

# Macrolevel factors encouraging bureaucratic policy entrepreneurship: The case of religion and state in Israel

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## Abstract

How do external macrolevel factors encourage bureaucrats to become policy entrepreneurs? And what are their organizational goals in pursuing entrepreneurship? Contrary to traditional public choice literature on bureaucracy that sees the latter as change-resistant, this study stresses that bureaucracies can and do change; they are not as insulated from reformist pressure. In this study, we lay the conditions under which change occurs, making bureaucrats—policy entrepreneurs. We argue that: (1) bureaucratic inefficiency, leading to (2) societal pressure as expressed by public opinion, and consequently to (3) pressure from potential new providers offering bottom-up competition, will encourage bureaucrats to turn to policy entrepreneurship strategies. In addition, we assert that their goals in doing so are to modify and design efficient services, while protecting their monopoly on service provision. We test these claims by analyzing the state-religion dynamics in Israel, and specifically the case of the 2021 kosher food inspection reform.

## KEYWORDS

bureaucratic policy entrepreneurship, external competition, inefficiency, Israel, public opinion, state-religion relationship

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## 1 | INTRODUCTION

Institutions and policies have, essentially, shrunk the entrepreneurial field, leaving little room for enterprise within their structures (Lamine et al., 2021). Within this realm, it is policy entrepreneurs who can use the limited entrepreneurial space in their organizations to institutionalize their initiatives. Theoretically, policy entrepreneurs are traditionally considered to be individuals who are well-versed in the sociopolitical context in which they operate. They are very socially astute, and resultantly, their efforts to engage in policy conversations may prove successful (Mintrom & Norman, 2009). Thus, they identify windows of opportunity (Kingdon, 2011) for introducing innovative policies within the existing social order, and use unconventional strategies to influence policy outcomes that may change the existing status quo (Golan-Nadir & Cohen, 2017; Navot & Cohen, 2015; Witting & Dudley, 2020). Definition-wise, policy entrepreneurs seek to change the status quo in policy arrangements. The attention that policy entrepreneurs pay to specific issues and their willingness to work with others, while building teams, increase the likelihood of securing the policy outcomes they desire (Cohen, 2016a; Golan-Nadir & Cohen, 2017; Mintrom, 2013; Navot & Cohen, 2015; Schneider & Teske, 1992).

In some instances, the term “policy entrepreneurs” refers exclusively to those individuals who change the direction of policies while holding bureaucratic positions (Brouwer & Huitema, 2018; Golan-Nadir, 2021). In such cases, these individuals not only have limited entrepreneurial space in which to function, but also must deal with the institutional constraints within which their positions are embedded. These bureaucrats may be high-level bureaucrats (Baez & Abolafia, 2002; Navot & Cohen, 2015; Teodoro, 2011; Teske & Schneider, 1994), as well as low-level bureaucrats (Frisch-Aviram et al., 2018). Implementation literature also provides special attention to street-level bureaucrat’s policy entrepreneurship (Brodkin, 2011; Maynard-Moody & Musheno, 2003; Thomann, 2015).

The realm of religion and the mere idea of entrepreneurship were studied together in varied settings. For example, how values developed in religious beliefs and practices shape entrepreneurship (Dana, 2010, 2021; Dodd & Gotsis, 2007); entrepreneurship and religion in the context of business (Emami & Nazari, 2012; Hisrich et al., 2007; Nwankwo et al., 2012; Zafar & Ammara, 2023; Zelekha et al., 2014), and in the perspective of youth (Dvouletý, 2023). Some studies focus specifically on Muslim entrepreneurship (Hassan, 2022). Religion and entrepreneurship were studied in Western democracies, as New Zealand (Carswell & Rolland, 2007), Britain (Anderson et al., 2000; Nwankwo et al., 2012), India (Shinde, 2010), and Israel (Golan-Nadir, 2021; Talal, 2022, 2023), and in nondemocracies as China (Du, 2017), Indonesia (Sulung et al., 2020), Korea (Choi, 2010), and Nigeria (van der Westhuizen & Adalakun, 2021). Nonetheless, within the realm of religious policies and services, only few studies have treated bureaucrats as policy entrepreneurs. High-level bureaucrats of sorts were dealt with in the realm of religious state policies toward ethnic minorities, specifically within education. It shows that where political authority is fragmented, bureaucratic policy entrepreneurship takes place (Talal, 2022, 2023). Other literature treated lowest level “street-level bureaucrats” as policy entrepreneurs while offering extended religious services in governmental hospitals (Golan-Nadir, 2021).

