad aspirational direction of government policy of Carlo Ciampi. This aspirational direction was toward modernization of public institutions, the shoring up of the welfare state, and squeezing more value out of public expenditure. The wider policy context for these aspirations included Italy's commitment to join the incipient European Monetary Union. Delivering on this commitment required reducing the public deficit to levels permitted by the 1992 Maastricht Treaty.

Another aspect of the temporal context in 1993 was public opinion. Opinion surveys⁵⁵ indicated that the public had become profoundly disappointed in government, while the referendum voting behavior also signaled a disillusionment with public administration⁵⁶. For a government inclined to shore up a welfare state, this attitude represented a problematic condition.

It is not difficult to understand how Sabino Cassese came to be responsible for expanding on the Ciampi government's approach to public management. Cassese had been recruited to the ministerial post because of his prominence in one of the best-positioned epistemic communities in Italy, namely the academic field of public law. Explaining how the concept of government innovation came about as an issue definition is difficult to do with complete confidence. What we do know for certain is that Cassese entered the role of Public Administration Minister at this critical juncture with a prepared mind; indeed his cognition was socially supported by a solid epistemic community that had grown out of the effort that produced the 1970's Giannini report.

⁵⁵ The opinion polls that preceded the administrative elections showed the lack of trust in government and the coalition parties – the *partiti di governo* – in favor of new parties such as the Northern League and the National Party of the Right. (150 years of Italian history: 1861-2011. Archives Alinari - Università degli studi di Milano). A poll on the trust towards government revealed, “50% of the Italians do not believe in government” (Corriere della Sera, Historical archives, 19 March 1993).

⁵⁶ The referendum held on 19th April 1993 obtained an unprecedented turnout rate (76.8). It abrogated three Ministeries: 70% of votes determined the abrogation of the Ministry for Agriculture, established in 1929; 82.3% of votes determined the abrogation of the Ministry for Tourism & Entertainment established in 1959 and 89% of votes determined the abrogation of the Ministry for Public Participation in Private Enterprises, the Ministry established in 1956 to manage public shares in private companies. In addition, the results of the referendum led to the reduction in scope of the functions performed by local healthcare agencies (82.6 of positive votes).

Despite the fact that academic lawyers were central to this epistemic community, one of the features of its outlook was that organizational improvement could be pursued through administrative tools and not only through legislative reform. This socially supported belief tended to push the search for alternatives in the direction of crafting long-term managerially-oriented change initiatives, in addition to preparing and selling legislation to alter the institutional context of public employment and functioning. In other words, we can attribute some of the actors' cognitive conduct to a kind of organizational learning, specifically a carefully engineered one that had taken place more than ten years earlier.

Turning to the question of how and why the design of *Projects for Change* came to be, policy transfer and imitation did not play a major role in developing the initiative, notwithstanding the official visits and the exchange of ideas between the minister and his foreign counterparts. The process was influenced instead by interpretations of the government's own experiences and by their availability. Here, the concept of feasibility in selecting alternatives (Kingdon 1984) can be integrated with the concept of availability and proximity in developing new organizational practices (Levitt and March 1988) to account for the decision of the minister to select an initiative that already existed and that had already shown its shortcomings.

A further incentive to recycle this experience was also a result of the time constraints ingrained in the transitional nature of the government, which had to compress the innovation policy cycle into a few months. Thus, after analyzing the critical aspects of the previous initiative and developing possible adjustments, the minister and his staff of external experts finalized the initiative to reflect the repair work and launched *Projects for Change*. The participation of the Minister for Public

Administration in the expenditure-planning phase, coupled with his reputation as a “treasury guardian,” helped to secure resources for the government innovation policy.

Program for Change

The analysis of the second policy cycle explains why and how in 1997 the issue of government innovation was revived despite a congested agenda by employing the concept of familiarity with the issue of the policy entrepreneur, along with two concurrent spillover effects (Kingdon 1984). Franco Bassanini, the Minister for Public Administration appointed in 1996, came from the same policy community as Cassese, the minister who three years earlier had launched the *Projects for Change* initiative. They had both worked in the government reform commission in the late 1970s and had developed a similar conception of public sector reform also by experimenting with new solutions.

As for the two spill-over effects: the first came from the policy domain of Europeanization and the need to match EU criteria; and the second from the policy domain of administrative decentralization. Government innovation was thus repackaged as instrumental to the country’s competitiveness on the one hand and to the empowerment of local administrations on the other hand. This latter domain had strong advocates throughout the political spectrum, ranging from the recently formed Northern League party to the Left Democrats undertaking their first governing experience, who were eager to show a focus on decentralization and modernization thus endorsing the issue of government innovation, which then achieved a bipartisan image. It should be noted that the stability of the issue on the agenda was also ensured during the four left-wing governments that governed the country during this five-year legislature, due to the reputation of the policy entrepreneur.

Turning to the process of program development, Bassanini created a team for government innovation within the Ministry for Public Administration and in particular, attributed the organizational responsibility of expanding the issue and launching an ad hoc initiative to Pia Marconi, the manager who had worked as a consultant for Cassese in 1993. This phase was influenced by budget constraints, which obliged the policy entrepreneurs to ignore other options due to a perceived prohibitive cost. Consideration was given to both the availability of solutions and technical feasibility, thus leading to the decision to recycle the *Projects for Change* initiative.

The feedback on this experience, coupled with the stability of the policy sub-domain, allowed for the accumulation of knowledge on managing the design process of these initiatives. Additionally, the delegation of explicit responsibilities to organizations provided them with the opportunity to engage directly with the issue and benefit from previous lessons learned and vicarious experiences of other administrations. The practice of sustaining government innovation was refined consistently with these features of the design process. Thus, the initiative launched in 1998 was re-labelled *Program for Change*. Fewer projects, focused on the innovation priority of the government, had to be selected based on their potential achievements and of their ability to be replicated. The ministry was not distributing funds, but rather launching partnerships with selected administrations interested in developing new solutions to the common priorities of the Italian administrative system. The Ministry was also providing a platform for the exchange of innovation experiences, problems and even staff.

Construction Sites for Change

The analysis of the last cycle questions how the issue of government innovation remained stable on the policy agenda despite the fact that the 2001 elections brought in

a new party coalition led by Berlusconi, and despite the natural deadline of the *Program for Change* initiative in the same year. Over time, the issue and the related initiative had come to be perceived as a technical, bipartisan tool to support innovative administrations, regardless of their political affiliations.

One feature of the development process that shaped the innovation initiative was the cohesion within the professional community of public innovators, strengthened by the creation of an Office for Government Innovation within the Ministry for Public Administration in 2000. When Silvio Berlusconi appointed Franco Frattini as Minister for Public Administration in 2001, a policy monopoly (Baumgartner and Jones 1993) had already formed. The new minister and government neither interfered in the flow of activities and debate that was already active and had produced positive feedback, nor dismantled the office in charge of coordinating the innovation efforts.

The cohesion within the professional community of public innovators was enabled also by the confirmation of Pia Marconi as Director of the Office for Innovation. Her participation in the OECD Public Management Committee coincided with the development of the initiative by validating both the actor and the new program. On the one hand, the policy entrepreneur associated with government innovation by the community of experts and administrations was legitimized also at the international level. On the other hand, the new initiative was launched within the framework of the OECD recommendations of institutional empowerment and bottom-up innovations as key resources for the government's ability to adapt to a changing context.

This determined a new approach to the management of the process design, since the Minister linked the idea of bottom-up innovation to the idea of legal moratorium and took the development of the new initiative away from the process of legal enactment. The initiative shifted completely into the specialized agenda of the Ministry, supported

by the community of practice which had turned into a constituency for change (Kelman 2005).

The process of developing the new initiative was constrained by a concurrent parallel cycle. The policy entrepreneurs could not propose a large-ticket item since the issue of Electronic Government had captured the media's attention including funds available for innovation, and had determined the establishment of an *ad hoc* ministry with specific allocations. As a consequence, while Electronic Government was receiving high coverage and had climbed the political agenda, the new initiative for government innovation, *Construction Sites for Change*, was crafted for a specialized audience. While the flagship initiative for Electronic Government was based on a call for projects to be funded, *Construction Sites* was based on a sophisticated system of knowledge management and support to the communities of practice that had developed over a decade-long period.

Discussion

This section offers an explanation of continuity and change in this decade-long episode by analyzing the three cycles longitudinally. Within such a timeframe, policy making concerning government innovation evolved in a consistent direction. Interestingly, it took a consistent direction even though Italy was passing through a period of recurring cabinet instability between 1993 and 2002, with a turnover of nine Executives and six different ministers for public administration.

Following Baumgartner and Jones (1993), we can posit that the policy making on government innovation was a partial equilibrium situation during these years. Therefore, we can dissect this situation by examining the interlocking features of a partial equilibrium, including the policy subsystem and issue image. By the end of the

first cycle, the Public Administration Ministry had achieved a policy monopoly over government innovation issues. There is no evidence of any attempt to contest this jurisdiction, as the composition and the internal structure of the public management policy community served as bulwark against incursions into the public administration ministry's policy jurisdiction. No single factor, including the stability of the ministry's jurisdiction, accounts for the consistent direction of policy making. Another condition that played a causal role was the stability in issue image (Baumgartner and Jones 1993). The condition is partly explained by the fact that the issue of government innovation did not relate to the basis of partisan competition and, similarly, the very idea of government innovation appealed equally to parties of different ideological colors (Mele and Compagni, 2010).

Since we now understand continuity, let us now explore the repeated introduction of novelty in the features of government innovation policies. As we have seen, the features of *Projects for Change* (1993) were different from those of the *Program for Change* (1998) and, in turn, from the ones attributable to *Construction Sites for Change* (2002). The first initiative distributed funds to projects in any phase of development, generically based on innovative ideas. The second initiative carefully selected projects in one of the key areas identified by the Public Administration Ministry, with the aim of testing and demonstrating practices that could be spread throughout the public sector. The third was a sophisticated initiative of knowledge creation and knowledge sharing, aimed at developing and supporting communities of practice.

Just as we have used Baumgartner and Jones (1993) to account for the continuity of policy making on government innovation, we can now employ Levitt and March (1988) to structure an account of the changes in the policy design. According to Levitt

and March, routines are chosen by actors in the system that monitor the operation of such routines. Then they encode experiences as either a success or failure, they try to explain the outcome despite causal ambiguity and they proceed in variation of routines in the interest of achieving success in the next period of operation. This scenario came to pass in the episode. Periodically, there was an interruption in the experience where actors asked whether it had been successful or not. The very meaning of success evolved in parallel with the initiative's features, shifting from the completion of a project roughly consistent with the department's mandate, to the positive analysis of the project impacts on the users and on its replicability. This provided an opportunity for understanding and greater comprehension of the initiative. The more the initiatives progressed, the more they activated positive feedback regarding their outcomes.

The program's ability to progress rather than deteriorate was also facilitated by the 'routinization' of the transition phases between cabinets, that would have otherwise been disruptive for the policy sub-domain, both in terms of stability of jurisdiction (i.e. units in charge of innovation policy) and in terms of issue image (how the issue was framed). Routinization of the transition phases meant that policy entrepreneurs learned how to manage the frequent cabinet transitions and the associated reorganization of the policy sub-domain.

Conclusion

The established research literature on public management reform in Italy is not consistent with the fact that initiatives aimed at promoting government innovation in Italy between 1993 and 2002 proved durable rather than ill-fated. The best evidence that they were not ill-fated is that a single exercise of political will gave rise to the persistence and to the preservation of a novel approach to public management policy.

These initiatives were able to develop gradually, becoming a sophisticated system of knowledge management, establishing their national and international reputation as effective programmes, and aggregating a considerable and, more importantly, recognizable network of public managers willing to invest continuous efforts in experimenting and adopting innovative practices.

This analysis of the Italian innovation episode is suited to question the theoretical case that Italy's state tradition and legalistic culture operate as indomitable structural constraints on public management reform. It has done so first by showing how these traditions were actively discredited by policy entrepreneurs and a niche of the public management system was built around the novel view. Second, the research argument shows how the character of meso-structures (e.g. policy subsystems) is deeply implicated in public management reform. In particular, while most works patterned on Kingdon (1984) take the policy subsystem for granted, this experience suggests that it deserves more attention in politically instable contexts. In such settings, the rubric of social mechanisms that explain continuity and change needs to be enriched and must include developing a community of practice and working through frequent cabinet transitions.

Generalizing arguments about the politics of public management reform in Italy should naturally take into account explanations of episodes in which a change in the direction of public management policy and practice has been sustained for numerous years. They should take into account research arguments that consider the effects of transitory political factors within the political stream (Kingdon 1984), such as political crises, as well as institutional factors, such as policy subsystems (Baumgartner and Jones 1993), that are more fine-grained than a governmental system's legalistic tradition of public administration. If accepted as research knowledge about the country case of

Italy, individuals' risky investment of energy and reputation in reforming public management might no longer be dismissed as curiously heroic, but rather regarded as sociologically explicable.

Appendix A

The author interviewed a former Prime Minister, a former Minister for Public Administration, the Director General of the Public Administration Department, two former Senior Officials at the Public Administration Department in charge of Innovative Projects, two former consultants in charge of “Cantieri” (Construction Sites for Change), a Senior Official at the Department for Innovation and IT, an expert and former consultant for the Public Administration Department and three academics in their role of experts of public policy and consultants for the Public Administration Department.

The empirical work occurred in three phases. First, in order to get a sketchy draft of the research case and to guide subsequent data collection, five preliminary interviews were conducted and a focus group of four informed participants was organized. Second, these insights were supplemented by written documents and archival records of the Public Administration Department, such as feasibility studies, internal reports, project evaluation reports, minutes of meetings, research papers conducted by academics and consultants. To gain insight into the process dynamics of the pre-decisional stage of the three sets of initiatives, twelve further semi-structured interviews with key informants were conducted until reaching saturation (Bauer and Gaskell 2000, 23). The interviews were conducted taking into consideration the challenges of 'elite interviewing'.

To limit informant bias and improve construct validity, four in-depth interviews were conducted for each policy cycle with informants who viewed the project from diverse perspectives - policy entrepreneurs, civil servants working at the launch and implementation of the project, consultants in charge of operationalising the project and academics with a deep knowledge of the Public Administration department activities -

former consultants - with an external, yet informed, perspective on the initiatives for innovation in government.

The interviews took place mostly in the interviewees' office. The duration of each interview was between ninety minutes and three hours. Five of the twelve interviewees were consulted at least twice. Four follow-up interviews with different key informants were conducted for a respondent validation of the data.

2. DYNAMICS OF ELECTRONIC GOVERNMENT POLICIES: THE CASE OF ITALY (1992-2003)

Introduction

A main theme of public sector innovation is the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs)⁵⁷ to strengthen state capacity. These reforms often involve efforts to improve state economic and social programs, its relationships with citizens and its internal operations by exploiting ICTs (Brown 2005). In public administration, “the use of ICTs, and particularly the Internet, as a tool to achieve better government” has been defined as Electronic Government (OECD 2003, p.1). This term was coined in the wake of the Internet-driven transformations in the modus operandi of entire business sectors, known as Electronic Commerce. After its debut in the early nineties⁵⁸, the concept of Electronic Government has gained currency among policymakers and has become, first, a significant component of the modernization and innovation agenda in developing and developed countries and then, since 2000, the main target of numerous administrative reforms.

Paralleling its spread in the policy arena, Electronic Government has been progressively incorporated in the studies on public management and is currently used as an umbrella category under which separate research streams have coalesced. Despite the variety of these research streams, the process of Electronic Government policy-making, must be analyzed further. This chapter develops research arguments about the politics of Electronic Government, analyzed as an instance of innovation and change in a public services context.

⁵⁷ In this chapter the acronyms IT (Information Technology) and ICT (Information & Communication Technologies) are used interchangeably. For a complete account of the shift from IT to ICT see Castells, 1996. IT policy and E-Government policy are also used without distinction, though aware of the fact that EGovernment as a label was coined much later when the first IT policies were launched.

⁵⁸ The term first appeared in the 1993 US National Performance Review.

In the frame of this section– dedicated to the analysis of concrete experiences of innovation – this chapter reports and then analyzes a decade-long episode of Electronic Government in Italy. The efforts to launch and sustain Electronic Government policy in this country were initiated with the establishment of an Authority for IT in Public Administration in 1993 and continued throughout the decade resulting in a high number of ad hoc laws, institutional rearrangements, initiatives and projects. The episode analyzed is used as an instrumental case to answer two empirically grounded questions: (a) How did the innovative content of E-Government evolve in the decade under analysis? (b) Why and how was the issue of Electronic Government introduced in the agenda in the three policy cycles?

Answering these questions, in turn, contributes to inform an analytically significant question on what explains the trajectory of the E-Government policy in Italy. The chapter proceeds as follows. The next section features the theoretical underpinnings of the study and the methodology. A narrative of the policy episode follows. The narration is organized into three intervals of policy making. The narrative provides the empirical basis for the analysis of the policy cycles thus providing insight into the *process* of innovation in the context of public services. In conclusion, the chapter offers some analytical insights and implications for policy makers.

Concepts And Methods

As the literature on Electronic Government evolves, what remains communal is the accepted view that ICTs are a set of technical means, processes and skills enabling not only the creation and access to information but also the unprecedented level of integrated communication systems. Besides this communality, three distinct thematic areas of the Electronic Government literature can be identified. The first strand of

literature aims at recognizing the role of ICT in enabling revolutionary change in public administration. The central question is whether government would become dramatically different if technological possibilities of ICTs were fully exploited. In fact, scholars have formulated a singular issue around which they have developed various scenarios. Several basic analytical devices have been employed to comment on the issues. These devices include holistic concepts such as paradigm shifts and very stylized notions of the processes operating within the output side of government (Moore 1995), such as public service delivery. For example, some argue that the advent of ICTs is shifting governments away from the traditional bureaucratic model (La Porte, Demchak, and De Jong 2002; Thompson and Jones 2008), triggering a new form of governance and setting in motion an information polity (Taylor and Williams 1990). Others have investigated the dynamics between the paradigm of New Public Management (NPM) and the paradigm of government informatisation (Bellamy and Taylor 1992; Bellamy and Taylor 1994). More recently, the ICT-driven paradigm superseding NPM has been conceptualized as 'digital era governance' (Dunleavy and Margetts 2000), a constellation of ideas and reforms that grant a central role to ICTs in a wide-ranging series of alterations of how public services are organized and delivered to citizens (Dunleavy, Margetts, Bastow, and Tinkler 2006).

A further stream of literature can be considered as a contingency version of the one described above. The work of the scholars writing in this strand challenges the optimistic claims of inevitability of the first approach. In particular, it shows that such universal expectations cannot possibly be accurate. The evidence, in fact, confirms that the relationship between an intention of E-Government and its outcome is highly conditional (Gil-García, Ramon and Pardo 2005; Ho and Ni 2004; Kim 2005; Luna-Reyes, Gil-García and Cruz 2007; Rose and Grant 2010). Studies in this strand are

focused on the identification of critical issues and success factors of E-Government policy design and implementation. These studies typically try to identify salient predictors of the decision and successful implementation of E-Government policy. For example Carter and Weerakkody (2008) have investigated the country variation in the citizens' E-Government adoption. By comparing data from the US and UK they conclude that determinant factors driving citizens' willingness to use E-Government services are the level of their perceived utility and the level of trust in the public agency offering such services. Similarly, Dimitrova and Chen (2006) have attempted to profile the adopters of E-Government services according to non-demographic characteristics such as perceived usefulness, perceived uncertainty and civic mindedness. Other scholars have investigated the supply side, offering that specific institutional arrangements and the availability of resources, such as IT budget allocation, IT staff or IT training, are conducive to positive outcomes of E-Government initiatives. For example Luna-Reyes, Gil-García and Cruz (2007) argue that institutional arrangements and organizational forms affect the way in which technology is understood, designed, and used in a particular inter-organizational project.