As policy entrepreneurs are said to be highly motivated individuals that draw attention to policy problems, present innovative policy solutions, build coalitions of supporters, and secure legislative action (Mintrom & Norman, 2009), this study’s contribution lays in drawing on a causal mechanism leading high-level bureaucrats to become policy entrepreneurs. It focuses on

the macrolevel conditions under which such change occurs. Additionally, contrary to the traditional public choice literature on bureaucracy (Michels, 1911; Niskanen, 1971; Tullock, 1965) that sees the latter as change-resistant, this study stresses that bureaucracies can and do change; they are not as insulated from reformist pressure as many scholarly work stresses. This study further uses the realm of religion to indicate that bureaucratic policy entrepreneurship may be aimed at improving bureaucratic efficiency, but also—due to religion's monopolistic nature—to protect the institutional monopoly it holds. This is contrary to the accepted assumption in literature that the objective of policy entrepreneurs is to break the status quo (Gunn, 2017).

Hence, we ask; how do external macrolevel factors encourage bureaucrats to become policy entrepreneurs? And what are their organizational goals in pursuing entrepreneurship? We argue that: (1) bureaucratic inefficiency, leading to (2) societal pressure as expressed by public opinion, and consequently to (3) pressure from potential new providers offering bottom-up competition, will encourage bureaucrats to turn to policy entrepreneurship strategies. Consequently, we assert that their goals in doing so are to modify and design efficient services, considering demanded institutional modifications, while protecting their monopoly on service provision.

We test this causal mechanism using a textual analysis of primary and secondary sources, elite in-depth interviews, existing statistical data, and two public opinion surveys on the kosher food inspection services provided by the Israeli Rabbinate. Context-wise, the Rabbinate of Israel as a state institution in a Jewish and democratic state (Barak-Erez, 2008), has a monopoly on granting kosher food certificates to public and private businesses. Many have criticized that the process of obtaining such certificates is onerous. This is since the Rabbinate suffers from acute bureaucratic inefficiency, leaving it open to vast public criticism. With increasing competition from private Orthodox kosher food inspection organizations, the General Director and managing strata of the Rabbinate were successful in fending off a challenge to their monopoly, while improving the inspection service's efficiency; A 2021 reform has set that the Rabbinate would remain the only body regulating all food inspection organizations, despite being eliminated as the sole provider of this service.

## 2 | LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 | Bureaucrats in policy entrepreneurship

Policy entrepreneurship considers the role of the individual within the policy process and explains factors leading for change (Kingdon, 2011; Mintrom, 2013; Mintrom & Norman, 2009).<sup>1</sup> Cohen (2016b) defines them as: “individuals who exploit opportunities to influence policy outcomes to increase their self-interests—without having the necessary resources required for achieving this goal alone. They are not satisfied with merely promoting their self-interests within institutions that others have established. Rather, they try to influence a given reality to create new horizons of opportunity using innovative ideas and strategies” (p. 180).

Policy entrepreneurship is studied in a manner that pays simultaneous attention to contextual factors, to individual actions within those contexts, and to how context shapes such actions (Mintrom, 2000; Mintrom & Vergari, 1996). Context-wise, the motivations for policy entrepreneurship are varied: ideological or value-based, organizational, professional, or self-interest. Hence, they may include several elements such as their ideology (Brewer &

Selden, 1998; Crewson, 1997),<sup>2</sup> their desire for more power (Dunleavy, 2014) or their attempt to secure their future jobs (see in Frisch-Aviram et al., 2018).

Within this realm, bureaucrats who hold official positions as managers may use their entrepreneurial abilities to maintain their monopoly in service provision when they see that it may be compromised by other competing organizations. High-level bureaucrats are often an important source of the information about policy problems that other players in the policy process use (Dunleavy, 2014; Peters, 2001). They dominate the policy process thanks to their professional knowledge and expertise (Peters, 1987). High-level bureaucrat's position as administrators that initiate policy change is highly intriguing. This is since bureaucrat's immanent role is to implement policy, not design it. Theoretically when referring to policy design, agents of policy change are referred to as veto players (Immergut, 1992; Tsebelis, 2002). The latter are individual or collective actors whose agreement is necessary to change the status quo (Tsebelis, 1999, 2002). Veto players have preferences over public policy outcomes, and these are consistent across the continuous policy choices the veto player faces (Immergut, 1992; Tsebelis, 2002). Furthermore, Tsebelis argues that the status quo will only change if it is weakly preferred by all veto players, since otherwise one of the players would veto the social choice (Tsebelis, 1999; Tsebelis & Chang, 2004). Bureaucrats, hence, are not in veto position on policy change. In the following sections, we draw on the factors leading to bureaucratic policy entrepreneurship.

## 2.2 | Bureaucratic inefficiency, lack of professionalism, and corruption

The first factor that initiates the causal process leading bureaucrats to turn to policy entrepreneurship strategies is bureaucratic inefficiency. Weberian classic bureaucracy, particularly regarding impartiality and professionalism, is argued to be a crucial and important measure of the quality of governance (Fukuyama, 2013). Bureaucratic professionalism and impartiality are the two core ideas of the post-new public management (NPM) (Lodge & Gill, 2011). Since the 1980s, NPM and post-NPM reforms have dominated attempts to improve public administration. Evidently, it has focused on improving the efficiency of public services and the measurement of professionalism while applying horizontal specialization in public apparatuses, contracting out, marketization and privatization, adopting private-sector management methods, performance management, and an outcome-based orientation (Cohen, 2016a; Golan-Nadir, 2021; Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2011). Following, the post-NPM reforms<sup>3</sup> were designed to strengthen the central political and administrative level through structural reintegration and by increasing its capacity in light of the former reforms. It also aimed to enhance the NPM's promise of efficiency (see in Cohen, 2016a).

Overall, public choice literature argues that bureaucracies are inefficient, intransigent, and immune to reform (Niskanen, 1971; Tullock, 1965). Neoclassical economists and theorists of public administration treat bureaucracy as a nonmarket mechanism, and thus ineffective (Meyer, 2013; Wolf, 1987). It usually lacks effectiveness or goal attainment, adequate achievement of explicit functions of the organizations, adaptive capabilities, or coordination and control of self-interest-driven or value-driven individual actions (Gajduschek, 2003). This is since they are perceived as budget-maximizers, as everything of value to them (e.g., salary, reputation, power) is directly related to the total budget of the bureau (Niskanen, 1971;

Wyckoff, 1990). Such enduring inefficiency could result in part from not implementing the NPM or post-NPM reforms at the organizational level (Cohen, 2016a).

Furthermore, professional bureaucracy ideally should be characterized by merit-based recruitment and internally recruited senior officials, rather than political appointments or political network-based recruitment (Dahlström et al., 2012; Suzuki & Demircioglu, 2017). Evidently, bureaucratic value requires bureaucrats to act professionally with an absolute commitment to the public interest within the framework of bureaucratic neutrality, anonymity, impersonality, and fairness (Agba et al., 2008). Professional bureaucracy can prevent public sector corruption, namely the illegal—or unauthorized—profiteering by public officials who exploit their positions in public office to make personal gains. The latter enjoy(s) administrative discretion that may be used to secure economic benefits through informal side payments or bribes (Blackburn et al., 2010; Cohen, et al., 2022; Tummers & Bekkers, 2014)

Ideally, the performance of the bureaucrats' public duty requires that they balance between conflicting interests of politicians and the general public. Here, the professional codes of ethics engender a sense of duty that places the bureaucrat above personal preference (Agba et al., 2008). This, along with the NPM's need to compete for customers, is supposed to bring the notion of the "customer comes first" into the realm of public services (Cohen et al., 2016), making the bureaucrats a fruitful platform for policy entrepreneurship.

Perhaps the most evident signal that focuses attention on inefficiency is the *consumer complaint*, which is used as an indicator of public discontent. Consumers have legitimate information on the correct allocation of goods, and raising flags helps superiors to intervene and solve any present issue (Prendergast, 2003). These complaints may also be pronounced via public opinion, or as professed by Albert Hirschman (1970, 1993), in "voice." In his *exit, voice, and loyalty* model Hirschman explains that when consumers are dissatisfied with a certain product, they may choose either the voice option, meaning they will demand better outcomes, or use the exit option and simply leave the firm offering the product (1970, 1993).

### 2.3 | Expressions of clients' attitudes toward bureaucracy—Public opinion

Bureaucratic inefficiency results in societal pressure as expressed by public opinion, making it the second factor that promotes the causal process leading bureaucrats to turn to policy entrepreneurship strategies.

The shifts and effects of public opinion on policymaking processes were studied by several profound theories, namely Kingdon's multiple-streams framework (Cairney & Jones, 2016), the advocacy coalition framework (Weible et al., 2009), and the punctuated equilibrium theory (Yildirim, 2022). Evidently, Western democratic governments are escalating their efforts to monitor citizens' attitudes toward government and public administration (Bouckaert et al., 2005). The NPM encourages the accumulation of data regarding citizens' opinions about the quality of the services they have received from the public sector (Vigoda-Gadot & Yuval, 2004). This information is supposed to provide a clearer picture of the public's trust in and satisfaction with service providers. It also highlights general trends for evaluating bureaucratic efficiency at different points in time (Harrison, 2013; Rovai et al., 2013).