The third stream of literature, analyzes the “output side” of government (Moore 1995). Instead of the holistic perspective on Electronic Government seen before, these studies adopt an empirical approach and ground their commentary on a clearly argued appraisal of a particular technical innovation within programs (Moore 1995). There is a lot of variety in the required performance characteristics of E-Government projects and their outcomes. Illustrative of this approach are some studies that appraise ICT-based projects in relation to their effectiveness in cutting red tape (Peled 2001), others in increasing the direct interaction with citizens (Thomas and Streib 2003) or in channeling a democratic input into the policy-making process (Torres, Pina, and

Acerete 2006). It should also be noted that many of these design criteria, such as the level of public agencies' accountability (Pina, Torres, and Royo 2007) are familiar to public administration studies, while some, such as system openness, appear to be novel and specific to this domain (Wong and Welch 2004). These works seem to conclude that there is little improvement determined by E-Government in relation to the valued criteria to appraise the expected change. In particular, the rhetoric of a full-fledged, integrated, and transactional E-Government is compared with the reality of merely informational websites or of online services with an unsatisfactory takeup (Moon 2002; Norris and Moon 2005; Scholl 2005; Nasi, Frosini and Cristofoli 2011). It should be noted that not only has this stream questioned whether the incorporation of new ICT assets changes the performance characteristics of a public program (i.e. it is truly conducive to innovation in public services), but has also attempted to diagnose failures in implementation. Such failures are mainly associated with the fact that Electronic Government often only exacerbates the pre-existing practices of public bureaucracies (Wong and Welch 2004), thus preventing innovative projects from unleashing their full transformative potential (Torres, Pina, and Acerete 2006).

In synthesis, despite the variety of approaches taken by the literature on E-Government, there is still a gap on empirical research that investigates policy-making as an important component of the broad Electronic Government enterprise. Some scholars do not partake in this research interest because they conceptualize E-Government holistically. Others study Electronic Government in its components but develop a narrow interest for the utilization of such innovative technical features of delivery systems, thus missing the stage where decisions on these features are taken.

A minority strand of research focuses on single country-cases of Electronic Government (Acaud and Lakel 2003; Hudson 2002; Liou 2008; Lofgren 2007; Margetts

2006). Most of these studies are commentaries on the evolution of the Electronic Government policy in one country. Yet, they represent encouraging precedents in that they show how an interest in policy-making is not entirely idiosyncratic with the literature on Electronic Government.

This chapter posits that analyzing continuity and change in Electronic Government policy should be a substantive inquiry, and one that also responds to recent calls for a better understanding of the political dynamics among the actors that lead to the decision to launch Electronic Government initiatives. Moreover, the research should entail a greater use of out-of office data gathering. Some scholars have identified, as a limitation of this literature, the narrow range of research methods being used, with little empirical work and website development as the main indicator (Norris and Moon 2005). While this per se does not invalidate the findings of the research, the fact that “most E-Government researchers appear to do little more than sit at their PCs” tends to exclude events and opinions from the analysis and triangulation of large tranches of data (Heeks and Bailur 2007, 257). This methodological choice might, in turn, be mutually reinforced with the lack of interest for the policy-making processes behind E-Government developments (Yildiz 2007).

Therefore, this chapter analyses the instrumental case (Ragin, 1987; Yin, 1994; Abell, 2004) of Electronic Government in Italy in the frame of a research approach on public management policy change (Barzelay 2003; Barzelay and Gallego 2006, 2010). This programme seeks to develop a middle-range, historically based, causal theory of public management policy-making. Public management policies are government-wide institutional rules and routines that carry out administrative functions, such as expenditure planning and financial management, civil service and labor relations, procurement, organization and methods and audit and evaluation (Barzelay 2001). The

synthesis scheme is built around Kingdon's theorization of the policy making process, composed of the three phases of agenda setting, alternative specification and decision-making. The middle-range theory is structured around the dynamics of each component phase and their interfaces (Barzelay and Gallego, 2006).

The standard unit of analysis for investigating this process is the policy cycle and, considering that the E-Government policy in Italy during the decade under analysis included three waves, this chapter analyses a multi-cycle case. Details of the study design, sources examined and interviewees are in Appendix B2.

Narrating E-Government Policy In Italy

Activities for promoting Information Technology (IT) were formally started in 1993 with the establishment of the Authority, designed to be a key player over the following decade for this policy domain. Since the beginning, the mandate of the Authority has been two-fold: to spread IT usage in public administrations and to exert control over IT procurement processes. Its main achievements include the issuing of organic plans for IT application in the public sector and a project to create a system network of local Italian public administrations. The political context during this decade was a turbulent one, resulting in the continuous turnover of Executives. Thus the responsibility for strategic planning relating to IT in the public sector fluctuated between the Authority and the Ministry for Public Administration. Moreover, the policy arena for IT in the public sector saw the rise and fall of several Commissions, Units and Centres. Despite this institutional turmoil, there has been substantial continuity and evolution of IT as a policy issue and practice.

The following sections present a narration of a decade-long policy cycle organized around three turning points, namely the establishment of the Authority in

1993, the launch of the Action Plan for E-Government in 2000 and the Call for an E-Government project in 2002. These three decisions represent the outcome of intentional efforts aimed at changing practices and principles embedded in the public administration. The narrative is focused on the phase preceding each decision, structured around the above mentioned meta-categories of agenda setting, alternative specification or program development and finalizing and launching the program. The synthesis of the events selected and narrated is presented in the Appendix B1.

Previous events

Academic works (Calise and De Rosa 2003; Cucciniello and Nasi 2008) and policy documents⁵⁹ associate the beginning of the policy cycle on E-Government in Italy with the establishment of an ad hoc Authority in 1993⁶⁰. The nature and mission of the Authority, however, represented a controversial matter during its entire mandate, which ended a decade later. Analyzing the phase that preceded the Authority's launch helps to account for the ambiguities that marked the interplay between context and actors during this decade-long episode.

At the time, Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in Public Administration were not a new issue in the debate on administrative modernization. Since the late seventies, one of the Commissions charged with assessing the *status quo* of the Italian bureaucracy and its modernization needs focused on ICTs. The Commission denounced the scarce level of technological penetration in the public offices, while it recognized the tremendous potential of automated procedures for public

⁵⁹ Policy documents refer to the establishment of the Authority in 1993 as the beginning of the policy for electronic government. See for example the *Premesse al piano di e-government nazionale*. Roma. Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri 22/6/2000 or *Riferimenti normativi* (p.6) in the *Guidelines for the interoperability of the Public administration unitarian network*. Roma. RUPA 31/1/2003.

⁶⁰ The time boundaries of the episodes have been set by analyzing the literature and the policy documents, and by corroborating this information with the perception of the interviewees. Especially in the first round of interviews, my interview protocol included questions aimed at identifying the milestones of the policy under analysis.

office modernization. Simultaneously, the studies on e-administration flourished, though their main interest was limited to the legal validity of documents managed and archived through the prototype PCs.

Throughout the eighties, cultural and technological developments provided the foundations for the modern conception of E-Government in the country. Several scholars and intellectuals became advocates of the democratic potential of ICTs, influenced also by the French experience with Minitel. In the words of one of our informants: “Not only did we believe that new technologies were improving the internal efficiency of public agencies, the most remarkable progress brought by the advent of technology regarded communication between citizens, between public administrations, and, above all, between citizens and administrations.”

At the same time the distribution of basic technological equipment per public sector office increased conspicuously, though “in 1990 Italy was still lagging behind the other industrialized countries” (Interview with a top bureaucrat of the PA Department). The issue was given a certain level of attention also from the Executive throughout the second half of the eighties. In 1984 the Public Administration Ministry established a Commission for IT in Public Administrations. Five years later the Commission delivered a decree on the coordination and planning of IT in central agencies, which “can be considered a turning point in the conception of the bureaucratic machine as an entity in charge of delivering services to citizens also through new technologies.” (Interview with the former Minister for Public Administration). However, the advisory nature of the Commission and the relatively low status of this issue in the Executive agenda prevented this decree from producing actual change in the procedures of central agencies.

Efforts aimed at rationalizing IT developments continued throughout the period in office of the following Executive, when the Public Administration Ministry issued an ad hoc memorandum and Guidelines for IT Standardization in Government. Nevertheless, despite the increase in investments, the process of IT diffusion in the local and central public organizations was developing in a fragmented fashion, with scattered projects and applications.

Therefore, despite the establishment of an ad hoc Commission, investments in ICT in public administrations proceeded with scant coordination. Moreover, ICT investments – as well as any significant public procurement decision - had to be authorized by the State Account and Controller General. However, the role of this Controller was limited to checking the legal validity of the procurement procedures. Strategic planning, coordination and standardization were far beyond its mandate.

Direct effects of such a fragmented approach were that “the systems being implemented were hardly ever compatible” (Finocchiaro 1991, 49), the potential economies of scale were hindered and the bargaining power of public administrations with vendors was limited. In 1992, the figures on ICT penetration showed an uneven distribution. Some public organizations, both at the central and at the local level, were technologically advanced while the majority of public organizations were still relying on backward ICT systems. In fact, the president for the Commission on IT coordination in public administration affirmed, “We lacked a comprehensive development model. Several of our initiatives were praiseworthy. Yet, they turned out to be like the *tesserae* of a mosaic whose shape and content had not been defined in advance”. Let us now turn to the first phase of this decade-long episode.

The Authority for IT in Public Administration (1993)

Setting the agenda

In 1992 the issue of ICT in government moved from the specialized agenda of the Public Administration Minister to the congested agenda of the Executive, after a phase of political and economic turbulence. In 1992 the “clean-hands” scandal had reached its peak, and the media had exposed civil society to the evidence collected over years of investigations on political corruption and bribery. At the same time, the currency crisis of 1992, which mirrored the global financial crisis, together with the struggle to meet the EU standards, prompted the Executive to introduce emergency measures.

The issue of ICT in government found a receptive audience in the two Executives that ruled the country during, and in the immediate aftermath, of the scandal. The first of these two Executives was headed by Giuliano Amato and, under his short mandate, “the coordination of ICT strategies and expenditure in public administration, a process which had matured slowly, abruptly exploded” (Interview with the former Prime Minister). The mandate of Amato focused almost entirely on the drafting and approval of a ‘package’ through which he intended to delegate the economic rationalization of the public system to the Executive. The package interested domains and jurisdictions as diverse as healthcare, social security, civil service, financial accounting and expenditure. He was also familiar with the specific challenges of reforming the Italian bureaucracy as he had participated in the attempts to reform the Italian bureaucracy since the early seventies, thus he developed a maturing awareness on the role of ICT as an enabler of streamlining and administrative simplification.

Alternative specification/developing the Authority

The Prime Minister's familiarity with the main problems of the Italian public administration, including the lack of a coordinated policy for ICT in government, led to the inclusion of IT in the agenda. The last mile for the inclusion, however, was gained as a serendipitous result of the intense negotiations with the unions that preceded the approval of the Amato package. The labor unions' leadership, in fact, was concerned that the austerity measures were excessively penalizing for civil servants, forced to give up some of their established benefits. Thereby, the Prime Minister was asked to introduce parallel measures clearly attending to the need for austerity but "signaling that civil servants were not the only scapegoat" (Interview with the former Prime Minister). The result was two oddly disparate alternative measures to be included in the austerity package: an additional tax for luxury motorcycles and the establishment of an entity aimed at coordinating, and thus controlling, the public expenditure on ICTs. The inclination of the Prime Minister and the current debate on the need to increase the efficiency of public administrations determined the inclusion of the latter issue in the 'Amato package', approved right before the Executive resigned amid corruption allegations in 1992.

The President of the National Statistics Institute was appointed *ad interim* as Special Commissary for IT in Public Administration. He drafted the regulation for the new entity, conceiving it as a qualified structure with high technical expertise. It was beyond his mandate, however, to determine the legal status of the new organization; to exercise the choice between establishing an Agency or an Authority. While the former was considered as semi-autonomous from the Executive (Fedele et al. 2007), the latter had the status of a completely independent organization.

Finalizing and launching the Authority

The following Executive discarded the alternative of an Agency and opted for an Authority. By creating an Authority completely independent from the political parties, the Executive signaled its commitment (Gilardi 2002; Elgie and McMenamin 2005) to fight the corruption of elected officials. Hence, in 1993 the Authority was officially launched with a vast and ambiguous mandate.

The Authority was expected to support the process of ICT diffusion in the public sector, rationalize the adoption of ICT and review the regulations for technology procurement: “the Authority was created to stimulate and coordinate technological developments in public organizations as well as to regulate their procurement procedures in the aftermath of the ‘clean-hands scandal.’ These two distinct needs determined a bi-cephalous entity.” (Interview with a former top bureaucrat of the Authority for IT in Public Administration). A further ambiguity marked the establishment of the Authority. Notwithstanding the intention of its President to create an Authority completely independent from the Executive, the Public Administration Minister considered it an Agency, subject to the priorities of the Executive and, more specifically, to those of his own department. In the words of one of our informants: “Basically the Executive launched an Authority, but regarded it as an Agency.”

The Authority operated with 3-year plans that were to be updated annually and with a main focus on ICTs in central administrations. Ministries were requested to submit their ICT procurement contracts to the Authority, in charge of assessing the contracts’ conformity to the annual plan. The main criterion for assessing the appropriateness of the contracts was their formal compliance with the procurement standards more than their substantial coherence with the Authority ICT plan.

The E-Government Action Plan (2000)

The second cycle of this decade-long episode is associated with the launch of the E-Government Action Plan. While efforts to draft the Plan had been rapid and intense, it had taken a few years for the issue to be widely recognized in the political and administrative arena, both at national and at European levels, and for the community of interest to coalesce around the Public Administration Department.

Setting the Agenda

In the period from 1994 to 1996 the Authority performed two main tasks. First, it assessed a considerable number of central ICT procurement contracts - an activity considered as the primary tool for steering the ICT policy. Second, it worked on the ambitious project of an Internet-like information system, which should have connected all the Italian public administrations through a network based on the Internet Protocol. In 1996, in fact, Italy and the Scandinavian countries were the only European countries to have an Internet Protocol.

While the Authority mandate was focused on central administrations, local administrations such as the Municipalities of Bologna, Milan and Modena started to experiment electronic community networking. Such developments were aligned with European Union guidelines on the Information Society, which prepared the ground for the inclusion of Internet development as a priority in the EU agenda for development and social cohesion.

The new Executive elected in 1996 soon recognized the importance of ICT in the public sector. First, it established the *Information Society Forum*, composed of key representatives from different Ministries, assigning it the mission of promoting Information Society and supporting the creation of a favorable regulatory framework.

Second, it included the development of a *Unitarian Telematic Network* in the comprehensive reform of public sector launched by the Public Administration Minister. The Minister also established a Technical Centre, in charge of managing the Unitarian Network.

The prominent status gained by the issue of Information Society in the agenda was strengthened further over the following months. Early in 1999 the Executive established a new organizational structure for promoting the Information Society, composed of three boards reporting directly to the Prime Minister. The three boards, in charge of drafting a new *Action Plan for the development of Information Society*, were supported by a permanent *task-force* within the Prime Minister's Council. Regional and local authorities were involved in the activities of the *Information Society Forum*, and an ad hoc *Coordination Centre for E-Government in Local Administrations* was set up in Turin.

In the 2-year timeframe between 1997 and 1999, the work of both the newly established bodies and the Authority led to the approval of a significant number of laws and decrees, which promoted and ruled the use of new technologies in the public sector. Documents produced by civil servants through digital devices were granted legal status, while digital signature, optical archives and digital documents were introduced. The practice of tele-working for civil servants was pioneered in Italy while the online management of the revenue service and the land registry was introduced and became a best-practice at the EU level.

Developing the Action Plan

During the same period, between 1997 and 1999, the European Commission was developing a draft strategy for the Information Society. The *eEurope Action Plan*,

endorsed by European heads of government at their summit in June 2000, was aimed at fostering the Information Society, considered a crucial component of European competitiveness. The eEurope Action Plan also marked a shift in the conception of ICT usage by public administration. The Plan legitimized Electronic Government as a key asset of the European strategy for development and, more importantly, it signaled its policy salience as an autonomous cross-country issue.

In parallel, after a reshuffle of the Italian executive in late 1999, Electronic Government was confirmed as a policy priority. In particular the Executive established the institutional role of an Under-Secretary at the Prime Minister Office for Technological Innovation. Another significant indication of the issue's rise in status on the policy agenda was the inclusion of a chapter on Electronic Government in the action plan for Information Society drafted by the Committee of Ministers for Information Society. The chapter was drafted by the Public Administration Minister with the support of an *E-Government Working Group*, a think-tank mainly composed of experts from academia. A few days after the *Information Society Action Plan* had been approved, the chapter was extracted from the general strategy and was launched as the *E-Government Action Plan 2000-2002*. The document promoted Electronic Government as a main instrument for modernizing the public sector, and it was packaged as instrumental to the structural reforms initiated by the coalition in 1996. In particular, the main pillars of the public administration reform were strengthening the managerial tools available for public officials, such as performance evaluation systems; simplifying the administrative procedures thus reducing red-tape; and devolving new functions and service delivery to local governments. Unsurprisingly, the Action Plan for Electronic Government mirrored these priorities and was organized around the building blocks of ICT-based decision support systems for public managers, streamlining bureaucratic procedures and

delivering online services. This chapter was also the result of the intense cooperation with a group of a few local administrations that had experimented with cutting-edge ICT applications, typically for streamlining the internal procedures or for activating online communication channels with groups of citizens. The exchange and collaboration of the E-Government Working Group with these local administrations led to the immediate endorsement of the Electronic Government Action Plan by the Joint Conference of Central, State, and Local Administration, a step that ensured higher visibility and consensus to the Action Plan.

Launching the Action Plan for E-Government and reorganizing the Policy Domain

In 2000, Giuliano Amato, the Prime Minister that had led the Transition Executive in 1993, once again received the mandate to lead a Transition Executive before the political elections of 2001. As a consequence, the same Premier who had launched the Authority for IT in 1993 was responsible for approving the E-Government Action Plan in June 2000.

The Plan laid out the details of specific E-Government initiatives, such as the establishment of an Internet connection among all public agencies, the development of an electronic ID card and the use of electronic signature to certify online procedures. These goals required high-level technological expertise. The institutional venue with the highest concentration of expert staff whose skills ranged from computing engineering to legal aspects of information systems was a Unit within the Authority – the *Technical Centre*. The Unit had been established in 1997 to tackle the complex issues associated with the development of the Unitarian Network for public administrations, the most ambitious project of the Authority. This project had never been fully deployed. In fact, the lengthy process of authorizing and setting up the Network lagged behind the pace of

technological innovation so that, by the time the Authority defined the technical and legal standards of the Unitarian Network Project, alternative full-fledged Internet solutions had been made available ‘off the shelf’ making this complex architecture technologically obsolete. Over time, the substantial failure of this and other minor projects, announced and never delivered by the Authority, undermined its reputation. The reservations held by an increasing number of experts and civil servants on the effectiveness of the Authority in building capacity and in coordinating large ICT projects were exacerbated by an ill-timed mismatch between the scope of its mandate and the emerging needs of Electronic Government projects (Interviews with two top bureaucrats at the Public Administration Department and with one academic consultant of the Authority). On the one hand, the target of the projects launched by the Authority had been limited since its inception to central administrations. On the other hand, local administrations had become the key enablers of Electronic Government developments, and especially of what was progressively considered at the heart of the national strategy for E-Government, namely online service delivery. Therefore, the exclusive focus of the Authority on Ministries and large central agencies was no longer compatible with the dominant conception of Electronic Government and with the current shift towards the devolution of public functions to local entities.

These reasons prompted Bassanini, the Public Administration Minister, to move the Technical Centre from the Authority to the Prime Minister’s Council. This shift also marked the end of a period during which the Authority had been in charge of strategic planning on ICTs. Bassanini created a new *Permanent Unit for implementing the E-Government Action Plan* within the Public Administration Department. The Unit included representatives of local administrations, well-known academics, experts and top officials. At the same time, the reorganization of the Public Administration

department offered the opportunity to include an *Office for ICT and Public Digital Networks* in the new organizational chart. In 2000 the Public Administration Department completed the process of appropriating the jurisdiction over Electronic Government matters by incorporating the Technical Center that was previously part of the Authority.