Research has established that the reason most commonly cited for the public's poor opinion of the public sector's failure to perform (van de Walle et al., 2008). Other factors that destroy the public's trust in the government are perceptions or experiences of corruption when dealing

with the state and its agents (Aghion et al., 2010; Anderson & Tverdova, 2003; Blanco & Ruiz, 2013; Chang & Chu, 2006; Morris & Klesner, 2010; Seligson, 2002; see in Gillanders & Neselevska, 2018). Specifically, public trust is important to public officials because it is central to supporting the development and implementation of public policies and, subsequently, for effective, cooperative compliance. Trusted public officials can use their skills, discretion, and autonomy to enhance their efficiency, responsiveness, and effectiveness (Bouckaert & Van de Walle, 2003; Danaee Fard & Anvary Rostamy, 2007; Davidovitz & Cohen, 2021, 2022; Gillanders & Neselevska, 2018; Gordon, 2000; van Ryzin, 2011).

As clients' attitudes toward organizations that supply public services are negative, we see the establishment of society-based external competition that, in turn, challenges the bureaucratic monopoly. As Hirschman argues, citizen's decision to "exit," namely leave the current service supplier, depends heavily on the availability of a good alternative outside the organizational framework (1970, 1993). Evidently, there may be private "exit" alternatives to government bureaucracies.

## 2.4 | Bottom-up external competition

Bureaucratic inefficiency that results in societal pressure as expressed by public opinion leads to the pressure from potential new providers offering bottom-up competition, making it the third factor that promotes the causal process leading bureaucrats to turn to policy entrepreneurship strategies.

On the organizational level, studies have explored how institutions create barriers to social change (Arthur, 1994; North, 1990; Pierson, 2000). Specifically, historical institutionalism stresses that policy choices made when an institution is being formed will have an ongoing effect on policy far into the future (King, 1995; Skocpol, 1992). Such institutional lock-ins usually assume that politicians and/or bureaucrats and their agencies have a monopoly on the services they provide, with no option for the voters to "exit" (Wittman, 1995).

Overall the preferences of the consumer-voter are given, and the government tries to adjust to the pattern of these preferences (Tiebout, 1956). Yet, referring to the quality of goods, Albert Hirschman explains that when consumers are dissatisfied with a certain product, they may choose either the voice option, meaning they will demand better outcomes, or use the exit option and simply leave the firm offering the product (Hirschman, 1970, 1993). Exit, simply means that people do not have to consume a public good they are dissatisfied with. It does not necessarily mean there are private alternatives, nevertheless, this is often the case. Other scholars elaborated on the concept of "exit." Gofen (2012) suggests the term "entrepreneurial exit"; namely, a proactive exit response that involves the initiation of an alternative form of service offered by citizens themselves. Other scholars have referred to it as "alternative politics," meaning specific strategies adopted by individuals and groups in response to their dissatisfaction with the declining availability of government services (Ben-Porat & Mizrahi, 2005; Cohen, 2012; Cohen & Filc, 2017; Levy & Mizrahi, 2008).

Exit initiatives create external competition among organizations that offer similar services. Some bureaucrats might be encouraged to act as policy entrepreneurs when witnessing these societal initiatives. The literature emphasizes the influence of entrepreneurial role models on the decision to initiate new policies. It shows that the effect of these role models is driven by social interactions and personal contact (Kacperczyk, 2013). It also stresses that through

observing their parallel counterparts engaging in entrepreneurial activities, some bureaucrats may see entrepreneurship as attractive (Wyrwich et al., 2016).

Therefore, this study investigates what role inefficiency, critical public opinion, and external competition play in prompting bureaucrats to engage in policy entrepreneurship strategies? Based on the abovementioned literature, we argue that: (1) bureaucratic inefficiency, leading to (2) societal pressure as expressed by public opinion, and consequently to (3) pressure from potential new providers offering bottom-up competition, will encourage bureaucrats to engage in policy entrepreneurship strategies. Consequently, we claim that the goals of these bureaucrats in doing so are to influence public policy to the benefit of the organization, while improving its service efficiency in light of demanded institutional modifications. This may result in bureaucrats taking action to maintain the organization's authority on service regulation as much as possible. Figure 1 illustrates our hypothesis.

The hypothesis suggested here is tested using the realm of state-religion relations. As literature in this realm of study emphasizes, religious regulations embedded in institutional designs may draw criticism when the delivery of services is performed poorly. The economics of religion shows that government regulations play a critical role in shaping religious trends (Iannaccone et al., 1997). Furthermore, a monopolized state support for religion, where religious institutions such as religious departments and courts are incorporated into the government, can also lead to the bureaucratization of religion (Fox, 2021; Künkler, 2018).

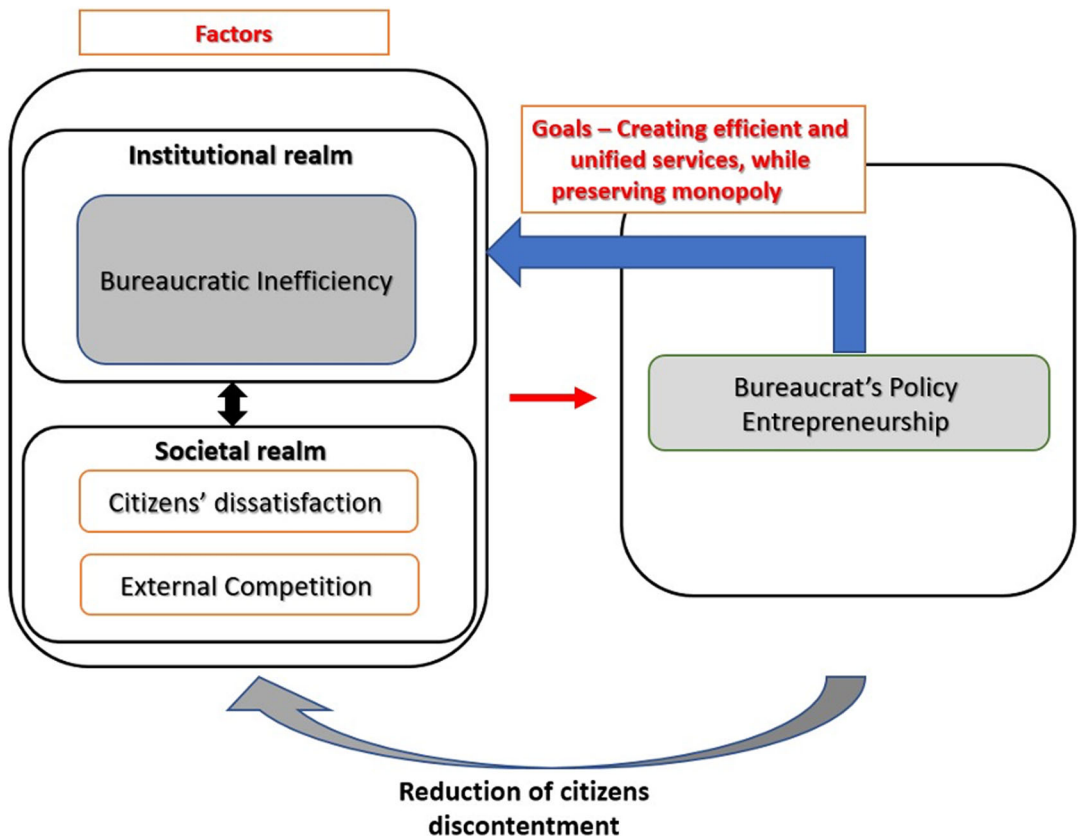


FIGURE 1 Factors leading bureaucrats to policy entrepreneurship strategies.

Evidently, many religions become highly bureaucratized, particularly the Catholic and Orthodox Churches, as well as state-supported Protestant ones. Indeed, many European countries roll these confessions into the actual bureaucracy, as in the case of Judaism in Israel.

Despite the regulation of religion, the religious preferences in society are pluralistic (Gill, 2005), and can also vary across culturally homogenous populations, with no single religion likely to satisfy all people (see also Stark, 1992). Iannaccone (1991, 1992, 1994) and Gill (1998, 1999) argued that pluralistic religious environments are more vibrant and participatory than those of state-supported monopolistic settings. They provide members with goods and services that they value (Gill, 2021), solving the problem of societal dissatisfaction. These preferences, many times encourage that change at the bureaucracy level does occur.

Following, the Israeli case of the Rabbinat's kosher food inspection services is tested in light of these theoretical assumptions.

## 2.5 | The context—Israeli law on kosher food inspection

Israel was established in May 1948 and is constitutionally defined as a “Jewish and democratic state.” This unique official character created a basic difficulty in separating religion and state (Barak-Erez, 2008; Golan-Nadir, 2021, 2022; Yanai, 1996). Among Israeli Jews, there is broad consensus that Israel should be a “Jewish state,” but deep controversies exist over the meaning of the term. This complexity creates constant tension regarding the boundaries between public and private life. In practice, this tension translates into questions over the role of *Halakha* (i.e., Jewish religious code) in the conduct of everyday life (Ben-Porat, 2008; Golan-Nadir, 2022).