The prominence gained by the issue of Electronic Government by early 2001 ensured the allocation of a significant amount of funds to implement the Action Plan.⁶¹ This was the last act of the Electronic government policy under the four Executives of the Left-wing coalition that had ruled the country during a 5-year legislature.

Call for E-Government Projects (2002)

Setting the Agenda

The issue of E-Government remained a priority for the right-wing coalition chaired by Silvio Berlusconi, who won the elections in May 2001. During the electoral campaign and in the following years, modernization of the bureaucracy was addressed as a matter of so-called ‘digital state’ and E-Government became the one-size-fits-all solution to cut red tape, to improve country competitiveness and to strengthen business-government and business-citizens relations. The ‘digital revolution’ was expected to spill over from the public administrations to schools, universities, businesses and citizens.

Consistent with the priority given to innovation and ICT in the electoral campaign, the Premier established a new office in his Cabinet, namely the Ministry for Innovation and Information Technologies and appointed Lucio Stanca as Minister. Mr. Stanca had over 30 years of professional experience at IBM and had served as CEO of IBM Italy. The initial mandate of the Ministry for Innovation and IT swept across

⁶¹ The funds totaled approximately 410 million Euros coming from the auctioning of licenses for UMTS (Universal Mobile Telecommunication System) to telephone companies.

different policy domains. The Ministry was in charge of steering any policy on information society, science, technology and innovation, including basic research. However, despite such a broad mandate, Electronic Government immediately became the focal point of the Ministry's activities thanks to the availability of *ad hoc* funds, allocated by the previous Executive to the implementation of the E-Government Action Plan.

Developing the Call for Projects

While the available funds and the institutional mandate created a favorable context for the Minister to launch incisive actions and to implement the Action Plan for E-Government, Mr. Stanca struggled to assemble a team under his leadership. When he took office in 2001, the policy domain of E-Government was difficult to coordinate. The Authority was still in place and claiming its autonomy from the Executive. As for the Technical Centre, its shift from the Authority to the Executive had brought it closer to the leadership of the Minister. Yet, its Director had been appointed during the previous Legislature. In his view, the next steps to implement the E-Government Action Plan entailed investing in the infrastructure and the back-offices of public administrations, while the new Minister was keen on immediately strengthening front-office services highly visible for citizens and corporations.

The distribution of the institutional mandate for Electronic Government was complicated by the presence of the *Permanent Unit for managing the E-Government Action Plan* and of the *Office for ICT and for public administration networks*. Both entities, whose institutional locus was the Department of Public Administration, were composed of members designated by the previous Executive. Such a fragmented policy sub-system was not compatible with the existence of a newly established Ministry for

Innovation and IT that had been granted both the clear mandate and the resources to steer Electronic Government initiatives. Consequently, between 2001 and 2002 the Electronic Government domain was restructured. First, the responsibility for policy making shifted definitively from the Authority of IT in Public Administration to the Ministry for Innovation and Technologies. Second, within the new Ministry an Office of E-Government for Local Administrations was created. The drivers to do so were partly political and partly instrumental to the goal of implementing the Action Plan. At the political level a debate initiated in the early nineties, over the need to devolve functions downward and to empower local administrations, had intensified. This pressure was fuelled by the inclusion of the Northern League in the ruling coalition; a Political Party very attentive to the needs and requests of local administrations. The decision to actively involve local administrations was not only driven by the perception of political opportunity, but also by the awareness of the Minister and his staff that local administrations represented the “administrative backbone of the country. Without the support of local administrations, delivery of services to citizens and businesses would have remained wishful thinking” (Interview with a top-bureaucrat at the Ministry for Innovation and IT). The Minister appointed as Director General of the Office of E-Government for Local Administrations was an experienced top official who had been working at the Authority for IT in Public Administration, and then headed the Office for IT and digital networks at the Public Administration Department. His work and profile was well-known among central and local agencies. Therefore, his appointment facilitated the liaison between the Ministry and local administrations. The following months were characterized by intense negotiations between local administrations and the Ministry over a crucial decision: the modalities and criteria to allocate the funds already appropriated by the previous Executive for Electronic Government. The

alternatives being evaluated could be roughly synthesized into two approaches. The top-down approach required that the new Ministry select a few priorities for the development of Electronic Government and then invest the funds in building capacity at the local and central level by ensuring that technological infrastructure, system integration and *ex officio* removal of the administrative barriers were in place. In the bottom-up approach, central and local administrations were expected to define their own strategies to enact Electronic Government projects and the Ministry had to provide the adequate resources.

Launching the Call for Projects and Restructuring the Policy Domain

The latter approach prevailed, mainly due to the complexity of a centralized, top-down approach in terms of institutional capacity needed to orchestrate the initiative as well as in terms of resistance by local administrations to give up some of their prerogatives. In 2002, the Minister launched the first Call for E-Government Projects, open to any administration delivering services to citizens and businesses. The previous initiatives gave priority to less visible aspects such as back-office re-engineering and systems interoperability (i.e. making different applications and technological architecture compatible with each-other). Instead, the most important criterion for selecting projects was identified in the visibility of the outcomes for citizens and businesses.

The Minister completed the restructuring of the policy domain in June 2003, when the Executive replaced both the Authority and the Technical Centre with the *National Centre for IT in Public Administrations* (CNIPA). The new entity was responsible for the implementation of the E-Government plans devised by the Minister for Innovation and Technologies, and became the operating unit of the Ministry.

Analysing The Electronic Government Policy

This section attempts to provide a basic understanding of E-Government policy making in Italy between 1993 and 2003. The idea pursued here is that E-Government can be analyzed as a public management policy, related specifically to the role of central coordinating agencies (Barzelay 2007: 21). The episode presented here includes three policy cycles, each resulting in the launch of an entity or a project for E-Government.

The first question concerns the evolution in the innovative content of Electronic Government policy.

The analysis of this episode shows a significant evolution in formulating and implementing a policy aimed at fostering an innovation, namely IT in the public sector. When the Authority was established in 1993, it was considered innovative in terms of potential impact on the IT procurement procedures and on the harmonization of the IT procurement policies. The system put in place to monitor the public expenditure for IT consisted of the mandatory approval by the Authority of each IT public procurement contract. It is also important to highlight that the Authority's mandate was only exerted over central administrations.

When the Action Plan for E-Government was launched in 2000, the concept of IT-related innovation had evolved tremendously. First of all, ICTs were regarded as instrumental to the general reform of public sector, and particularly to the one initiated by the Minister himself, that was launching the E-Government Action Plan. Second, the emphasis was not on changing IT procurement procedures, but rather on supporting the system-wide country competitiveness through the new available technologies. Third, while in 1993 the Authority was established to control and possibly reduce IT expenditure, the 2000 Action Plan came along with an allocation of ad hoc resources.

The last substantial difference is that, consistently with the general public sector reform, the Action Plan was addressing both Central and Local Administrations.

The third phase was the Call for E-Government Projects in 2002. The alternation from left-wing to right-wing in the ruling majority introduced by the political elections in 2001 did not significantly change the trajectory of E-Government policy. Yet, the notion of IT-related change was redefined and increasingly associated with the impact on the end users' experience. The initiatives were formulated accordingly, and the funds available were distributed to the central and local administrations whose projects were employing ICTs to improve the service delivery, thus increasing end users' satisfaction.

The second question is focused on why and how the issue of Electronic Government became introduced in the policy agenda in the three policy cycles.

The inclusion in the agenda, which led to the establishment of the Authority for IT in Public Administration in 1993, can be explained by the interplay between the context factors and the quality of participation of the policy entrepreneurs. The concept of IT in the public administration, in fact, was not a novelty when it was added to the agenda in 1993. Ever since the late 1970s, experts in the policy community brought the IT issue to the attention of a specialized audience and included the issue among the critical factors for bureaucratic modernization. Encouraging signs also came from the political stream, where parliamentary members managed to create ad hoc commissions to discuss and analyze the implications connected to the introduction of IT in public administrations. Yet, this subject could have remained a low priority issue on the cabinet agenda, had it not been for the quality of participation of the policy entrepreneurs and for the malleability of the issue image of IT in public administration. On the one hand, the political turmoil of the early 1990s determined an abrupt turnover of the whole establishment and the majority of the members of the transitional

Executives were co-opted from academia. These experts who had participated in the Commissions for the reform of Public Administration in the late 1970s had been given crucial positions in the so-called ‘technical’ government. For example the quality of participation of the Prime Minister in the IT policy domain in 1992 was influenced by his previous experience as member of the working groups in charge of assessing the problems of the Italian bureaucracy fifteen years prior. On the other hand, the issue definition process played a crucial role in 1992, as IT in the public sector was introduced on the agenda under the guise of an action aimed at fostering control and transparency in public procurement.

Turning to the following policy cycle, the period started with the election of a new Coalition in 1996 and culminated with the launch of the E-Government Action Plan in 2000. The issue of IT in the public sector had not scored particularly high in the electoral program. However, it found a secondary entrance as the pressure to improve the country competitiveness and the struggle to meet the EU standards called for reform in the public sector.⁶² The issue of IT in this context was defined as instrumental to bureaucratic modernization. The institutional *locus* around which the community of experts and civil servants coalesced was the Public Administration Ministry, and this reinforced the overlap between public sector reform and IT in the public sector policy domains. Also, the Minister in charge of the government-wide reform of public administration became the champion of IT (E-Government). Changing the label of these initiatives from ICTs to Electronic Government was a consequence of his participation in the EU ministerial meetings for the eEurope Action Plan. However, being part of

⁶² This view is witnessed by the initial section of the E-government action plan (22/6/2000), which states that: “The actions and the tools of the E-gov action plan are an an integral component of the policies for the development of the information society, which the Executive is promoting, not only for the benefits in terms of country competitiveness due to the higher quality, savings and efficiency of public services, but also for the fundamental role that innovation in public sector may have for the social diffusion of culture, tools and experience of new digital economy , across all the sectors of the population”.

such international polity also had a domestic outcome in terms of issue and actor certification.

Last, in the third policy cycle, the recognition received by the issue at the national and international levels, together with the availability of funds appropriated for E-Government, persuaded the incoming Executive to build on the issue and to reinforce its status. This was due to the fact that during the electoral campaign Digital Government had become the substitute for the discourse on bureaucratic modernization. The issue, however, had to be repackaged in terms of devolution, which was consistent with the political milieu of the executive. A newly established Ministry for Innovation and IT was the natural candidate to aggregate the policy community and to channel the different initiatives. Thus, despite some internal resistance and the slow pace, the competencies for E-Government were ultimately shifted from the Public Administration Ministry and from the Authority to the Ministry for Innovation and IT.

Conclusions

This chapter has combined the previously distinct streams of literature on Electronic Government and public management policy change, thus responding to calls for a better understanding of the policy dynamics that lead to the initiation of E-Government initiatives. In particular, these calls have suggested the importance for the literature on Electronic Government to extrapolate its theoretical underpinnings from established public policy frameworks (Hudson 1999) and to tie the subject of E-Government to mainstream public administration research (Heeks and Bailur 2007; Yildiz 2007).

Now we can employ institutional processualism to analyse and then compare the three cycles, thus distilling analytical insights on *what explains the overall trajectory of the E-Government policy in Italy*. First, the analysis has indicated the importance of the

issue image in explaining the resilience of the E-Government policy in Italy, which is surprising considering the frequent government turnover in Italy during the decade under study. The subject of IT in the public sector was packaged in the first cycle and repackaged in the following two cycles around the leading themes of the political or electoral agenda. Transparency and austerity, country competitiveness and bureaucratic reform, devolution and visibility for the end users have, in sequence, shaped the issue image of E-Government in this decade-long episode. Such flexibility of the issue did not activate interference-effects from the champions of competing policy domains.

On the other hand, despite its early start and the significant resources allocated to the E-Government policies, several experts and scholars question whether these actually resulted in a more efficient, responsive and transparent administration at the central and local level. Among the factors that may have hindered a systemic development of ICT in public administrations, this chapter has identified a certain degree of contention over its jurisdiction. In fact, the period under analysis witnessed a continuous reconfiguration of the E-Government policy sub-system, with ad hoc working groups, inter-ministerial and central-local coordination units co-existing with the dedicated Authority and, in the final phase, a new Ministry taking over the issue of E-Government. Two interrelated determinants explain this continuous reconfiguration, namely the frequent government turnovers over the decade combined with the ambiguity in the mandate that marked the functions and the activities of the Authority since its inception.

To conclude, focusing on the policy developments of e-government through the lens of institutional processualism has offered three main contributions. First, it brings to the forefront features of issue framing that explain its persistence (i.e. issue

malleability) and that can also complement more static analyses focused on the ‘determinants or barriers’ to the development of e-government.

Second, this account provides a more fine-grained explanation of the external influence on e-government policy adoption. So far, policy emulation among countries (Bolgherini 2007)⁶³ has been a recurring explanation of e-government policy diffusion. What we observe in the Italian case is instead a more subtle effect. My account acknowledges that the extended career of E-Government (as a mainstay of public administration policies) in Italy echoed policy developments at the European Union level, though it reveals the mechanisms of ‘issue certification’ and ‘certification of the policy entrepreneurs’ through which this foreign influence was enacted. Third, the analysis has focused on the features of the policy subsystem, considered as a ‘sticky institutional context’ (Baumgartner and Jones 1993) to be understood in its evolutionary nature throughout the episode. In doing so, it complements extant analyses on the effects of institutional and organizational arrangements and the way in which IT programs in the public sector are conceived and designed.

Previous studies warned public managers that designing and implementing E-Government initiatives requires careful consideration of the technological and organizational conditions that enable the innovation. The evidence presented in this chapter supports the notion that the dynamics of policy making are also not to be overlooked.

⁶³ Scholars have also analysed e-government emulation among intermediate levels of government, such as regions or states (Yun and Oppheim 2010).

Appendix B1

Establishing the Authority for IT in Public Administration AIPA (1992 – 1993)	Launching the E-Government Action Plan (1996 – 2000)	Launching the E-Gov Funding Project (2000 – 2002)
<p><i>Setting the agenda</i> – Packaging of IT coordination in terms of austerity and market competition</p> <p><i>Developing the Proposal for an Authority for IT in Public Administration (AIPA)</i> – Consulting with the unions and considering alternatives – Appointing an Extraordinary Commissioner for IT in Public Administration (1992) – Formulating the mission of the Authority – Projecting the Authority resources and personnel needs</p> <p><i>Finalizing and launching Authority for IT in the Public Administration (AIPA)</i></p>	<p><i>Setting the agenda</i> - Establishing the Info Society Forum within the Prime Minister Council (1996) -Including the issue of IT in the wider public sector reform issue (1997) - Establishing a Technical Centre for the Government Digital Network (1997) – Establishing a new Unit for the Information Society, reporting directly to the Prime Minister (1999)</p> <p><i>Developing the Action Plan</i> – Gathering ideas and working with the EU DG on the Info Society (1998, 1999) – Collaborating with the permanent task-force in the Office of the Prime Minister (1999) – Negotiating with the local authorities (establishment of a Coordination Centre for Territorial Authorities (1999) – Gathering ideas from academics and consultants and negotiating the resources with the Executive</p> <p><i>Finalizing and launching the Action Plan</i></p>	<p><i>Setting the agenda</i> -Creating an ad hoc Unit for E-Gov within the Ministry for Public Administration (2000) -Creating an ad-hoc Ministry for Innovation and ICTs (2001) -Certifying part of the previous team -Repackaging the issue in terms of federalism</p> <p><i>Developing the Initiative</i> -Appropriating of 410 million euros from the UMTS licenses sale to fund the E-Gov Action Plan (2001) -Negotiating with local administrations and establishing the Regional Competence Network on E-Government (2002) - Gathering ideas from academics and consultants</p> <p><i>Finalizing and launching the Call for Projects</i></p>

Appendix B2

The 'corpus construction' (Bauer & Gaskell, 2000, p.23) has been built considering the criteria of relevance, triangulation (Creswell, 1994; Yin, 1994; Marshall and Rossman, 1995) and saturation, through the analysis of the documents collected and the interviews conducted during the field research (2003-2005). Two main sets of documents were used for the study. One set included official documents such as Cabinet submissions, internal reports and project evaluation reports from the Italian Archive of the Prime Minister Council, from the Department for Public Administration and from the Ministry for Innovation & Technology. Another set of documents included research chapters and feasibility studies conducted by academics and consultants of the Prime Minister Council. The list of the 20 relevant actors that were interviewed includes: (1) a former Prime Minister; (2) a former Minister for Public Administration; (3) the former Director of the National Center for IT in Public Administration; (4) the former President of the Authority for IT in Public Administration; (5) the former Director of the Area ‘‘Innovation, Regions and Local Administration’’ at the Department for Innovation and IT; (6) the Director General of the Public Administration Department; (7) the former Senior Official at the Public Administration Department in charge of E-Government; (8) a Senior Official at the Public Administration Department; (9) a Senior Official at the Department for Innovation and IT; (10, 11) two former consultants for the PA Department and for the Department for Innovation and IT in charge of innovative projects; (12, 13, 14) three academics who worked as consultants for the E-Government Projects during the episode; (15, 16, 17) three top managers of large IT vendors (IBM Italia, Oracle Italia and Microsoft Italia) in charge of analysing and interacting with the public sector during the episode; (18, 19, 20) three top bureaucrats of local administrations (Modena, Siena and Reggio Emilia) that received funding from the

Public Administration Department for their Electronic Government pilot projects. These bureaucrats also participated in the preliminary stages of the Electronic Government Action Plan.

The semi-structured interviews took place mostly in the interviewees' office. The duration ranged from ninety minutes to three hours. Four interviewees have been consulted twice. Interviews were conducted taking into consideration the peculiarities of 'elite interviewing' (Bauer & Gaskell, 2000) for the rapport building and the interview schedules. Consistent with Wengraf's recommendations (2001), the research questions (i.e. main research questions and research sub-questions) have been distinguished from interview-questions/prompts. Access both to internal documents and to the interviewees was facilitated by the author's work as consultant for the Public Administration Department at the Prime Minister Council (1999 and 2000). ATLAS.ti was used for coding, retrieving and recording the documents and interview text.

3. EXPLAINING THE UNEXPECTED SUCCESS OF THE SMOKING BAN IN ITALY: POLITICAL STRATEGY AND TRANSITION TO PRACTICE (2000-2005)*

Introduction

Conversations surrounding policy change and stability are among the most significant discussions in public administration and are increasingly being adopted to enrich the ‘toolbox of policy analysts’ (Weible 2007, pp.113) beyond its technical bearing.

Classical approaches to the study of policy dynamics include the multiple streams theory (Kingdon 1984), the punctuated equilibrium theory (Baumgartner and Jones 1993) and the advocacy coalition framework (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith 1993). A strand of literature has applied each of these frameworks to highly debated policy issues, such as environmental (Grimble and Wellard 1997; Ramirez 1999; Weible 2007) and health decisions (Glassman *et al.* 1999; Kubler 2001). In the specific case of smoking bans, policy processes have been analyzed as case studies at both the national level (Sato 1999; Derthick 2005; Givel 2006; Wood 2006; Worsham 2006; Cairney 2007) and at the supra-national level (Duina and Kurzer 2004; Gilmore and McKee 2004). Some have compared country experiences (Kagan and Vogel 1993; Studlar 2002, 2004; Marmor and Lieberman 2004; Albæk *et al.* 2007), while others have linked country experiences arguing that ‘policy transfer’ was at work (Asare and Studlar 2009; Cairney 2009). Most of these works have examined the pre-decisional phase, assuming authoritative decisions as unproblematic policy outcomes.

*Mele, V. and A. Compagni. 2010 “Explaining the Unexpected Success of the Smoking Ban in Italy: Political Strategy and Transition to Practice”. *Public Administration* 88(3): 819-835.

The mechanisms of turning policy decisions into action (John 1998) have been investigated, instead, by a different community of scholars (for a comprehensive review see O'Toole 2000; Hill and Hupe 2002), under the label of implementation studies. Implementation, with its drawbacks and hiccups, is considered to be a time of renewed conflict and negotiation among actors in the policy cycle.

This chapter does not aspire to integrate these two tracks of literature, but explores the grey area of what unfolds in the policy-making process between 'the establishment of an intention on the part of government to do something, and its ultimate impact in the world of action' (O'Toole 2000, pp. 266). It does so by looking at the unexpected success of the smoking ban policy in Italy, which excluded the *sigaretta* from all indoor public places including cafes, restaurants (unless they had separate smoking areas with continuous floor-to-ceiling walls and a ventilation system), airports and railway stations, as well as in all public and private workplaces (Gallus *et al.* 2006a). In the last forty years, several countries such as the US, France, Australia, Canada and others (Feldman and Bayer 2004) have introduced progressively stricter limitations to smoking in public places. However, some of them, especially in Western Europe, encountered difficulties in enforcing these laws.

In January 2003, skeptical observers, both domestic and international, were left incredulous by learning that Italy was the first large EU country to approve a comprehensive and strict smoking ban policy. The feeling of surprise increased when, two years later, the law became effective and the Italian general public promptly complied with the new rules (Pisano 2007). In the meantime, Norway, Ireland and Malta approved and enforced similar regulations but it was mainly the example of Italy, with its reputation as an unruly country, that gained visibility in the international press (Povoledo 2005; Rosenthal 2006).

The episode analyzed here includes two policy cycles, between 2000 and 2005, of smoke-free policy-making in Italy, with two different outcomes: an incomplete decision stage and an authoritative decision. The first cycle started with the inclusion in 2000 of a smoking ban on the policy agenda and ended in 2001 with an impasse, after the proposal had been deliberately ‘watered down’ by more than 100 amendments. In the second cycle, starting in 2001, the issue of the smoking ban was revamped by the new Cabinet and, by virtue of a well-crafted political strategy, approved (2003) and ultimately enforced in 2005.

The chapter offers a historical account of the introduction of the smoking ban in Italy from a processual perspective (Pettigrew 1997; Barzelay and Gallego 2006), by addressing the following questions: Why was the smoking ban put on the policy agenda in the late 1990s? Why and how did the ban remain on the agenda despite the change in the Executive? How was the ban approved amid a contentious political debate? How did the government manage the period between the formal passage of the law and its enforcement?

The synthesis scheme is built around Kingdon’s theories on the policy-making process (Kingdon 1984). A policy cycle involves the career of an issue on the governmental policy agenda (Abbott 2001); during the early phases, the issue evolves in response to occurrences in two sub-processes, agenda setting and alternative specification, and the cycle is completed by the third phase of decision-making. Besides adding to the analysis of pre-decisional dynamics, the case of the smoking ban in Italy allows us to uncover the set of events and activities occurring between the formal passage of a law (decision-making) and its full application. So far, studies have not systematically focused on distinguishing phases during implementation. We have conceptualized ‘*transition to practice*’ as the initial phase in the policy implementation

process. In the case under consideration there is a two-year gap between the passing of the smoking ban law and its application, making it an ideal example on which to conduct this study.

The analysis presented in this chapter proceeds through two steps. First, it provides a condensed narrative history of the 2000-2005 period on which any such instrumental case study must be based. The narrative covers selected previous events and the actual episode, and it is organized around the policy cycle categories of agenda setting, alternative specification, decision-making and transition to practice. Second, the chapter applies institutional processualist theories (Barzelay and Gallego 2006) of policy change to account for the dynamics of policy introduction and success. Finally, explanations are presented and discussed with consideration given to comparative literature on tobacco policy.

Methodology And Concepts

While this case represents an interesting slice of history in itself, there are two main uses for the analytically significant evidence revealed upon further investigation. First, examining the Italian experience through the conceptual lens of institutional processualism promises to be more revealing than other frameworks, such as the advocacy coalition framework or the punctuated equilibrium framework, due to the subtle dynamics of issue inclusion in a congested policy agenda and of issue maintenance after a Cabinet turnover. Second, it is also more likely to reveal aspects such as political feasibility and policy entrepreneurs' participation. Moreover, it allows for the explanation of how social mechanisms, such as attribution of opportunity, work and are activated during a policy cycle.

The study is based on a narrative analysis aimed at developing both a historical understanding and a causal explanation (Goldthorpe 2000). The ‘corpus construction’ (Bauer and Gaskell 2000, pp. 23) has been built considering the criteria of relevance, triangulation (Creswell 1994; Yin 1994; Marshall and Rossman 1995) and saturation, through the analysis of the documents collected (2006-2007) and the interviews conducted during the field research (2007-2008). Details of the study design, sources examined and interviewees are contained in Appendix C.

Narrating The Introduction Of The Smoking Ban

The long wave of anti-smoking policy

In November 2002 the Italian Parliament approved an article that instituted a smoking ban in any public place, including bars and restaurants. The extension of the ban to these convivial spots was considered a sudden novelty and has changed the habits of millions of Italian citizens, both smokers and non-smokers. Yet, tobacco control policies in Italy, and particularly smoking bans, had a long history (for a concise timeline of the main events refer to Table 1).

TABLE 1

Timeline of the main events related to anti-smoking policies in Italy

<i>Previous Events (1934-2000)</i>	
1934	Sovereign Decree on the ban to sell cigarettes to individuals under 16 <i>(art 25 Sovereign Decree 24th December 1934, n.2316)</i>
1975	Ban to smoke in public places such as schools, hospitals, cinemas and theatres, trains (except in smoking areas), libraries etc. <i>(law n.584, 11th November 1975)</i>
1995	Ban to smoke in any public administration office or area, including the private offices subcontracting from the public administration <i>(Prime Minister Decree, 14th December 1995)</i>

1998	Smoke prevention is included in the National Healthcare Plan 1998-2000
Main episode (2000-2005)	
9/2000	Smoking ban proposed by the Health Minister Veronesi
3/2001	Ministerial Ordinance on “Interpretations and applications of the current laws related to the smoking ban” (<i>Ministerial Ordinance 28th March 2001, n.4</i>)
1/2002	Smoking ban proposed by Health Minister Sirchia
1/2003	Smoking ban issued (<i>art 51, law n.3, 16th January 2003</i>)
1/2005	Smoking ban enforced from 10 th January 2005 (<i>Law decree 9th November 2004, n.266 and Health Ministry ordinance, 17th December 2004</i>)

The first milestone in this policy domain is represented by a sovereign decree restricting the sale of tobacco to individuals over the age of sixteen in 1934. It was only in 1975 that Parliament banned smoking in public places such as schools, hospitals, cinemas, theatres, and trains (except in smoking areas). Twenty-one years later, in 1996, a directive toughened the ban by extending it to any office or area of public administration, including private businesses subcontracted by the public sector. However, the substantial lack of compliance with the ban prompted a new regulatory intervention. For the first time, the National Health Plan 1998–2000 included the promotion of healthy lifestyles and the reduction of smoking among the national public health priorities and started a positive trend that applied to all of the subsequent plans.

In April 2000, a political crisis determined the appointment of a new Executive, which included Prof. Veronesi as Health Minister. Besides being a world renowned

cancer specialist and enjoying great visibility in Italy, throughout his career Veronesi had been very active, almost a militant, in attracting attention to the correlation between smoking and cancer. In 1987, together with his very influential French colleague, Prof. M. Tubiana, he had put the Italian Prime Minister Craxi under pressure to promote a European-wide action on cancer, with tobacco control as main priority. Craxi and the French President, Mitterrand, jointly proposed the initiative to the European Commission and this led to the establishment of the program ‘Europe against Cancer’, considered to be the channel for all subsequent action on tobacco at the European level (Gilmore and McKee 2004). Veronesi was also familiar with the government dynamics as he had been a member of two National Commissions named by the Health Ministries in 1993 and 1998 on cancer-related issues. Two weeks after his appointment, Prof. Veronesi announced his intention to present a law proposal to ban smoking in public places and to increase fines for the transgressors, stating that this was “a moral duty, both as an oncologist and as a Minister” (La Repubblica, 18th May 2000).

A smoking policy scored among the top priorities for public health interventions, and this choice was mainly backed by the Health Minister with the alarming figures concerning the effects of tobacco smoking. Almost 90,000 deaths per year could be attributed to lung and larynx cancers, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and degenerative cardiovascular diseases. In the speech⁶⁴ accompanying the launch of the Annual report on the National Health Conditions⁶⁵, Prof. Veronesi pointed out that despite a progressive decrease in the number of smokers from 15 million in 1980 to

⁶⁴ Speech given at the Italian National Research Council (CNR) by the Health Minister, Umberto Veronesi, on July 3rd 2000. Archive of the CNR.

⁶⁵ A comparison of the Report on the National Health Conditions issued in July 2000 with the two previous ones issued in 1999 and 1998 respectively, shows that all three reports included a chapter on the smoking habits of the population in the core section on ‘Health determinants’. Different from the 1998 and 1999 reports, however, the report launched by Veronesi in 2000 referred to the importance of smoking prevention in the Preface among the top three priorities for the National Healthcare System and included *Smoking prevention* as a chapter in the section of the report titled ‘From health protection to health promotion’.

12.5 million (a quarter of the entire population) the goal of reducing it below 10 million was still far away. Veronesi highlighted this as a main priority to improve the health status of the country, to be achieved by working in two parallel directions. On the one hand, the anti-smoking campaign ought to be developed further, refining its gender, age and social reach. On the other hand, he stated that, "...by no means can we defer the approval of a new anti-smoking law which shouldn't have the features of a crusade, but nevertheless should be rigorous and justly severe, both towards those that break it and towards those in charge of enforcing it".

In September 2000 the Executive approved the final version of the smoking law proposal in which the list of smoke-free areas included virtually all work and public places. The Commission on Social Affairs started the parliamentary works that were developed over the following months. The proposal focused only on the ban, since smoking prevention interventions and related health education programs had already been considered and approved in other phases of the political debate. The starting point of Veronesi's law proposal was the prohibition of smoking, which ought to be considered the default situation, and the possibility of smoking only an exception. Yet, in order to strengthen the prescriptive effectiveness of the ban and to avoid any ambiguity, the proposal listed comprehensively the public places where smoking was forbidden and where the no-smoking sign was to be shown. In addition, each business or administration had to identify an individual responsible for the enforcement of the ban. The proposal also included an *ad hoc* article on the minimum standards for the separated smoking areas that private and public organizations were allowed to create. Depending on where the law violation occurred, the proposal established that the revenues generated through the fines would be redistributed to the regional or central

administrations. The latter would then reinvest these resources in training and education programs for tobacco prevention.

The law was refined and adjusted, reflecting the negotiations with the different Parliamentary commissions. Illustrative of the adjustments that the proposal underwent was the decision not to extend the ban to inmates, prompted by the Parliamentary Commission on Justice and heavily debated by the Parliamentary Commission on Social Affairs.

The Minister had preventively checked the support of the parliamentary political groups, obtaining a general support for the initiative. However, such support soon faltered, based “on the principle but not on the specific proposal” (La Repubblica, 9th July 2000). Thus, despite the unanimous praise of the law, the debate had remained a generic one and despite the imprimatur of the parliamentary restricted committee, a series of never-ending amendments (110 in total) were absorbed into the proposed ban in the following months, halting its approval. By the time the proposal was ready to be put forward (February 2001) for voting in the Chamber of Deputies, the legislature was over. In March 2001, Veronesi’s proposal was then converted into the short ministerial ordinance on ‘Interpretations and applications of the current laws related to the smoking ban’.

Setting the agenda

After the 2001 political elections, Prof. Sirchia was nominated Health Minister. He had worked as head of the immunohaematology unit and of the blood bank at the Ospedale Maggiore of Milan University for over thirty years, and occasionally served as a high-level expert, or member of technical commissions for the Ministry of Health. The Prime

Minister, Silvio Berlusconi, appointed Sirchia on the basis of both his scientific record and his political experience as responsible for social services for the City of Milan.

From the very beginning Berlusconi was supportive of Sirchia's plan to tackle the issue of smoking control during his mandate. This endorsement was stimulated by the recent polls and surveys conducted by DOXA, the Italian branch of Gallup International Association. In 2001, a survey on the attitudes towards smoking regulation showed unexpected support by the general population (Gallus *et al.* 2007). In regards to cafés, restaurants and other places open to the public, more than 83% of adult Italians were in favor, moderately or strongly, of separate smoking areas, and of a blanket ban in the absence of such separation. The most striking result was that more than 50% of smokers would support a comprehensive smoking regulation in Italy. The scientific community promptly ensured that there was visibility of these findings, claiming that, "public opinion could not, therefore, be given as a reason for further delaying the adoption of a smoking policy" (La Vecchia *et al.* 2001, pp. 245). In addition, the belief that an anti-smoking policy was required was repeatedly expressed in reports and published commentaries (Invernizzi and Zagà 2003; Mangiaracina 2002; Tabaccologia 2007), as well as in articles produced by the scientific community that were clearly aimed at proving how certain tobacco control strategies and prevention policies could be effective in changing attitudes and behavior (Sardu *et al.* 2006).

It should be also said that, since 1994, legislation on health and safety in the workplace had been issued and, although it did not specifically deal with tobacco smoke, nonetheless, it required employers to protect the health of their workers from carcinogenic agents. Since tobacco smoke is a known carcinogen, the law could be applied to secondhand smoke in the workplace. Two sentences had marked the evolution and the public perception of this legal framework. First, a constitutional court

sentence in 1996 had included passive smoke as a health hazard. Second, in 1999, a bank had been clamorously condemned for the death of an employee, whose lethal asthma attack had been triggered by secondhand smoke in the workplace.

Encouraged by the consensus basis, Sirchia presented to the Parliament the 2001-2002 report on the health status of the Italian population, emphasizing the need to decrease and control public healthcare expenditure, and, consequently, contribute to the reduction of the budget deficit. In this context, the focus on healthy lifestyles and primary prevention of drug and alcohol abuse and smoke consumption appeared as high priorities. The Minister highlighted, among the various consequences, the heavy economic impact of problems directly linked to smoking on the national healthcare system.

The annual report not only pointed out figures on smokers, adding up to 25% of the population, but, for the first time, also the number of passive smokers. The report drew attention to the importance of regional empowerment in health policy and delivery. This latter argument was influenced by the composition of the ruling coalition, which included the Northern League, a party strongly in favor of political and administrative devolution of the twenty Italian Regions.

Learning from the failed experience of his predecessor, the Health Minister Sirchia committed to a strategy to ban smoking in public places that would not be based on the prohibition to smokers but that would be strictly limited to the protection of non-smokers. The argument was intentionally broad and shifted the debate over constitutional principles, which were difficult to be disputed. It should be said that a logical linkage between the existing legislation and smoking had already been established in the Triennial report on tobacco consumption and trends (1998-2001), issued by the High Level Institute for Healthcare. The report addressed the opportunity

to link a smoking ban to the constitutional ‘right to health’ (art. 32 of the Italian Constitution). However, Sirchia established a constitutional reference for the ban that was an even less controversial principle. Consistent with the 3rd article of the Italian Constitution, the ban was in fact presented as a mere consequence of the ‘equal duties and equal rights’ principle.

Alternatives specification

Sirchia had assembled his team by confirming some top officials at the Ministry and by appointing three new experts as his immediate staff. The very nature of the Ministry of Health put it in close contact with the scientific and medical community. In particular, the ISS - the High Level Institute for Healthcare - represented a significant source of health research and epidemiological data and offered a platform for consultation between the ministerial staff, academia and other Italian medical research centers.

In addition to the ISS, in 2000, the Italian Society for Tobacco Control and, in 2001, a National Coalition for Tobacco Control was founded, bringing together governmental and non-governmental organizations, as well as scientific associations and individuals, to lobby for tobacco-free policies. This coalition supported the Ministry of Health in developing national smoke control strategies (Tamang 2007). Last, the presentation of the annual report on smoking in Italy, *ad hoc* seminars and symposia on health and economic risks associated with tobacco offered additional venues for an exchange on these issues between the scientific community and policy-makers, and, probably, helped shape the early phases of this policy cycle.

The government concerns over potential protests of bar and restaurant owners were mitigated by the “data on the economic effects of smoke-free policies, for example from the US states of California and New York showing no impact or positive impact of

smoke-free laws on restaurants and cafés.” (Interview conducted by the authors with Prof. Sirchia, 30th September 2007). These reassuring results strengthened the negotiation power of the Health Minister with his colleagues, particularly in light of the continuous monitoring of popularity through polls and surveys commissioned by the Cabinet of Berlusconi. (Interviews conducted by the authors with Prof. La Vecchia, 24th October 2007, and with Dr. Mangiaracina, 7th November 2007).

Besides being influenced by the scientific community, the strategy followed by Sirchia for preparing his legislative project became focused on intentionally avoiding the major obstacles that his predecessor had found in the Houses.

“I did not want my proposal to agonize in Parliament as it had been the case with Veronesi [the previous Minister]. His law had been considered too moralistic and persecuting to smokers. Critics would misleadingly claim it descended from a vision of “ethical state”. I did not want it blocked by endless examinations and infinite amendments” (Interview conducted by the authors with Prof. Sirchia, 30th September 2007).

As a result, Sirchia decided to limit the fuss that would have been associated with a comprehensive regulation on smoking and worked along three directions. First, in December 2001, he tightened the existing legal framework by increasing the fines, both for Italians smoking in places like cinemas, hospitals, offices, schools, museums, buses and airports, and for the managers of public spaces failing to enforce the ban. For Italians who ignored the bans, fines ranged from 25 to 250 Euros. The fine doubled if the violation took place in the presence of pregnant women or children up to 12 years old. For restaurateurs or personnel of public offices, failure to enforce smoking bans could result in even stiffer fines, ranging from 200 to 2,000 Euros, and the loss of their license.

Second, in September 2002, Italy adopted the EU directive (Directive 2001/37/EC) on the labeling of tobacco products and forbade the printing of terms such as ‘Light’ and ‘Mild’ on cigarette packs, as they were considered misleading. The adoption of the directive followed a pronouncement by the Antitrust Authority according to whom, “The label ‘light’ accurately indicates lower content of nicotine [...] However, it evokes in the consumer a reduced perception of health hazard. Therefore, ‘light’ can be misleading as it alters the perception of the pernicious consequences of smoking. This position is consistent with the EU Directive 2001/37/EC”. The Antitrust pronouncement, was in response to a request from the Italian Consumers’ Federation⁶⁶ to issue a formal opinion concerning the need to enforce a stricter policy for cigarette packs⁶⁷.

Third, he activated alternative advocacy channels, calling for the support of public agencies and bodies. For example, in July 2002, he condemned the promotion of tobacco during movies and TV shows and invited the national broadcasters to cease smoke-related indirect advertisements and product placement.

Also, in September 2002, he appealed to police officials, requesting them “to refrain from smoking while in uniform”. Last, in October 2002, he urged the *prefetti*, state officials responsible for order and security at local level, to intensify the controls over smoking violations in public places. The sanctions, determined by the 1975 law and confirmed by a 1995 ministerial ordinance, had never been adequately enforced. For instance, during the entire year of 1999, the total sum from fines collected on behalf of tobacco scantions was only thirty-five Euros.

⁶⁶ *Codacons*-Coordination of the associations for the defense of environment and of the users’ and consumers’ rights.

⁶⁷ Similar to what has been reported for Denmark (Albæk 2004; Albæk et al. 2007) and for Germany, (Kohler and Minkner 2014, 695) stricter regulations on tobacco products’ labelling and advertising, and even increased taxation on tobacco products do not trigger a level of contention comparable to that resulting from smoking bans.