As a state institution that regulates religion as a public service, the Chief Rabbinate of Israel is officially responsible for kosher food inspection in the state, which is de facto carried out through the local branches of the Rabbinat. Enacted in 1983, the Prohibition of Kashrut Fraud Law<sup>4</sup> states that the Chief Rabbinate is the only authority that can grant businesses of any kind a kosher certificate. A certificate is granted to products that have been inspected and certified as kosher (Blech, 2009). Section 11 also says that the inspectors cannot consider any factors other than religious law in their inspections. The law was amended in 1991<sup>5</sup> and 2005 to support its core.<sup>6</sup> In practice, the Chief Rabbinate oversees the implementation of kosher procedures in all areas, and ensures compliance with all religious requirements (Chief Rabbinate of Israel, 2023).

In October 2021, former Prime Minister Naftali Bennett's government enacted a law entitled *Optimizing the Kosher Inspection System*.<sup>7</sup> The law opened the kosher inspection market to additional private service-providing organizations of Orthodox rabbis (but not to nonorthodox ones), such as Tzohar Rabbis Organization, a group of Modern-Zionist Orthodox rabbis.<sup>8</sup>

The law was codesigned by the Minister of Religious Services, Matan Kahana (a Modern-Orthodox Jew, then affiliated with the right-wing *Yamina* Party), and the Acting General Director of the Chief Rabbinate of Israel at the time, Adv. Harel Goldberg. Party-politics-wise, the composition of the 2021 coalition excluded the ultra-Orthodox parties, as occurs every once in a while,<sup>9</sup> positioning a Modern-Zionist religious minister at the Ministry of Religious Services instead of an ultra-Orthodox one. Such political structure accelerated the execution of bureaucratic policy entrepreneurship by Goldberg.

According to the new law, a rabbinical commissioner shall maintain a register of kosher-inspection organizations and councils that have been licensed or certified. These private organizations will be able to grant kosher food certificates starting in January 2023. The Chief Rabbinate, nevertheless, will become a regulatory body with broad authority over all inspection



organizations. Matan Kahana, stated: “This is a comprehensive reform that addresses all the gaps identified over the years in the Kosher food inspection system. It also gives power to the Rabbinate, both in the context of inspection guidelines and in the context of inspection.”<sup>10</sup>

### 3 | RESEARCH DESIGN

Applying a single case study approach (Franklin et al., 2014), the Israeli case study presented here can be defined in several ways. Theoretical-variables-wise, it can be considered as an illustrative-typical case study, as it represents a typical causal mechanism (Seawright & Gerring, 2008). Additionally, according to George and Bennett (2005), the Israeli case study can be categorized as *the most likely design*, stressing that some cases are more important than others for the purposes of testing a theory. Accordingly, for the realm of public administration, this case study attempts to use the typical connection between the variables to present religion (religion-directed policy) in democracies as a paradigmatic case study; a service as any other public service, hence its significance.

The time period explored begins with the establishment of Israel, as the study elaborates on this critical juncture when state-religion arrangements were set. Following, it examines bureaucratic inefficiency, public opinion, external competition, and bureaucratic entrepreneurial behaviors that have taken form in the past four decades. It ends with two public opinion surveys conducted in 2022. The surveys provide the most up-to-date snapshot of the phenomenon investigated. Importantly, the population of the study includes Israeli-Jews. This is because state formation was oriented toward Jews, and intertwined state law with aspects of Orthodox Judaism, while excluding other minorities from formulating the structures of the newborn state (though their religious-cultural arrangements were also regulated) (Kimmerling, 1999; Liebman & Don-Yihya, 1983).

The study mixes several data collection tools:

*Textual analysis of primary and secondary sources:* Our primary source material includes state legislation (the Prohibition of Kashrut Fraud Law, *Optimizing the Kosher Inspection System Law*), Israeli state institutions' official websites that contain protocols and general information (the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Religious Services, the Chief Rabbinate of Israel, the State Comptroller and Ombudsman of Israel), and of kosher inspection oriented societal associations (Tzohar Rabbis Organization, Hashgacha Pratit), Knesset protocols on the Kashrut reform, and High Court of Justice verdicts on kashrut (6494/14, 3336/04). We also used secondary source materials such as reports issued by research centers (Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics, The Israeli Democracy Institute, The Knesset Research and Information Center), and newspaper coverage on kashrut reform (varied daily newspapers: *Makor Rishon*, *Israel Hayom*, *TheMarker*, *Yediot Achronot*).