While the search for strategies alternative to a systemic legislative proposal and the moral suasion had been fruitfully employed, Sirchia believed that eliminating smoking in public places, particularly bars, restaurants and clubs, would have been unfeasible without a norm. Thus, after a consultation with the other Ministries and with the Regional Governments, the Minister proposed a single article to be included in a broader law on public administration and attached it to the annual finance bill. The article was clearly committed to the protection of non-smokers and avoided any mention on the discipline of smokers. It only mentioned the sanctions for violators and the characteristics of separate smoking rooms and assigned the *State-Regions Joint Panel* the thorny task of setting, within four months, the standards through an *ad hoc* regulation.

Making the final decision

When making a decision on the final draft proposal in March 2002, the Minister decided to append it to a broad law on public administration that was on the parliamentary agenda for discussion at that time. Regardless of its limited fit with the general content of the law, the Minister was convinced that the narrow scope of a smoking article in the midst of a vast and controversial law would have limited the parliamentary conflict over the issue. However, after an animated debate, the speaker of the House of Deputies deemed the proposed legislation to be inadmissible as it was extraneous to the topic. In an official statement the Minister of Health expressed his disappointment that “despite the requests of the Italian citizens, Europe and the World Health Organization, his legislative initiative to protect non-smokers had been rejected”, but persisted in his intention to have an article included in a general law on public administration, aware that “missing the train of the financial bill would have meant deferring the law to a

vague and uncertain future.” (Interview with Prof. Sirchia, 30th September 2007).

Thus, in early November 2002, after intense negotiations and the threat to quit the Executive, the House of Senators approved the article, incorporating it in the general law on public administration. While this represented a first success, major obstacles were expected in the House of Deputies.

The endorsement of the President of the Republic came in the form of an official declaration during the third National Day for Cancer Research. During the press conference, the President stated that “smoking is always and anyway harmful, and there are no situations whatsoever in which it can be considered neutral”. He also spelled out his unambiguous support of the anti-smoking policy, by recognizing the importance of the preliminary approval by the House of Senators and by asserting his trust that “the law proposal would successfully conclude the process of parliamentary approval as soon as possible.”

After a rushed debate on the entire legislative proposal on public administration, the article (Article 51, Law n.3, 16th January 2003) banning smoking anywhere indoors except for private homes, on December 22nd 2002, was approved by the Italian Parliament with a large majority (236 votes in favor versus 63 against). The Deputy Sergio Gambini, in the transcripts of the final discussion in the House of Deputies, claimed that “the law was substantially armoured and that the lack of time did not allow for a proper analysis” (parliamentary meeting, 4th December 2002, slot 3.20 PM-3.50 PM).

Transition to practice

In January 2003 the law was officially promulgated and the following phase was a flurry of activities aimed at managing the transition to practice. The article had assigned

to the *State-Regions Joint Panel* the task of specifying, in the months to come, both the technical standards of the smoking rooms and the enforcement mechanisms for the sanctions. The extent of the efforts required to solve the implementation issues, prolonged the phase between the law approval and its actual coming into effect for two years.

On the surface, the work of the *State-Regions Joint Panel* flowed with good organization and general collaboration. But this was not enough to ensure a smooth acceptance of their outcome. The shift to a later stage and to a more technical discussion of potentially problematic decisions had successfully reduced the parliamentary conflict, facilitating the approval process of the article. Yet, it had only displaced political conflict to the implementation phase and, far from being eliminated, the disputes surrounding the ban re-emerged in the form of a contentious public debate with high media visibility. While smokers' groups campaigned for a referendum to overturn the law, bar and restaurant owners threatened not to enforce the law, arguing that they were business people, and not 'sheriffs of the state'. Bar and restaurant owners were organized through the Italian Federation of Bars and Catering (FIPE), a unit of the Italian Industry Association. Most certainly, these associations were fuelled by tobacco interest groups (Tamang 2006; and interview conducted with Dr. Mangiaracina, 7th November 2007). In the fall of 2004 the resistance of the Federation to the ban started to escalate. In October, the president of the FIPE sent a public letter to the Minister, asking him to defer the ban enforcement for six months, in order to allow the bar and restaurant owners to issue a shared interpretation of the ban and to organize ad hoc training initiatives. In December, the silence of the Minister caused the association to issue a petition among the members, formally requesting a postponement of the ban's

enforcement⁶⁸. A public letter sent from the President of the Italian Industry Association to Prime Minister Berlusconi followed shortly⁶⁹. Next, FIPE launched a campaign to boycott the ban directed at bars and restaurants, which even provided a toll-free number to receive more information and updates by FIPE⁷⁰. The last act of the FIPE association came with the announcement, through a press release, that the federation had contracted with prominent experts of constitutional law to prepare an appeal to Regional Administrative Tribunals⁷¹.

The Minister's response to these threats mainly employed the media. On the one hand, he explicitly condemned the behaviour of these business associations during TV shows, uncovering the surreptitious interests that linked the Italian Federation of Bars and Catering to the tobacco industry. In fact, the Federation was a unit of the Italian Industry Association, shareholder of British American Tobacco that, in turn, had recently acquired the Italian Tobacco Public Company (Marini 2005; and interview with Prof. Sirchia, 30th September 2007).

On the other hand, throughout 2003, an intensive media information campaign on healthy lifestyles and tobacco control was promoted by the Ministry of Health. The campaign, conceived of as a supporting tool for the ban, was consistent with the priorities of the National Health Plan (2003-2005) of "informing, communicating and educating on healthy lifestyles" and with the broader health agenda influenced by the Italian semester of EU Presidency. The general goal was to dissuade people from smoking by raising awareness of its negative effects, with an emphasis on the protection of passive smokers and vulnerable groups such as children and pregnant women. The target audience was, in fact, mainly the young, teenagers, women and mothers. The

⁶⁸ On 18/12/2004 the formal request was sent to the Minister, FIPE Archive.

⁶⁹ The letter was sent on 21/12/2004, FIPE Archive.

⁷⁰ FIPE press release 29/12/2004.

⁷¹ Regional Administrative Tribunals (TAR) are the judiciary venues where private subjects claiming that their legitimate rights have been violated by a public decision can appeal.

operation was accurately planned and managed by the Minister and his team. After defining the message and the targets, an agreement between the Health Ministry and the main national broadcasters was signed, maximizing the campaign visibility and reach.

In addition, the ministerial team identified an effective group of ‘message conveyers’ in a panel of renowned scientists and celebrities, selected according to TV channel and targets. Last, a whole set of adverts, video clips, announcements, information windows, entire TV and radio programs, online forums and chat rooms were produced.

During this transition phase, the Executive kept monitoring the popularity of the ban through surveys conducted by DOXA, the Italian branch of Gallup International Association, under the scientific supervision of an important medical research team. In 2004, one year after the law was issued and one before it came into effect, more than 85% of smokers were in favor of separate smoking areas in cafés and restaurants, and of a total ban in the absence of such separation. Even limiting the analyses to current smokers, the estimates did not change appreciably, confirming a steady support of the ban among the general population (Gallus *et al.* 2006a).

In 2004, the creation, heavily promoted by Minister Sirchia, of two new public bodies, the Technical Group on Tobacco Control and the National Centre for Diseases Prevention and Control (CCM), further strengthened the coordination between central and local administrations in the field of tobacco policy. The Technical Group gathered experts working at the local level on smoking cessation initiatives and attempted to harmonize training and education programs for health and social workers throughout the national territory. The CCM was in charge of coordinating the Health Ministry and the Regions in the field of disease monitoring and prevention. The mission of the CCM was to establish a sound prevention network in Italy by providing a bridge between the

research world and practitioners in the public health sector, as well as by facilitating institutional partnerships and professional collaborations.

Despite the strong opposition of restaurant and bar owners and strengthened coordination across the national prevention network, the enforcing regulatory step, in the form of a law decree signed by the Prime Minister, still developed into a rite of passage for Sirchia and his law. At the final meeting with the Cabinet, concerns and doubts were raised and the Health Minister threatened to quit. Consensus was found again only when Sirchia promised to 'be reasonable' with inspections and sanctions (interview with Prof. Sirchia, 30th September 2007).

In December 2004, a few weeks before it came into effect, an ordinance by the Health Ministry on the application of the smoking ban summarized the mechanisms in place for law enforcement and clearly attributed the responsibility for inspections and sanctions to local public bodies and police forces. The document also confirmed the prominent role given to bar and restaurant owners, accountable for enforcing the ban in their own businesses.

Later events: enforcement and compliance with the smoking ban

Beginning January 10th 2005, despite some initial concerns on enforcement issues and the role that restaurants and bar owners would play, the Italian general public promptly complied with the new ban. Since then, Italians have radically changed their smoking habits in public places, at least in pubs, cafés and restaurants. In the following months, the thousands of inspections conducted first by the police force (NAS) under the direct control of the Ministry of Health and, then, by local police and civil forces found only 112 law-breakers (approximately 1.5%).

Surveys showed that support for the ban in the Italian adult population, smokers included, increased from 83% to 93%. Smoke-free legislation did not unfavorably affect the hospitality business (Gallus *et al.* 2006b), as Italians reported that they went to restaurants and cafés more frequently. The data was confirmed by a survey of bar, restaurant and club owners, who by and large did not report any significant revenue losses. Consistent with other countries, the legislation has proven effective in protecting non-smokers (Gallus *et al.* 2007) and, at least in the short-run, it has determined a decrease in smoking prevalence and cigarette consumption (Gallus *et al.* 2006b). Also, it has shown immediate cardiovascular and respiratory health benefits (Barone-Adesi *et al.* 2006).

Understanding Anti-Smoking Policy Making

The episode analyzed here includes two policy cycles, between 2000 and 2005, of smoke-free policy making in Italy, with two different outcomes: an incomplete decisional stage (2001) and an authoritative decision (2003). This section attempts to give a process account of the episode, by addressing the following questions: Why was the smoking ban included in the policy agenda? Why and how did the ban remain on the agenda despite the change of Cabinet? Why was the ban approved amid a contentious political debate in 2002, as opposed to 2001? How did the government manage the period between the formal passage of the law and its enforcement (transition to practice)?

Issue inclusion in 2000 can be accounted for by the combined effect of three factors, namely discourse diffusion, quality of the policy entrepreneurs' participation and the attribution of political opportunity to the smoking policy issue.

We have also considered alternative explanations to the first inclusion of the smoking ban on Minister Veronesi's policy agenda, *in primis* policy transfer and imitation (Dolowitz and Marsh 2000), which were already employed, thereby explaining the inclusion in the agenda of a smoking ban in other countries (Asare and Studlar 2009; Cairney 2009). However, policy transfer and imitation do not appear to have played a major role, since the parliamentary discussion in 2001 preceded the adoption of smoking bans in other EU countries (Ireland in March 2004, Norway in June 2004 and Malta in October 2004). Rather, we recognize a milder effect of 'discourse diffusion' due to the increasing relevance of smoking and cancer prevention within the crusade that WHO and other international organizations had launched worldwide.

Second, Veronesi's outstanding reputation as a top cancer specialist and his high public visibility determined the actor certification (McAdam *et al.* 2001) needed to launch a forceful action against smoking. Also, the Minister was familiar with political dynamics at the national level and had been very effective in advancing a policy agenda on smoking and cancer prevention with the European Commission. His positive experiences in policy making made him a confident policy entrepreneur. Veronesi's conviction in including the smoking ban in the agenda was strengthened by a first round of parliamentary consultations that signaled support for his initiative across the political spectrum. This led the Health Minister to see a window of opportunity for the smoking ban.

In 2001, despite the need to signal political discontinuity and the debacle of Veronesi, the anti-smoking issue was maintained on the policy agenda of the newly elected Executive led by Mr. Berlusconi. Such stability can be partially accounted for by the bipartisan issue image (Baumgartner and Jones 1993) of the smoking ban, as

policy advocates and their opponents were distributed across political parties. This allowed the incoming Minister to recycle the issue, notwithstanding that it had been the warhorse of his predecessor. Most of all, the support of the Prime Minister, the sound consensus of the public opinion as shown by the polls, and the Minister's determination to tackle this issue by avoiding the obstacles faced by his predecessor, led him to recognize a political opportunity in pursuing the tobacco control policy.

In late 2002, amid a controversial debate, the new Minister succeeded in having the ban proposal approved. Based on the Advocacy Coalition Framework, the different final outcomes of the two policy cycles, in 2001 and 2002, could have been explained by a changed balance among various stakeholders and interest coalitions or by external perturbations (Jenkins-Smith and Sabatier 1994). However, the evidence showing that the support for policy change by the general population and the scientific community did not change over time renders this explanation less plausible.

Rather, the success of Sirchia's political strategy is likely the result of the careful consideration of the political feasibility of his project, in the light of the errors of the previous Minister. Veronesi had translated his smoking policy into a comprehensive law proposal. Sirchia, instead, minimized the recourse to the legal enactment process. The ban was presented as a single article included in a much wider law disciplining disparate issues of public administration, and incorporated in the annual financial bill. This curtailed the time and the attention that the Houses and the parties could devote to the issue.

The minimization of the legal enactment was enabled by three deliberate strategies. First, a potential source of conflict was parceled out from the parliamentary discussion, by deferring the definition of the standards for the smoking rooms and for the enforcement mechanisms, and by delegating it to a *State-Regions Joint Panel*. This

strategy had a further advantage, as it packaged the whole policy in terms of devolution to the Regions, one of the top priorities of the Executive. Second, surveys and polls were employed to bring about evidence of population attitudes towards smoking and smoking regulation, strengthening the political power of the Minister in the negotiations within the Executive and, at a later stage, with the Houses. In addition, the data on the economic impacts of the ban adoption in the US states of New York and California were used to dispel the claims of restaurant and bar owner associations. Third, the issue framing was deliberately shifted by Sirchia to the protection of non-smokers rather than to the more ambitious goal of smoking cessation. This limited the interference effect (Kingdon 1984) of the opposing issue of individual liberties in the parliamentary and public debates.

Finally, our analysis points out how the government managed the period between the issuing of the law in January 2003 and its coming into practice in January 2005, a phase that we named transition to practice and that we consider crucial for the successful implementation of the ban. During this phase, the Minister and his team performed activities that included establishing intergovernmental coordinating mechanisms as well as sustaining the political consensus for the decision. In turn, the institution of the Technical Group for Tobacco Control and the National Centre for Disease Prevention and Control ensured a platform for the coordination and clarification of tobacco policies among the Regions and between the Regions and the Ministry of Health. On the one hand this coordination platform provided the details of law enforcement, decreasing the level of uncertainty perceived by the implementers. On the other hand, the prevention network also worked as a ‘constituency for change’ (Kelman 2005) for the ban. Last, the tactical use of the media increased public awareness of non-smokers’ rights, thus strengthening the bargaining power of the policy entrepreneur.

Conclusions

This work analyses two policy cycles in Italy between 2000 and 2005 in a very controversial policy domain, banning smoking in public places. In order to explain the opposite outcomes of the episodes, it focuses on the interplay between policy entrepreneurs and the institutional context. The narrative has covered the policy evolution by examining agenda setting, alternative specification, decision-making and transition to practice. The analysis has identified the main differences between the cycles in terms of the political strategies adopted by the two Health Ministers.

In particular, the case highlights the importance of managing political feasibility (Meltzer 1972; Radin 2000). The incoming Minister learned from the experience of his predecessor and deliberately employed a low-key political strategy to uphold the initiative. He limited the conflict that might have jeopardized the policy outcome, by reframing the issue from smoking cessation to non-smokers protection. Second, he deferred and delegated the definition of standards and further clarifications of the law to the *State-Regions Joint Panel*. Third, he strategically employed polls and surveys to negotiate with his peers.

These three features characterizing Sirchia's political strategy can be traced in the experiences of other countries with tobacco control policy described in international literature (E.g. Feldman and Bayer 2004). First, in the US (Bayer and Colgrove 2004), Canada (Manfredi and Maioni 2004), Germany (Frankenberg 2004) and Japan (Feldman and Bayer 2004), to name a few examples, smoking control had been reframed from a prohibition stance to one of protection of bystanders from the harmful effects of environmental tobacco smoke. This approach is justified by the fact that governments wanted to "retain the hands-off posture toward individual behavioral

choice while at the same time exercising [...] their public health powers” (Feldman and Bayer 2004, pp.67). In Germany, for example, there was an agreement between the Federal Ministry of Health and the German Hotel and Restaurant Association aiming to provide smoke-free environments to non-smokers, but as it was a self-regulated compliance, it was largely ineffective.⁷² Beginning in September 2007, non-smokers protection has been governed by the Federal Law for protection from the hazards of passive smoking - clearly focused on guaranteeing the health of bystanders. The Law excluded from its compass workplaces open to the public, including bars and restaurants, providing only a loose requirement (i.e. to ban smoking to the extent compatible with the nature of the business or type of employment). In turn, each state parliament had to rule explicitly whether and where a smoking ban should be imposed and, starting in 2007, Germany’s sixteen states regulated smoking differently within the boundaries set by the Federal Law. However, most of the newly introduced smoking bans at the state level were soon modified and turned into milder guidelines, following a 2008 decision of the Federal Constitutional Court. The Court decided that some of the state provisions constituted a violation of the fundamental right to freely exercise a profession. This ruling occurred after two operators of the hospitality business had filed constitutional complaints against the non-smokers protection laws in their respective states. This ‘focusing event’ contributed to the wrong perception in public opinion that smoking bans were harmful to business⁷³ (Kvasnicka and Tauchmann. 2012). This especially allowed for reframing of the smoking bans from the relatively uncontestable

⁷²In 2005, a non-binding agreement between the Federal Ministry of Health and the German Hotel and Restaurant Association was signed which did not lead to the desired improvement in non-smokers protection. The Federal government successively opted out from this domain stating that it lacked the legislative competence in this area and, since 2007, the non-smokers protection in the gastronomy sector had been regulated by state laws.

⁷³ In particular, Kohler and Minkner (2014) report that the law was perceived as unduly disadvantaging specific types of businesses, i.e. small gastronomies and nightclubs vs larger gastronomies - that could establish separate smoking rooms.

idea of protection of bystanders to a contentious dispute in terms of potential business discrimination.

Second, the deferring of the debate to a devolved setting has also been observed in the case of Scotland where this venue shift has facilitated the approval of the smoking ban. Scotland was the first in the UK to implement comprehensive measures on the smoking ban. Discussion in 1999 during a Parliamentary debate resulted in a public backlash that led to a suppression of debate throughout the 2003 election cycle, at which time no party made legislative proposals regarding smoking ban measures (Cairney 2009). A policy entrepreneur, elected in Parliament in 2003 introduced the Maxwell Bill, which proposed in the Parliament a smoking ban on public areas that serve food. The fact that the bill was straightforward as a public health issue (i.e. not pushing public opinion too far into debates on smokers' protection), and required a relatively limited support to advance the agenda⁷⁴, made it significantly easier, at least politically, to move forward in 2004 with examination of the subject matter for legislation. This 'venue shift' from the Executive to the Parliament, pushed by the policy entrepreneur, as well as the framing of the ban as an issue of public health, made it a matter that could be decided upon at the *devolved* level (i.e. by the Scottish Parliament) as opposed to the *reserved* level (i.e. aligned with the UK provisions). The shift was allowed by the Scottish Executive, looking for a 'big idea' (Cairney 2007, 27) that could advance its policy standing in the UK. This venue shift allowed for comprehensive smoking bans in Scotland, which contrasted, at the time, with the UK reliance on voluntary agreements.

Third, the use of polls in the smoking political strategy had been pioneered by the US (Bayer and Colgrove 2004), and the Australian governments (Ballard, 2004), to monitor

⁷⁴ Only 11 signatures were needed to move to a Stage 1 examination by a select parliamentary committee - the Health Committee (Cairney 2009).

public opinion support and stir the political debate. Also in Scotland, in the period that preceeded the parliamentary approval of the ban, the Office for National Statistics issued an 'Omnibus Survey' that showed a strong support for restriction of smoking in most public places. Another independent poll commissioned and publicized by the Tobacco Manufacturers' Association, however, reported a much lower score, especially if referred to the alternative of a total ban. As these surveys allowed for much ambiguity, the Scottish Executive made the decision to use a public consultation, leading to a response reporting 80% support of a smoking ban with 56% of responders rejecting any exemptions (Cairney 2007).