*Elite in-depth interviews:* To obtain a detailed understanding of the entrepreneurship process, we conducted five in-depth elite interviews (Natow, 2020) with politicians, advisors and practitioners taking part in the process. Overall, interviews were designed to give emphasis to the process leading to the kashrut reform; interviewees were asked to describe the factors leading to it, the key individuals involved in it, and the political structure that has endorsed it.

*Existing statistics for highlighting general trends:* Official government statistics (Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics), and existing public opinion surveys conducted and collected by research centers (The Israeli Democracy Institute, The Hiddush Association for Religious

Freedom and Equality), provide a clear and supposedly accurate picture of a phenomenon. They highlight general trends describing reality at different points in time (Harrison, 2013).

*Public opinion surveys*<sup>11</sup>: We have conducted two surveys created by the Institute for Liberty and Responsibility at Reichman University in Israel and fielded by iPanel, an Israeli survey company.<sup>12</sup> The first survey was conducted as an online survey on January 9, 2022. We used a cluster probability-based representative sample<sup>13</sup> survey of 507 Israeli Jews: 51.4% women and 48.6% men. The average age was 42 (standard deviation = 16.1). The second survey was conducted 6 months later, between July 4 and 5, 2022, as an online survey. We used a cluster probability-based representative sample survey of 665 Israeli Jews: 51.7% women and 48.3% men. The average age was 41.1 (standard deviation = 15.4).

The surveys asked: (1) “To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: ‘The Chief Rabbinate’s monopoly on kashrut must be abolished?’” The participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed with each statement on a scale ranging from agree completely, mostly agree, mostly disagree, and disagree completely, to do not know.

The use of multiple and diverse data sources allows us to cross-check the information from the different sources and consequently, point on the causal mechanism.

## 4 | FINDINGS

As the findings presented here show, a window of opportunity gradually opened, due to three accumulative factors: (1) rabbinical inefficiency in regard to kosher food inspection; leading to (2) mounting public criticism, and consequently to the formation of (3) two major civil initiatives for private inspection services. Below, we present the three factors establishing the window of opportunity for bureaucratic policy entrepreneurship.

### (1) Bureaucratic inefficiency—The Lack Uniform Regulation and Employee Training

Empirically, bureaucratic inefficiency can be established via primary documentation produced by state institutions in charge of reviewing and assessing the performance of governmental bureaus. The State Comptroller and Ombudsman of Israel,<sup>14</sup> the Israeli parliament (the Knesset), and the High Court of Justice have all criticized the Chief Rabbinate and its local branches’ bureaucratic inefficiency in their periodical reviews. They have noted that the lack of implementation of varied state audit recommendations has led to poor outcomes of the kosher inspection system.

The State Comptroller and Ombudsman’s 2016 audit indicated that although nearly a decade has passed since its previous 2009 review, the Rabbinate had not corrected most of the deficiencies that were identified in it, nor had it improved the functioning of the Rabbinical kashrut system. In particular, the report noted the lack of coordination between all of the bodies involved in kosher inspections: The Office of Religious Services, the Chief Rabbinate, and the local and religious councils (Kosher Food Inspection, 2016, p. 59).

Moreover, in 2017, the Knesset’s research center pointed out grave structural inefficiencies in the rabbinical inspection system. Both the State Comptroller and the Knesset indicated numerous failures due to the poor policy design and implementation by the Chief Rabbinate and its local councils, among which not properly training the inspectors, failing to employ them in an orderly manner while providing a fair and full wage, as well as failing in: determining uniform rates for kosher services according to the size of the business, establishing an updated and up-to-date computerized database, regulating the profession of the “kosher inspector” as a

profession that requires full-time work (or at least a part-time presence), requiring a degree or threshold conditions for engaging in the profession, requiring participation in professional training, and the passing of periodic tests (Moshe, 2017).

Additionally, the High Court of Justice ruled on two important matters that had gradually contributed to the opening up of the window of opportunity for bureaucratic policy entrepreneurship. The first, HCR 6494/14<sup>15</sup> in June 2016, ruled that businesses that are supervised by private Orthodox inspection bodies cannot advertise themselves as kosher. The verdict stated that a restaurant that does not have a kosher certificate is prohibited from presenting itself as kosher. However, it has allowed these businesses to make a truthful presentation regarding the standards it adheres to and the manner of monitoring their observance, which also includes an explicit clarification that it does not have a rabbinical kosher certificate. The second, HCR 3336/04<sup>16</sup> in May 2017, eliminated the financial dependence of businesses on kosher food inspectors, which had been widely criticized as one of the main failures of the system. Up to this point, the inspectors received their salaries directly from the business owners they inspected, which might have led to a conflict of interest, and corruption. Yet, despite demands for modifications from all of these state institutions, the kashrut inspection system remained largely the same for decades.