Another form of direct participation can be found in the German policy episode, where numerous initiatives by citizens' or interest groups, in fact, attempted to influence non-smokers protection legislation through the direct democratic procedures available, in addition to the top-down legislation, at the state level. While only one state is reported to have strengthened the smoking provision as a result of the referendum, "the pronounced direct democratic activity on smoking bans in Germany reflects the controversy about smoking bans" (Kohler and and Minkner 2014, 695).

Turning to Denmark, this is the only Scandinavian country where tobacco control has never scored high on the political agenda. Traditionally, the dominant policy approach has been to favour voluntary agreements (Albæk 2004). A milestone of the anti-tobacco policy has been an attempt in the late 1980s to ban smoking from public spaces. However, similar to what happened to the proposal of Veronesi in Italy, the extraordinary number of amendments to the law proposal determined the parliamentary defeat of the comprehensive anti-smoking program presented by the Health Minister. (Albæk 2004). The issue remained dormant for several years. Cyclically, health organizations would bring the issue to the Executive or parliamentary attention, but the

response of policy makers and ministers tended to be “hesitant to legislate in this area to say the least” (Larsen 2009, 13). Albæk et al. (2007) submit that the difficulties involved in including a smoking ban in the agenda and advancing it effectively to the decisional stage are due to its issue image. Specifically, tobacco consumption was traditionally framed as an exclusively private matter. Since the late 1980s political parties had opted out from taking a stance on what was defined as “part of ethical policy, where parliamentary members can vote as they see fit, free of party constraints. However, this happens [in a country] where most legislation is decided 100 per cent along party lines” (Albæk et al. 2007, 12) and this inevitably conferred to the issue low political salience.

In late 2004, both unions and trades organizations in the hospitality industry called on the Government to introduce some form of legislation after a report from the Institute of Occupational Health had demonstrated the annual number of tobacco-related casualties in the hospitality industry, which also led opposition parties to raise the issue in Parliament (Larsen 2009). After some reluctance to regulate the issue, the Minister of Health engaged in a year-long public debate. Similar to what we have observed in the case of Scotland, in Denmark the Minister decided not to rely on the polls, skeptical about their ability to capture the real citizens’ opinions. Therefore, he initiated a series of popular hearings around the country⁷⁵, which showed a remarkable support for the ban. In December 2006, a new smoke-free legislation was approved and came into effect in August 2007.

We have sketchily reported some common elements of smoking ban policy trajectories in a few countries, with special attention to three European countries in addition to Italy, namely Finland, Germany and Scotland. From the analysis of these country

⁷⁵ Larsen reports that during such hearings smaller groups of workers, high school students, smokers and non-smokers would come in and listen to various arguments for and against smoking bans followed by instant electronic voting on a long series of questions.

experiences, we can draw some interesting, albeit tentative comparisons. First, we have seen how in all these countries, there have been heated debates triggered by smoking bans proposals. However, they do not activate partisan types of quarrels since, unlike national insurance or hospital privatization, anti-tobacco regulation is a sub-domain of health policy that can be considered bipartisan. This specific political attribute of the issue may increase the chances for its approval. Instead, in Denmark, where the party appropriation of an issue is considered a pre-condition for its advancement on the agenda, it relegated smoking regulation to a limbo of political irrelevance.

The policy episodes analysed confirm the importance, showed by the Italian case, of framing anti-tobacco regulation as protection of bystanders to prevent large controversies in the parliamentary and public opinion debate - especially those concerning the paternalistic intervention of government in the private sphere of citizens.

We identified, as the second successful element of Sirchia's political strategy, deferring and delegating the specification of the ban's details and standards to the *State-Regions Joint Panel*. The comparison with the other countries provides stimulating insights. The case of Scotland confirms the positive influence that 'devolution' may have on the smoking bans (Cairney 2007, 2009). Noticeably, while in Italy devolution entailed collaborating with the regions, in Scotland it entailed affirming the autonomous policy capacity of the country *vs* the United Kingdom's central legislative procedures. In both cases, however, devolution is a policy cycle unfolding in another domain. Also in both cases, devolution was saturated with positive political valence that generated a spill-over, reinforcing the legitimacy of the anti-smoking provisions. If we compare the cases of Italy and Germany, we notice a remarkable difference in the implications on the policy issue of its devolution, obviously reflecting the different jurisdictional

arrangements of these two countries. In Germany, the Federal Law issued in 2007 laid down the general principles of health protection from smoking, leaving to the sixteen states the autonomous definition of the scope and details of the prohibitions. In Italy, standard-setting was delegated to the twenty regions, but only through a Joint Committee (Conferenza Stato-Regioni) in which the regions agreed upon a standard that was enforced consistently across the national territory.

Last, we discussed how the policy entrepreneur in Italy strategically employed polls and surveys to negotiate with his peers. The analysis of the other cases show that polls were also used in Germany, Scotland and Denmark. However, the analysis also points to a certain skepticism of policymakers towards polls, either due to the risk of manipulation or to their limited capacity to decipher the public mood. Accordingly, these cases display alternative channels for the interaction between policymakers and citizens on the smoking bans, including public consultations in Scotland, popular hearings in Denmark and democratic procedures in Germany.

To conclude, our work enriches this international literature on smoking policies in three substantial ways. First, it has explored an additional case, set in a country of highly legalistic traditions and in transition towards a decentralized institutional arrangement. The comparative literature on tobacco control policy has suggested that one explanatory principle for cross-national differences in policy outcomes is “the impact of a polity being organized along federal or unitary principles” (Marmor and Lieberman, 2004, pp 288). Furthermore, the chapter has investigated a case where political consensus has been attained at the central level, but successful policy enforcement had to rely on the participation of subnational units (the Regions). More significantly, it has revealed the dynamics by which the central features of a political strategy are effectively assembled to achieve the policy outcome. Finally, it allows us to

appreciate a phase, that we named 'transition to practice', covering the temporal gap between the passage of legislation and its implementation. This phase is particularly relevant in administrative systems where formal approval ought to be followed by an enforcing regulatory step.

During 'transition to practice' the general principles of the law are translated into operational instructions. At this point, although legal uncertainties have dissipated, the policy cycle process still has the potential of being halted or undone. The fact that a number of authoritative decisions to ban smoking from public places in Italy and in other countries were never really enforced clearly confirms the associated risks. Consequently, besides the well-studied policy categories of the pre-decisional stage, a constructive analysis of policy dynamics should take into account this critical phase.

At a more practical level, recognizing and understanding the challenges associated with transition to practice could be beneficial for policy entrepreneurs in order to achieve the last mile, and that is having bans enforced and respected.

Appendix C

Documents were retrieved from multiple sources: the Italian Parliament, the Ministry of Health (MoH), the High Level Institute for Healthcare (Istituto Superiore di Sanità, ISS), the National Center for Disease Prevention and Control (CCM), Censis (Research Center on Social Issues) and ISTAT (National Statistical Institute). They primarily included epidemiological studies, policy documents and recommendations, internal reports, transcripts of parliamentary hearings and meetings, research papers and presentations conducted by academics and consultants. Another set of documents was derived from the scientific literature and, in particular, commentaries published in international medical and public health journals, from national publications specialized on the issue of smoking policies (i.e. 'Tabaccologia') and from the databases of international organizations, such as the EU and WHO, that offered cross-country studies of anti-smoking policies and monitoring of their level of application. Analysis of the two major Italian daily newspapers and the international press were conducted to determine the degree of media coverage of the issue and the international reactions to the announcements of the passage and the enforcement of this legislation.

Analysis of the retrieved documents also allowed us to identify the main players involved in the policy cycle and experts that had contributed either to its formulation or to the general debate on the issue. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with these players either on the phone or face-to-face and lasted between forty minutes and three hours. Interviews were tape-recorded. Fifteen relevant players were interviewed: (1) the former Minister of Health 2000, (2) the former Prime Minister, (3) the Director of the Department of Prevention and Public health Campaigns at the Ministry of Health, (4) the Director of the National Center for Disease Prevention and Control, (5) the Head of External affairs and Communication at the Ministry of Health and personal advisor of

the Minister of Health on the issue; (6) one Senior Official at the Ministry of Health that had directly participated in the different phases of the anti-smoking policy cycle (7) one Official in charge of producing the statistical data for the Department of Prevention and Public Health Campaigns, (8) a top official at the High Level Institute for Healthcare (ISS) that normally provides the Ministry of Health with scientific and epidemiological data (9) the Director and (10) the President of the Italian Tobacco Association, chief editors of “Tabaccologia” - the newsletter on smoking attitudes and policy in Italy, (11,12) two medical scientists and epidemiologists, members of a prominent Italian Research Institute and authors of the international scientific literature on smoking attitudes in Italy, (13) the Director of the same Italian Research Institute, consultant for the Ministry on these issues (14) a member of the High Council on Healthcare, responsible for the elaboration of the technical criteria for the creation of smoking areas in restaurants and pubs and (15) one top official in the Health Department of the Emilia-Romagna Region, coordinator of all Italian Regions during the discussions about the anti-smoking policy in the State-Regions Joint Panel.

Comparing Dynamics Of Policy Change Across Cases

Each chapter included in this collection has analyzed and discussed its empirical findings. This concluding section offers a systematic comparison of the insights across the three cases. As discussed in the introduction, the three policy episodes unfold in very diverse policy domains. Therefore, before moving to the comparison, it seems useful to introduce a brief account of potential differences between the domains of public management and health policy.

Differences between the policy domains

The first two empirical chapters, on *Innovation in government* and *Electronic government* respectively, unfold in the setting of the public management policy domain. Decisions in this domain pertain to government-wide institutional rules and organizational routines related to expenditure planning and financial management, civil service and labor relations, procurement, organization and methods, and audit and evaluation (Barzelay 2001). Public management policies have achieved increased salience over the last three decades, since policy-makers saw them as the only option to respond to a major tensions for governments: responding to the fiscal stresses brought about by changes in the international economic system, while facing relentless demands for public services and regulations in national political systems (Aucoin 1990; Hood 1991). In the academic study of public administration and management, this specific reference to public management as a policy domain (Barzelay 2001; Pollitt and Bouckaert 2000), provides a unit of analysis distinct from sector-specific managerial tools and institutional strategies or leadership styles in the public sector (Barzelay 2003, 251-252). In other words, it asks the ‘big questions of public management’ on micro-

management, motivation and measurement (Behn 1995), but it deals with them as policy-level issues rather than as management prescriptions.

The third empirical chapter, on the *Smoking ban*, is set in health policy, a core sector in any welfare system, in charge of providing the conditions under which basic needs are met (Barker 1996; Immergut 1992a). The social significance of health correlates with its economic importance both in terms of government spending and in terms of its impact on the strategies of corporate production, for example in the industry of pharma and medical devices. It has been claimed that the right of access to healthcare has become a defining feature of democratic citizenship (Freeman 2000). However, enacting such rights requires governments to find a balance between equity and effectiveness (Powers and Faden 2008; Sassi et al. 2001). The way in which this balance is sought entails rationing resources among types of treatments, groups of patients or technologies. Consequently, health policy is more often than not a highly contentious domain, for it poses crushing dilemmas to policymakers (Choudry et al. 1997; Ham and Coulter 2001). Such high levels of contention are hardly matched in the public management policy domain. Despite public management reforms' increasingly high status on the political agenda, in fact, it is not typical for these types of policy decisions to "stir passions and mobilize interest groups on a massive scale" (Immergut 1992a, 1) as is the case for health. The three cases display remarkable differences in the level of contentiousness, with the smoking ban clearly representing a much more contested issue compared to innovation in government and E-government. However, the comparison of the three policy episodes reveals a common feature, i.e. the bi-partisan nature of the issue, which transcends its level of contentiousness. In other words, the issue did not split the political spectrum between right-wing and left-wing partisanship (Toshkov 2013).

Another difference between the two domains is the extent to which evidentiary bases are systematically employed for policymaking. The importance of evidence-based policy in health seems correlated to the relative importance of technical expertise in different country settings. I don't mean to argue that professional bureaucracies are a peculiarity of health. However, the physicians' professional dominance creates a sort of "monopoly of medical practice that sets the limits to health policy" (Immergut 1992b, 59). In healthcare, more than in public management, the evidence-based approach is saturated with positive cultural valence and has migrated from the sphere of clinical practice to the sphere of policy (Learmonth and Harding 2006). Consistent with these premises, in the case of the smoking ban we found that the policy entrepreneurs, who were also prominent medical scientists, resorted to different strategic sources of evidence to back their proposals and to defend them from the interferences of detractors and political adversaries. This account confirms the results of previous studies regarding the ability of policy entrepreneurs in the health domain to select and assemble different evidentiary bases (Mele et al. forthcoming). These bases, employed in the case on the smoking policy, range from knowledge and scientifically produced evidence (e.g. the studies on the correlations between the rates of lung cancer or cardiovascular diseases and tobacco usage) to codified forms of experiential knowledge (e.g. the reassuring data on the effects of smoking bans enforced abroad on the hospitality business).

Having acknowledged some general differences between the policy domains, the section now moves to the comparison of insights resulting from the three empirical chapters. The comparison is organized around two selected analytical components of the selected framework, namely policy entrepreneurship and context.

Policy entrepreneurship

Let me first recapitulate, for each chapter, the role played, and the actions undertaken by the policy entrepreneurs. In the innovation policy, the first entrepreneur (Cassese) was a ‘technical’ Minister for public administration selected from the academia, aware of the short-term horizon of his mandate. The Minister received a strong endorsement from the Prime Minister, who certified his political caliber and the salience of the public administration domain by delegating him to diagnose and address the main problems of the public sector as well as by including him in the expenditure-planning phase. Consequently, innovation in government was framed as a means to reduce costs and support austerity measures. The Minister swiftly gathered a parallel team of skilled professionals around the country. He pragmatically inserted his initiative into the legal template of an existing project formally initiated five years before that had remained dormant due to poor management and lack of visibility.

The second entrepreneur (Bassanini) came from the same policy community of his predecessor. A professor of administrative law, he carved out for himself the role of reform champion. In doing so, the policy entrepreneur remained constantly in charge of the initiatives for government innovation, despite an interlude of one year and a half in the middle of the mandate during which time the policy entrepreneur vacated the post of Minister. He framed Innovation in government as instrumental to the modernization of the public sector and to the pillars of his grand reform, namely devolution, transparency and simplification. He managed to gather a team of experts to work with him and he nurtured a professional community of ‘public innovators’ outside the Ministry through the activation of networks, conferences and awards.

The third entrepreneur (Frattini) was a career politician, though with a strong background in public administration issues and exposure to the themes of the reform.

He developed the policy for Innovation in government along the existing trajectory, he retained, at the Ministry, most of the team assembled by his predecessors and he consolidated the community of practice with ad hoc initiatives. His framing of Innovation in government conformed to the broader goals of institutional empowerment and bottom-up innovation – i.e. public administrations enabled to innovate without being mandated to do it by law.

Turning to Electronic Government, the first cycle is marked by the co-existence of two entrepreneurs, due to a tight alternation of two technical governments in a period of one year and a half. The first entrepreneur (Amato) stirred the inclusion of the issue into the agenda and participated in some alternative specification activities – taken over and led to the final decision by the second entrepreneur (Cassese). In the first cycle, the issue was framed as a measure to foster control and transparency in public procurement, against the general background of austerity and moralization of the public sector habits, for example to prevent corruption in public procurement.

In the second cycle, the policy entrepreneur (Bassanini) partook in the high-level EU definition of an Action Plan for E-government, thus certifying himself and the issue. He framed Electronic government as instrumental to public administration modernization and as conducive to country competitiveness in the policy milieu of information society.

The last policy entrepreneur (Stanca), a former top-manager of an IT multinational, was ‘certified’ as the head of a newly established Ministry for Innovation and Information Technology. He framed Electronic Government as a way to increase the satisfaction of public services’ users, either citizens or companies, as well as a means to cater to the devolution process, by supporting and funding the local administrations willing to participate to pilot projects.

Last, in the Smoking ban episode we see two main entrepreneurs. The first (Veronesi) was a prominent scientist, certified in Italy and abroad by his participation in high-level policy forums on cancer and tobacco prevention. He framed the issue as his fight against smoking and crafted accordingly an articulated law proposal that did not make it to the stage of approval. The second entrepreneur (Sirchia) also had an expert background. He assembled his team by confirming some top officials and appointing a few more as his immediate staff. The entrepreneur maintained the issue of the smoking ban high on the agenda, though he devised corrective measures to avoid what he thought were the mistakes of his predecessors. One of the measures was the framing of the ban, presented as mere protection of bystanders in order to minimize the contention over government incursions in the private sphere that had characterized the previous crusade against smoking. The other was the minimization of legal enactment to limit the chances of lengthy parliamentary discussions, more likely to result in the watering down of the proposal.

By comparing the choices and the actions of the policy entrepreneurs across the three episodes, it is possible to identify some common elements and relate them to the broader debate on the theories of policy change. I will especially relate my findings to a stream that has addressed the interplay between policy change and policy entrepreneurship (Ackrill and Kay 2011; Balla 2001; Mintrom 1997, 2000; Mintrom and Norman 2009; Mintrom and Vergari 1996).

A recurring feature in all three chapters is the ability of policy entrepreneurs to strategically frame the issue they are trying to push through, or maintain in the agenda. This finding is a *locus classicus* of Kingdon's conception of policy entrepreneurship. It is also consistent with the conclusions of other studies that highlight the importance of 'problem definition' (Mintrom and Norman 2009), i.e. the ability of entrepreneurs to

attribute salience to certain attributes of the issue, thus catalyzing the attention of the intended individuals and targeted groups. As anticipated, the three issues in my cases share an intrinsic malleability, afforded by the bi-partisan nature of their image (Toshkov 2013). Interestingly, by comparing the framing of the issue image across the three cases, we can observe a variation between the two public management issues and the health issue. Government Innovation and E-Government were not only ideologically neutral but also perceived as ‘technical’. Therefore, policy entrepreneurs and political parties were able to package these issues as instrumental to their priorities, be they austerity or country competitiveness measures. In the case of smoking, we also see the attempt to frame it in terms of control of public health expenditure. However, this supposed objective perspective did not easily mitigate the level of contentiousness of the debate on prohibition. Consequently, the political ability of the successful entrepreneur did not entail repackaging the issue as instrumental to other measures. Instead, it required the adoption of a low-key representation of the smoking ban as a protection of by-standers, thus minimizing contention over government incursions in the private sphere. This finding is consistent with the differences in political salience that we may expect between the two policy domains. It also leads us to the second key element of entrepreneurship – that IP is conceptualized as a social mechanism in terms of ‘attribution of opportunity’, i.e. seizing political momentum in order to advance an issue that may have otherwise scored low in the agenda.

Attribution of opportunity resonates with ‘social acuity’ (Balla 2001; Mintrom 2000; Mintrom and Norman 2009; Mintrom and Vergari 1996). In the words of Mintrom and Norman:

“In policymaking context, as in all areas of human endeavor, opportunities must be recognized before they can be seized and used to pursue desired

outcomes. This suggests change agents must display high level of *social acuity*, or perceptiveness, in understanding others and engaging in political conversations” (2009, 652).

While the notion of social acuity – as well as attribution of opportunity- reflects the volitional conduct of policy entrepreneurs, the analysis of my cases, afforded by the analytical framework of IP, also captures ‘actor certification’, a mechanism that complements the volitional character of ‘attribution of opportunity’ with a situational component. We can, in fact, observe the mechanism of ‘actor certification’ at work when prominent political actors lend their credibility to the policy entrepreneurs, thus attesting both their ability to carry out the mandate and the relevance of the issue at stake. The episodes frequently display actor certification at the international level, such as in cases where entrepreneurs obtain key responsibilities in prestigious policy venues - an OECD Committee or a EU Ministerial Group.

A third recurring element of policy entrepreneurship in the three chapters is the determination and ability to build a team. The analysis of the chapters shows the importance of team building at two interrelated levels: the tight-knit team within the Ministry and the broader outside coalition. Especially in the second chapter, we observed the progressive coalescing of a community of experts – central administrators, local administrators, academics and consultants – around the issue of Innovation in government. Such professional network offered feedback and inputs in the phase of alternative specification, it ensured vitality to the Ministerial initiatives, and it signaled the political relevance of the issue. This account confirms the importance of networks of contacts for policy entrepreneurs, who can then draw upon these repositories of skills and knowledge to support

their initiatives (Knoke 1990; Mintrom and Norman 2009). It also resonates with the notion of ‘constituency for change’ (Kelman 2005), a critical mass of individuals, typically working within the policy sub-system, who become reform advocates, making it difficult to rewind change initiatives once they have been deployed. It is interesting, here, to analyze the dynamics activated by the interplay between team building and one feature of the political context, i.e. its discontinuity due to frequent cabinet turnovers.

When policy entrepreneurs are aware of the limited temporal horizon of their mandate – and in the technical governments in my cases, this has meant anything between ten and fourteen months – they may gather a parallel team. In other words, instead of going through the procedural and political hurdles of substituting part of the ministerial staff, they may activate their professional network outside the Ministry for the ‘alternative specification’ while leaving unaltered – though mostly unexploited – the expertise and the experts available within the Ministry. A further implication of the interplay between team building and frequent government turnover is that, once established, the ‘constituency for change’ can help insulate the issue from the changes one may expect with a new executive and a new Minister, thus strengthening the tightness of the policy monopoly (Baumgartner and Jones 1993).

Another frequent feature of policy entrepreneurs that emerges from the analysis of the cases, is their background as active members of the policy stream. In the first and second cycle of the Innovation policy and Electronic Government episodes, the entrepreneurs were both reputed members of academia and they had a track-record of active participation in the policy professional community through reports and working groups. Also in the third chapter, we see two medical

scientists with policy experience acting as entrepreneurs in the domain of smoking regulation. This is a substantial variation from the assumption of independent streams à la Kingdon. In his words “these two streams, [policy and politics] involve different people with different backgrounds and training, different orientations and different preoccupations” (1995, 220). This feature is, at least in two cases, linked to a specificity of the Italian political context. Cassese (Innovation and E-Government, 1993) and Veronesi (Smoking ban, 2000) operate in the political context of so-called ‘technical governments’ whose members have weak political affiliation and, instead, strong substantive expertise on the matters they are called to regulate, the natural candidates to be recruited are members from the academic and expert community. I will return later to the implications of the osmosis occurring between the policy and political streams.

A last element of policy entrepreneurs displayed by the analysis of the three chapters is their codification of the legacies of the past. The importance of time and history has been discussed in the introduction and can be recollected through the words of Capano:

‘Timing and history cannot be omitted. Timing is an essential discriminatory factor with regard to the essence of the process of change. History means that policies are not developed within a vacuum. History means that policies are contextualized in a place, that they come from a past, and that they have taken up time’ (2009, 27).

The analysis of the cases through the selected framework gives substance to what may otherwise sound like a platitude. A processual perspective reveals that policy entrepreneurs are confronted with problems that persist over time and posits that episodes of policymaking can be interpreted as structured sequences of solving

recurrent problems (Haydu 1998, Rayner 2009). In the first chapter, solving recurring problems entailed stimulating and sustaining innovative practices among public organizations; in the second it involved devising a strategy to spread and guide the adoption of Information and Communication Technologies among public organizations; and, in the third, solving recurrent problems required passing legislation that banned smoking from public places. The way in which policy entrepreneurs constructed the problems and formulated solutions was influenced by ‘policy memory’, the active sentiment of their past that shapes perceptions, through thought and action (Kay 2006). For example, in the chapter on Government Innovation and in the chapter on Electronic Government we see the ramifications, about fifteen to twenty years later, of specific cognitive frames of public administration reform developed by the policy entrepreneurs, as a result of their participation in working groups tasked with identifying the main problems of the Italian bureaucracy. The community, assembled by a visionary Minister of Public Administration, pioneered themes that would become dominant in decades to come, and forged the next generation of statesmen. Similarly, in the chapter on the Smoking ban, the first policy entrepreneur had not only been a member of a community of top scientists for over twenty years but had also developed, together with other prominent oncologists, direct experience in advocating for European action on cancer more than a decade before the policy episode was narrated. It is worth emphasizing that in the three chapters the notion of policy memory, even when characterized as the familiarity of individual actors with an issue, implies that this familiarity or *habitus* is developed within the groups the individual belongs to (Bourdieu 1984). Policy entrepreneurs learn from their past experiences as members of epistemic communities.

We can also observe vicarious policy learning at individual and organizational levels as policy learning also stems from the encoding of previous policy initiatives. In

the chapter on Government Innovation, for example, we observed periodical interruptions during which incoming actors assessed recent or ongoing initiatives as either successes or failures and, on the basis of this exercise, designed the features of subsequent initiatives. Noticeably, the very notion of successful initiatives evolved in parallel with the progressive refinements of the dominant discourse on government modernization. In the chapter on the Smoking ban, the second policy entrepreneur designed the policy proposal by carefully avoiding what he had encoded as the mistakes of the previous Minister. The two examples I have recounted show how in these cases entrepreneurs experienced two types of vicarious learning – one based on encoding and interpreting of the substantive components of the policy experience, the other based on the acquisition of political sensitivity. This distinction resonates with the conceptualization of policy vs political learning. *Policy learning* is based on the production of knowledge that aims for a better “understanding – or even a redefinition – of the relationship between the configuration of components of policy design and their consequences” (Real-Dato 2009, 127). *Political learning* enables entrepreneurs to sharpen their ability to conceive and prosecute and promote policy goals and ideas (May 1992).

I am now turning to compare the cases in order to discuss another analytical component of the framework: the context.

Contextual Elements: decentralization, Europeanization and legalism

In the introduction I argued that one of the analytical merits of institutional processualism is to capture the interactions between context and situation, where “context includes fleeting occurrences and ongoing policy histories and where situation includes ideation and interactions among participants within the focal policymaking

process.” (Barzelay and Gallego 2006, 540). Institutional processualism, in the tradition of Kingdon, attributes principally to policy spillovers such causal relationship between context and situation⁷⁶. As a result of its ‘institutional’ roots, IP is also attentive to how situated interaction is influenced by stable cultural context (Barzelay and Gallego 2006; Thelen and Steinmo 1992).

Applying this framework to the analysis of my cases has allowed me to capture the diverse ways through which the three elements of the administrative context enter the policy scene in the three chapters. I will start with ‘decentralization’ and ‘EU integration’, and will then move to ‘legalism’ – an element typically codified as the trademark of Italian administrative culture (Capano 2003; Gualmini 2008; Lippi 2003; Ongaro 2011; Panozzo 2000).

Let me recapitulate the role of decentralization and Europeanization in the cases, by starting with the former. In the first chapter, decentralization takes the form of an overarching principle, i.e. ‘empowerment of local administrations’, which was increasingly enacted in the initiatives for Innovation in government. In the second chapter, Regions and local administrations cooperated with the Ministerial staff in the drafting of the E-government action plan, thanks to the establishment of an ad-hoc E-government Coordination Centre for Local administrations. In the last chapter, local administrations not only contributed to the preliminary works but they were also tasked with an autonomous step of the legislation process, i.e. to specify the technical details after the law had been approved.

Moving to the process of the Europeanization, the first policy cycles of Innovation in government and Electronic government are temporally situated in a period where Italy had committed to join the incipient EMU. This required, among other

⁷⁶ In addition to policy spillovers, another type of causal mechanism that is employed to account for the interplay between context and situation when an empirical case exhibits it, is called ‘a focusing event’.

responsibilities, reducing the budget deficits to levels permitted by the 1992 Maastrich Treaty. In the first chapter, for example, the ‘Guidelines for modernizing public administrations’ included as a top priority ‘to make the public sector more European.’ In the second chapter, the European Guidelines for the information society acted as a reference for the Italian action plan for E-government. In the last chapter, the first policy entrepreneur also owed his reputation to the launch of the plan ‘EU against cancer’ he had pioneered with prominent foreign colleagues. We also find a tangible implication of the process of European integration in the adoption of the EU directive on the labelling of tobacco products.

The analysis of these very diverse examples and experiences of decentralization and Europeanization indicates that the framework is geared to capture not only their nature of static contextual factors, but also the interactions between the context and the main policy cycle as it unfolds. I identified three channels through which the interaction takes place. One is instantiated by the formal mechanisms of jurisdictional shift towards the EU (e.g. the EU directives or the Treaty provisions on economic and monetary union) and towards local administrations (creation of ad hoc governmental units in charge of dealing with local issues). Another channel, discussed before, is through ‘actor certification’. A third channel, through which context and action interact, comes in the form of the political currency enjoyed by decentralization and Europeanization in the period under analysis. Europeanization became synonymous with modernization and competitiveness and was evoked by policy entrepreneurs as a value per se. Similarly, participation of local administrations in the drafting of a national policy proposal carried, for its proponents, a political benefit that was independent from its technical benefit. In other words, the political currency enjoyed by these contextual elements turned them into guiding principles for other policy domains (e.g. the ‘mantra’

of Europeanization or of devolution). Understanding these micro-dynamics sheds some light on the actual functioning of ‘policy spillover’, that is to say it allows starting to unpack how “ideas pass between institutionally-unrelated policy areas” (Ackrill and Kay 2011, 75). In doing so, it may also relate to the scholarship that has investigated the influence of European integration on policy change in the members countries and particularly in Italy (for a review see Redaelli and Franchino 2004). Some of these studies posit that policy change is activated from top (the EU) to bottom (Italian policies). Dyson and Featherstone (1999) for example attribute domestic policy change to Europeanization conceptualized as an ‘external lever’ that alters power relations in government and between government and parliament. In the same vein, Della Sala (1997) shows that the Treaty provision on EMU has enabled government agencies to resist the pressures of interest groups and advance more firmly economic regulatory reforms. Few studies opt for a ‘bottom-up’ approach. Among them, and particularly close to my research endeavor, is the study by Natali that investigates the effects of Europeanization on welfare state reform in Italy. Building on the three streams model, he shows how “creative policy entrepreneurs can use the [European forces] to enlarge the policy breaches” (2004, 1091).

To sum up, the comparative analysis of my cases has allowed me to discern the channels through which the spillover effect is enacted. I posit that this preliminary result may be a promising insight for researchers on Europeanization, especially those engaging in empirically based studies on the dynamics of domestic policy change triggered by the EU, beyond the top-down vs bottom-up dichotomy.

The third contextual element, legalism, is a striking, though not exclusive feature of the Italian administrative setting⁷⁷. As discussed in the introduction, this feature has

⁷⁷ Capano for example warns us that legalism is a phenomenon that has characterized other EU administrations, rather than some kind of Italian eccentricity (2003, 785).

especially attracted the attention of scholars interested in the Italian administrative traditions. In stylized terms, legalism is associated with the concept of law as an instrument for intervening in society rather than as a means of conflict resolution between different societal actors (Knill 2001; Ongaro 2011 Painter and Peters 2010; Sotiropoulos 2004). The corresponding dominance of legalism in the Italian administrative community is often held responsible for inhibiting reform efforts or turning them into perfunctory rituals, thus hollowing out their potential for real change (Capano 2003; Gualmini 2008; Lippi 2003; Panozzo 2000).

What the analysis of my cases suggests is that there is more variety at work, and that such variety is worth exploring. A first, basic outcome of the research is thus to introduce into international scholarship the previously unreported episodes of policymaking that, despite the legalistic setting, lead to policy change. A second type of variety that the framework is set to capture is displayed by the entrepreneurial responses to the legalistic pressures. Comparing the cases, we do find entrepreneurs that resort to legislation for highlighting the societal relevance of specific policy issues. Examples of this tendency are the establishment of an Authority in the attempt to make more transparent the IT procurement habits of central administrations or the search of a legal route to (re)affirm the principle that smoking in public places is not allowed. However, we also find examples of entrepreneurs that decode the constraints posed by legalism and find a way to achieve their policy goal by downplaying the legal component of the policy change. We even find entrepreneurs that try to counterbalance the legalistic approach by explicitly promoting a ‘legal moratorium’ and by packaging their initiatives accordingly.

Such empirical variety is (moderately) interesting per se, as it portrays a more nuanced view of the Italian policy community that includes elements of consciousness

about the dominant paradigm. More importantly from an analytical point of view, is that the framework allows us to uncover the dynamics through which, in the episodes I have studied, the legalistic culture that indisputably characterized the Italian administrative landscape does not prevail and inhibit the aspiration to change of policy entrepreneurs.

A closer look at the scholarly work on the Italian administrative culture, shows that my findings could hardly have been achieved by adopting the perspective that links administrative traditions to policy change. In the following, I try to explain why this is the case, by comparing my work with those of Capano (2003) and Panozzo (2000), which I take as illustrative of the research strand on administrative traditions.

First and most important, we have asked different questions. The work of Capano, for example, is set to explain ‘a whole spectrum of results of change’ (Capano 2003; 784), asking explicitly whether “the reforms introduced during the 1990s can be perceived as a paradigmatic change” (Capano 2003, 788). Along similar lines, Panozzo (2000) wonders whether managerial accounting reforms of the 1990s are ‘for real’ or whether the legal transposition of managerial and accounting principles has hindered their “original legitimacy and appeal” (2000, 363). These questions reflect the epistemological and ontological premises of culturalist theories applied to political change. One such premise is ‘oriented action’, that we find at work very often in the sociological stripe of new-institutionalism, for example under the guise of ‘logic of appropriateness’ (DiMaggio and Powell 1991; March and Olsen 1989). Eckstein has provided a clear definition of orientations to action:

“Actors do not respond directly to situations but respond to them through mediating orientations. Orientations to action are therefore general disposition of actors to act in certain ways in sets of situations” (Eckstein 1988, 490).

Looking for ‘oriented action’ clearly leads culturalist approaches to expect continuity. Orientations to action - in this case legalistic culture - are cognitive and normative elements immanent in institutions and leading to ‘institutional inertia’. Culturalist theory submits that massive counterforces are needed to dislodge inertia. Consistent with these postulates (and with common sense), the works of Capano (2003) and Panozzo (2000) do not rule out policy change. However, and here we switch to a difference with IP in terms of ontology, the type of change that can be seized through their lens is a “change of paradigm, conceived in terms of the deep transformation of all the constitutive elements of a public policy - goals, strategies and programs as well as policy tools” (Capano 2003, 783). I have briefly discussed this in the introduction, but I would like to highlight that this definition clearly points to ‘macro-patterns of cultural routines’ (Schmidt 2006, 2010) to the exclusion of individual action which, as emerges from the analysis of my cases, could in fact determine change by infringing upon the cultural norm. In denying explanatory power to social mechanisms explicitly activated by individuals, the scholarship on administrative traditions ends up portraying ‘action without agents’ (Hall and Taylor 1996, 954) or even ‘structures without agents’ (Schmidt 2010, 51).

Second, we have sought answers to our questions in different ways. The corpus of data of the two exemplary works on administrative traditions in Italy draws on pieces of legislation (Panozzo 2000, but see also Lippi 2000) complemented with a few policy reports (Capano 2003)⁷⁸. In the introduction I have discussed the rationale for including

⁷⁸ Capano (2003) relies on the analysis of five policy documents - three authored by the very policy entrepreneur (Bassanini), and two issued by the Public Administration Department – to challenge the paradigmatic novelty of the reforms. The study identifies a mismatch between the strong conviction of policy entrepreneurs that they were bringing about an historical break with the past and the ‘reality’ of a substantial continuity between concepts portrayed as novel and pre-existing pieces of legislation. Panozzo compares pieces of legislation on managerial control in Italy. He states upfront that the study is focused on the “conditions of possibility for reform rather than evaluating outcomes or impacts” (2000, 358). Similarly, Capano asserts “we should be looking for the organizational and functional principles underlying this reform process rather than the yet unclear results of the reform itself” (2003, 788).

interviews to gain first-hand testimony from direct participants and witnesses of the policy making process. Here I am not contending that interviewees should necessarily contribute to *corpus* construction in qualitative research (Bauer and Gaskell 2000) on policy making. I would argue however that their complete absence may preclude the “access to consciousness of actors” (Martin 1986, 131), thus preventing scholars that search for paradigmatic changes through the exclusive analysis of official documents, a more ‘agentic’ understanding of policy making. We may conclude that the epistemological differences between these two perspectives are also reflected in the methodological choices.

In this section, I have compared the three policy episodes that compose this collection around two main analytical components, namely policy entrepreneurship and context. For each component, I have provided a brief synthesis of the empirical evidence and then relate this to the relevant theoretical debates. I am now going to conclude the thesis by distilling key insights from this comparative exercise and by acknowledging the limitations of both the chosen framework and my own analysis in light of the findings⁷⁹.

Concluding remarks

The role of entrepreneurship in policy change has received attention and recognition by a large scholarship (Ackrill and Kay 2011; Balla 2001; Baumgartner and Jones 1993; Kingon 1984; Mintrom 1997, 2000; Mintrom and Norman 2009; Mintrom and Vergari 1996). From these studies emerges a widely felt tension. On the one hand, it has been acknowledged that, behind any instance of change, there are individuals that act as a driving force. Correspondingly, there have been calls to shift the unit of analysis from

⁷⁹ I do not repeat here the individual contribution of each of the three empirical chapters as a stand-alone piece nor the general limitations of the framework discussed in the introductory chapter.

members of ongoing collective action processes to individuals that shape the agenda and introduce new knowledge to policy sectors (Dudley et al. 2000). On the other hand, accounting for personal motives and behaviours is likely to appear idiosyncratic, and “idiosyncrasy does not offer propitious ground for theorization” (Mintrom and Norman 2009, 651).

My analysis has identified different analytical elements of entrepreneurship. Some are mostly volitional such as ‘framing’ and ‘building a team’; some are predominantly situational such as ‘attribution of opportunity’ and ‘institutional origin in the policy stream’; others can be located between situation and context, such as in the case of ‘actor certification’. Spelling out these analytical elements allows us to breach the theoretical impasse and respond to the call for a study of entrepreneurship attentive to “contextual factors, to individual actions within those contexts and to how context shaped such action” (Mintrom and Norman 2009, 651).

Next, all three policy episodes I analyzed unfold in Italy. Specific features of the country’s administrative and political landscape have allowed me to further develop the analytical bearing of the selected framework in three respects. The fact that policy entrepreneurs are experts coming from policy communities creates an osmotic effect between the policy and political streams. There is widespread agreement that interdependencies between streams are one of the main aspects of the MSF still overlooked (Capano 2009; John 2003; Nowlin 2011; Real-Dato 2009; Zahariadis 2007). My analysis has not been structured as a systematic investigation of the institutionalized connections between the streams. However, I have been able to explore that by virtue of their professional experience, actors belonging to the political stream (i.e. Ministers) engage in the activities that Kingdon exclusively attributes to the experts and academics that inhabit the policy stream: gathering data, conducting studies, drafting and polishing

proposals. In other words, they actively participate in the alternative specification phase and in doing so, two separate mechanisms of policy-making are conflated: the selling of ideas *to* and the selection of ideas *by* policymakers (Ackrill et al. 2013). In a political context characterized by frequent government turnovers, this conflation may be the *condicio sine qua non* for an effective entrepreneurship.

This leads us to the second feature of the Italian context with potential analytical relevance. I am referring here to the interaction between entrepreneurship and frequent government turnovers, including ‘technical governments’ whose members are aware of the short-term duration of their mandate. Looking at that interaction allows us to cast some light on the nature of the policy window, and in particular at its width, an element that to date remains under-theorized (Ackrill and Kay 2011, Ackrill et al. 2013; Natali 2004). Policy entrepreneurship in these cases is bound by the short-term time-pressured political agenda, and ‘political feasibility’ (Kingdon 1984) ends up being conceived mostly in terms of temporal feasibility. In other words, we see entrepreneurs and their staff adjusting to the unnatural width of the window in two ways. They “*filter out* the more difficult or demanding aspects on the change agenda and focus on the more readily doable, programmable or internally valued aspects” (Lodge and Hood 2002, 4). They *transpose* already existing initiatives to tackle new problems, thus building on the “comparative certainty of known institutions and contacts to reduce uncertainty” (Genshel 1997, 59).

Last, in this chapter I have engaged with the notion of legalism and with its implications for policy change, or lack thereof. The analysis of my cases afforded by IP does not deny the influence of this relevant feature of the Italian administrative landscape. However, it uncovers dynamics through which successful entrepreneurs find their way through the hurdles of a legalistic culture. One such dynamic is the interplay

between framing and legalism, enacted when entrepreneurs strategically frame issues and initiatives to remove them from legal procedures. Interestingly, in the original administrative setting of the MSF, entrepreneurs struggle to move an issue from the technical to the political agenda. The analysis of my cases set in the Italian administrative context shows that effective entrepreneurship, more often than not, entails efforts to move issues in the opposite direction. Overall, these considerations provide analytical and empirical ammunition to the postulate of Mintrom and Norman (2009), according to which, when a range of contextual factors appear to reduce the likelihood of change occurring, the actions of effective policy entrepreneurs could be decisive” (2009, 651).

In the introduction of the thesis, I devoted a section to discuss the limitations of the theoretical framework and of the research design. Here I am going to briefly present two interrelated limitations in light of my own findings. The first is a bias in case selection. The three cases, in fact, are not representative of the population of policy cycles in their own domain. Consistently with the research strategy of the IP, the criteria for selecting these cases as ‘instances of a process’ have included their analytically interesting features more than their being representative of policy developments in a certain sector. It might be also noted that the setting for surprising cases seems to be a common scholarly posture in studies of public policy. In the words of Lodge (2007, 275) “comparative public policy is about questioning stereotypes by exploring somewhat paradoxical or counterintuitive developments”. In my case, however, I do not compare my policy episodes with foreign experiences in the same policy domain. Nor do I compare, within the Italian setting, cases selected to reveal systematically different levels of political salience or legal enactment, as I have recently done with a co-author (Mele and Ongaro 2014). This bias in case selection has two main consequences.

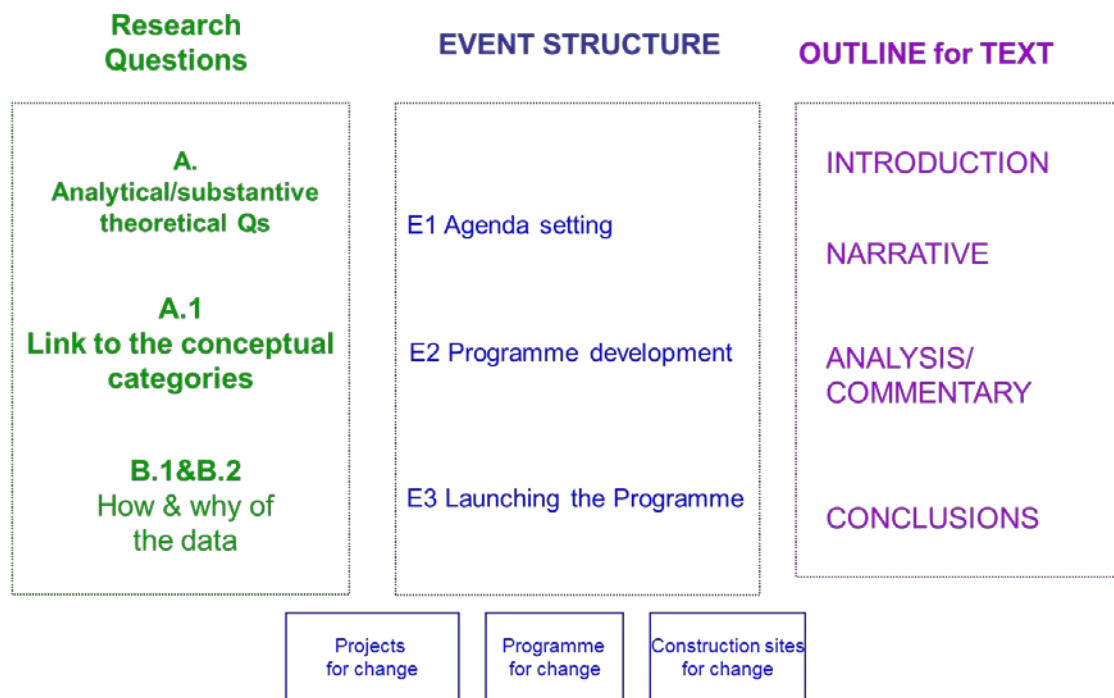
Lacking a proper comparative design, the surprise generated by the cases, be it the persistence of the issue on the agenda or the approval of a contentious proposal, risks to remain an end in itself instead of catering to a full-fledged variation-finding enterprise. Moreover, this approach to case selection matched with the focus on the pre-decisional phase and with a scarce attention to the content of change, weakens the potential of my analysis to contribute significantly to current policy debates on the Italian public administration reform or public policy change in healthcare. A mid-term goal of my research strategy includes amending these limitations.

ANNEXES

Annex 1

An example of research schematics: Government innovation policy in Italy (1993-2002)

Research schematics (Innovation in government 1993-2002)



A. EVENT STRUCTURE

The Innovation in government policy cycle (1993-2002)

E1 “Projects for change” (1993-1994)

E-1-1 Setting the agenda for Public Administration Innovation

E-1-1-1 Emerging and ascending of Government Innovation as a policy issue

E-1-1-2 Campaigning for issue visibility and status

E-1-2 Developing “Projects for Change”

E-1-2-1 Drafting a report on the conditions on the Italian Public Administration and the Guidelines for P.A. modernization.

E-1-2-2 Gathering ideas from innovative local administrations

E-1-2-3 Gathering ideas from foreign top civil servants (Ministerial visit to the UK)

E-1-2-4 Negotiating with the Finance Ministry

E-1-2-5 Readapting an initiative previously approved (Imposing a new discipline on a 1986 initiative for gaining productivity and experimenting public procedures)

E-1-3 Finalizing and launching “Projects for Change”

E-1-3-1 Deciding to include the initiative in the Italian Economic Plan (1993)

E-1-3-2 Launching publicly the initiative among Central and Local administrations(1994)

E-1-4 Managing organization transitions within the public management policy subsystem-

E-1-4-1 Reorganizing the Ministry for Public Administration

E-1-4-2 Building a team of external experts

E2 “Programmatic Projects for change”(1996-1999)

E-2-1 Setting the agenda for Public Administration Innovation

E-2-1-1 Reviving the issue of government innovation

E-2-1-2 Including the issue of government innovation to the wider programme for reforming public administration

E-2-1-3 Repackaging the issue in terms of decentralization, simplification and managerial innovation in 1997

E-2-2 Developing “Programmes for Change”

E-2-2-1 Assessing the results of the current Projects for change

E-2-2-2 Gathering ideas with external academic experts

E-2-2-3 Gathering ideas with high-ranking civil service officials

E-2-3 Finalizing and launching Programmes for Change

E-2-3-1 Starting and completing the decisional process

E-2-3-2 Launching publicly the initiative among Central and Local administrations (1999)

E-2-4 Managing organization transitions within the public management policy subsystem

E-2-4-1 Naming a Scientific Committee for evaluating the “Projects for Change”

E-2-4-2 Building a team of local civil servants and academic experts and assigning responsibility for the new initiative

E3 “Constructions sites for change” (2000-2002)

E-3-1 Setting the agenda for Public Administration Innovation

E-3-1-2 Maintaining the issue as a priority (2001 election)

E-3-1-3 Extending the issue to include bottom-up initiatives and knowledge management

E-3-2 Developing Construction sites for change

E-3-2-1 Gathering ideas from OECD PUMA members

E-3-2-2 Gathering ideas from external experts

E-3-2-3 Establishing consultation channels (with the Italian Industry Association, with the Unified State-Regions Conference and with the National Association of Italian Municipalities)

E-3-2-4 Establishing synergies with the Italian Institute for Public Administration Training and Studies

E-3-3 Finalizing and launching Construction sites for change

E-3-3-1 Starting and completing the decisional process

E-3-3-2 Launching publicly the initiative among Central and Local administrations (2002)

E-3-4 Managing organization transitions within the public management policy subsystem

E-3-4-1 Reorganizing the Ministry for PA to include an Office for Innovation

E-3-1-2 Building/confirming the team

Previous Events

PE1 Public Administration reform Policy cycle (1861-1990)

PE1-1 The reform decade of the neo-Constitution (1948-1957)

PE1-2 The planning and efficiency decade (1961-1972)

PE1-3 The Giannini Commissions (1973-1979)

PE1-4 The 1990 Reforms on transparency and Local Autonomy

PE2 Referendum for the Majoritarian System Voting (1991)

PE3 *Bribesville*-public unveiling of widespread corruption practices (1992)

PE4 Currency crisis (1992)

Contemporaneous Events

1993-1994

CE1 1993 Referenda on Public Administration Functioning

CE2 Currency devaluation (1993)

CE3 Direct election of the Mayor (1993)

1994-2001

CE4 Political crisis first Berlusconi Executive (1994) and Transitional Executive (1995)

CE5 First Italian Left Executive (1996)

CE6 Joining EMU (1997)

CE7 Comprehensive Public Administration Reform on Simplification and Decentralization (1997)

CE8 Political turbulence (1998, 1999, 2000 Executive Reshuffling)

CE9 Political elections and new Berlusconi Government

Related Events

RE1 Policy cycle on Transparency/Simplification in Public administration (1990, 1993, 1997)

RE2 Policy cycle on the devolution of powers to local and regional administrations (1992, 1997, 2001)

RE3 Policy cycle on strengthening government-citizens connections (1990, 1993, 1997, 2000)

RE4 Policy cycle on Information Technology in Public Administration (1993, 1997, 2000, 2001)

RE5 Policy cycle on economic planning (Including the Public Administration Minister in the Economic Planning phase)

B. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The Innovation in government policy cycle (1993-2002)

A Question:

A What are the process dynamics of public management reform and how does the context affect them?
A1 What have been the process dynamics of public management reform in Italy? [Keyed to A]
B1 What makes public management reformers effective, in Italy? [Keyed to A1]

B2 Questions

LINKED TO THE E1, E2, E3 AS A WHOLE

B2-1 Why did a public service delivery change program take root in Italy's governmental system and become progressive element of the country's strategy of public management reform in the 1990s and 2000s? [Keyed to E1, E2, E3. Keyed to A1-1]

B2-1-2 Why did it turn out to be a stable item on the agenda of public management reform in Italy (despite party system and Cabinet instability)? [Keyed to B2-1] [Keyed to E-1-1, E-2-1, E-3-1, CE4, CE5, CE8, CE9]

B2-1-3 Why did this program become a progressive (rather than decaying or static) element of the country's strategy of public management reform? [Keyed to B2-1] [Keyed to E2-1-2, E2-1-3, E3-1-2, E3-1-3]

The Innovation in public sector policy cycle (1993-2002)

“Projects for change” (1993-1994)

Agenda setting: issue inclusion, issue image and issue status

B2-3 Why did innovation in public administration emerge as an issue in the early nineties while the governmental agenda was congested? [Keyed to B2-1 and A1-1-2] [Keyed to E-1-1-1, E-1-1-4]

B2-3-1 What explains the inclusion of innovation in public administration in the governmental agenda of the technical government in 1993? [Keyed to B2-3 and A1-1-2] [Keyed to E-1-1-1, E.1.1.4]

B2-3-2 Why was the issue packaged as instrumental to austerity measures in 1993?
[Keyed to B2-3] [Keyed to E-1-1-3, CE2]

Developing programmes for innovation

B2-4 Why did an innovative proposal about *Projects for Change* come to be supported within the community of interest formed to develop it? [Keyed to B-2-1, B2-1-3] [Keyed to E-1-1-2, E.1.2.1, E-1-2-2]

Finalizing and launching programmes for innovation

B2-5 Why did the quality of participation by the reformer (Cassese) affect the practices trajectory?
[Keyed to B-2-1, B2-1-3] [Keyed to E-1-3-1, E.1.3.2]

B-2-5-1 What explains that quality of participation? [B2-5]

“Programs for change”(1996-1999)

Agenda setting: issue inclusion, issue image and issue status

B2-6 Why was the issue of innovation in public administration revived by in 1997? [Keyed to B-2-1, B2-1-3] [Keyed to E-2-1-1, E-2-1-2, E-2-1-3]

B2-7 Why did the issue of innovation in public administration change status but remain on the agenda despite the Executive turnover in 1994 and 1995? [Keyed to B2-1] [Keyed to CE4, CE5,]

B2-8 How was it repackaged in terms of decentralization, simplification and managerial innovation in 1997? [Keyed to B2-1] [Keyed to RE1, RE2, RE3]

Developing programmes for change

B2-9 What changes in the process design features are observed? [Keyed to B2-1-3] [Keyed to E-2-1-4, E-2-1-5]

B2-9-1 Why did such changes occur? [Keyed to B2-1-3] [Keyed to E-2-2-1, E-2-2-3, E-2-2-4]

B2-10 How did agenda stability operate as part of a configuration of factors explaining these changes? [Keyed to B2-1-3], and how did the programs' dynamics contribute to agenda stability? [Keyed to B2-1-3]

B2-11 Why did an innovative proposal about *Programmatic Projects for Change* come to be supported within the community of interest formed to develop it? [Keyed to B2-1, B2-1-3] [Keyed to CE7, E-2-1-2, E.2.1.4, E-2-1-5]

Finalizing and launching programmes for change

B2-12 Why did the quality of participation by the reformers (Bassanini, Marconi) affect the practices trajectory? [Keyed to B-2-1, B2-1-3] [Keyed to E-2-3-1, E.2.3.2]

B2.12-1 What explains that quality of participation?

“Constructions sites for change” (2000-2002)

Agenda setting: issue inclusion, issue image and issue status

B2-13 Why did the issue remained in the government agenda despite the change in the Executive and the need to signal new priorities? [Keyed to B2-1 and A1-1-2] [Keyed to CE8, CE9]

B2-14 How was it repackaged in terms of bottom-up innovation? [Keyed to B2-1-1] [Keyed to E-3-1-3, RE2, RE4]

B2-15 Why was it included in the agenda despite the fact it scored low in the electoral programme? [Keyed to B2-1 and A1-1-2] [Keyed to E-3-1-4]

Developing programmes for innovation

B2-16 What changes in the process design features are observed? [Keyed to B2-1-3] [Keyed to E-3-1-3]

B2-17 Why did such changes occur? [Keyed to B2-1-3] [Keyed to E-3-2-1, E-3-2-2, E-3-2-3, E-3-2-4]

B2-18 How did agenda stability operate as part of a configuration of factors explaining these changes? and How did the programs' dynamics contribute to agenda stability? [Keyed to B2-1-3]

B2-19 Why did an innovative proposal about Cantieri come to be supported within the community of interest formed to develop it? [Keyed to B2-1, B2-1-3] [Keyed to RE2, E-3-1-4]

Finalizing and launching programmes for innovation

B2-20 Why did the new Executive launch a Programme which was rooted in the efforts of its predecessors?

B2-21 Why did the quality of participation by the reformer (Frattoni, Marconi) affect the practices trajectory? [Keyed to B-2-1, B2-1-3] [Keyed to E-3-3-1, E.3.3.2]

B2-21-1 What explains that quality of participation? [Keyed to E-3-1-3, E-3-2-1, RE3, RE2]

Annex 2:

List and background of the interviewees for each chapter

	<i>Chapter 1 Innovation in government (17 interviewees)</i>	<i>Chapter 2 Electronic government (20 interviewees)</i>	<i>Chapter 3 Smoking ban (15 interviewees)</i>
<i>Policy entrepreneurs</i>	-Prime Minister - Minister for Public Administration ^φ	-Prime Minister; -Minister for Public Administration ^φ ; -President of the authority for IT in Public Administration;	- Prime Minister - Minister of Health
<i>Bureaucrats</i>	-Director general of the PAD ^{φ*} ; - Director of the Office for public personnel of the PAD; -5 Senior officials of the PAD (Director of the Office for the relationship with stakeholders, Head of the international projects*, 2 Officials of the Office for innovation in public sector, 1 Senior official in charge of the relationships with local administrations);	-Director of the National Center for IT in public administration; - Director general of PAD ^φ ; - Director of the office 'Regions and Local administrations' at the Department for innovation and IT*; - Senior Official of PAD in charge of E-Government*; -Senior Official at the Public Administration Department ^φ ; -Senior Official at the Department for Innovation and IT;	- 4 Senior officials at the MoH (Director of the Department 'Prevention campaigns', Responsible of the statistical data, Head of External affairs, Senior official at the Minister office) - Director of the National Center for Disease Prevention and Control - Director of the High Level Institute for Healthcare (ISS) - Top official at the High Level Institute for Healthcare (ISS)
<i>Consultants</i>	-Consultant of the PAD, manager of Program for change; - 2 consultants of the PAD, managers of Construction Sites for Change; -3 academics/consultants of the PAD *;	- 2 consultants of the PAD &the Department for Innovation and IT in charge of innovative ICT projects; - 3 academics also consultants or the E-Government Projects;	- Member of the High Council for Healthcare, in charge of the technical criteria for the creation of smoking areas in restaurants and pubs and
<i>Relevant external stakeholders</i>	-President of <i>Forum Public Administration</i> , a think tank with an annual conference; - Responsible of the Unit 'Public Affairs' within the Italian Industry Association.	- 3 top managers of large IT vendors (IBM Italia, Oracle Italia and Microsoft Italia) in charge of the public administration units/public affairs; -3 bureaucrats of local administrations (Modena, Siena and Reggio Emilia) carrying out Electronic Government pilot projects funded from PAD.	- Regional Top official, coordinator of all Italian Regions in the State-Regions Joint Panel at MoH. - The Director and the President of the Italian Tobacco Association, chief editors of "Tabaccologia" - 2 medical scientists and epidemiologists, authors of the international scientific literature on smoking attitudes in Italy.

PAD = Public Administration Department

MoH = Ministry of Health

*The interviewee has been interviewed twice on this policy cycle

^φThe interviewee has been interviewed for both policy cycles (Innovation and E-gov), though in two separate interviews

Annex 3

Table with the executive turnover and the ministers of the three policy cycles⁸⁰

Period (legislatures)	Executive turnover (Prime Ministers)	PA Ministers	IT Ministers	Health Ministers
1992-1996	Amato (6/92-4/93)⁸¹ Ciampi (4-93-5/94) Berlusconi (5-94-1/95) Dini (1/95-5/96)	Cassese (4-93-5/94) Urbani (5-94-1/95) Frattoni (1/95-5/96)		
1996-2001	Prodi (5/96-10/98) D'Alema (10/98-12/99) D'Alema II (12/99-4/2000) Amato II (4/00-6/01)	Bassanini (5/96-10/98) Piazza (10/98-12/99) Bassanini (12/99-4/00) Bassanini (4/00-6/01)		Veronesi (4/2000-6/2001)
2001-2005	Berlusconi II (6/01-4/05)	Frattoni (6/01-11/02)	Stanca (6/01-4/05)	Sirchia (6/2001-4/2005)

⁸⁰ I have marked in bold the policy entrepreneurs that are included in the analysis of the three policy episodes.

⁸¹ In the first cycle of the E-government policy cycle, the first policy entrepreneurs is the Prime Minister Amato who set the idea of the Agency. This transitional government is short-lived and followed by another transitional government where the entrepreneur of E-government is the Minister of Public Administration.

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