## (2) Mounting public criticism of the Rabbinate's inspection services

The acute bureaucratic inefficiency has led to bottom-up criticism, as customers and the general public criticized the Rabbinate for its incompetence and corruption. The literature stresses that public opinion regarding public sector performance tends to be negative in the abstract, but favorable in practice. Citizens express dissatisfaction when asked about government or bureaucrats in general, even as they indicate high levels of satisfaction with specific public services and with public services they have recently received (Goodsell, 2004; Marvel, 2015). In this case, however, the public expresses negative attitudes toward the institution *and* the services it provides both.

Our interviewees have recognized that criticizing public opinion has had a substantial influence on the initiation of the reform (Interviewees 1–5). Various surveys collected by the Viterbi Family Center for Public Opinion and Policy Research at the Israel Democracy Institute show that Israeli Jews have rather negative opinions about the Rabbinate's monopoly on kosher food inspection. Concerning their trust<sup>17</sup> in the institution of the Rabbinate, 55% (2004), 58% (2009), 53% (2013), 72% (2017), and 59% (2021), stated they have no trust or have very little trust in it. Notably, in 2021 other state institutions were trusted more; the respondents stated they have no trust, or have very little trust in the High Court of Justice (50%), the Presidential institution (36%), the army (18%) and the local governments (40%). Indeed, only the Knesset (i.e., Israeli parliament), the government, and political parties suffer similar or even higher levels of distrust due to political instability (following five elections within 4 years, 2019–2022), and the police due to ongoing lack of personnel.

Moreover, in 2018, 66% of the respondents said that they believe that the Rabbinate is corrupt. As for kosher food inspection, 58% (1991), 60% (1999), and 55% (2009) argued that it is outrageous that the Rabbinate does not grant kosher certificates to businesses that, despite their legal eligibility, do not keep other religious practices that are irrelevant to being awarded the certificate. In 2018, 44% said that they would grade the Rabbinate poorly on kosher food inspection, and in 2019, 64% said the Rabbinate's monopoly on kosher food inspection should be revoked. Additionally, in 2017, The Hiddush Association for Religious Freedom and Equality<sup>18</sup> stated that 80% of Israeli Jews supported liberalizing the kashrut market and

opening it up for competition among various organizations (Hiddush Association for Religious Freedom and Equality, 2018).

Finally, in the first 2022 public opinion survey conducted for our research, 45.3% of respondents said they completely agree and 20% mostly agree that the Chief Rabbinate's monopoly on kosher food inspection should be revoked. This 65.3% agreement contrasts with the 31.5% who mostly disagree or disagree completely. In the second 2022 public opinion survey, similar results are evident, with 39.4% that said they completely agree and 21.8% mostly agree that the Chief Rabbinate's monopoly on kosher food inspection should be revoked. This 61.2% agreement contrasts with the 34.14% who mostly disagree or disagree completely. As shown in Table 1, in both surveys, when divided into levels of religiosity, it is evident that the secular section of the population, naturally, supports this option more than more religious segments, yet the latter do support it to lower extent.

### (3) External competition—Private inspection services

This mounting public criticism, which was highly debated publicly, has led to the establishment of NGOs that offer private inspection services. According to the Prohibition of Kashrut Fraud Law (1983), only officially appointed local rabbis, or rabbis authorized by the Chief Rabbinate, may provide businesses with a kosher food certificate. These rabbis send out inspectors to see all kashrut necessities are indeed kept. The process of receiving a kosher certificate includes that food business owners (that are interested in traditional/religious customers as well) submit a detailed written request in which they ask the local rabbinate in whose jurisdiction the business is located to grant them with a kosher certificate in accordance with the regulations of the Prohibition of Kashrut Fraud Law. The local rabbinate sends a rabbi responsible for kashrut or a representative on his behalf to the aforementioned business. His role includes to examining the business on all its

**TABLE 1** Positive replies in the 2022 public opinion surveys by level of religiosity.

|   | Religiosity          |                      |                     |                       | Total                |
|---|----------------------|----------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|
|   | Jewish-secular       | Jewish-traditional   | Jewish-religious    | Jewish-ultra-Orthodox |                      |
| Revoke the religious monopole on kosher |                      |                      |                     |                       |                      |
| Agree completely                        | 161<br>70.6%         | 58<br>34.5%          | 7<br>11.7%          | 3<br>6.0%             | 229<br>45.3%         |
| Mostly agree                            | 40<br>17.5%          | 53<br>31.5%          | 10<br>16.7%         | 0<br>0.0%             | 103<br>20.4%         |
| Mostly disagree                         | 16<br>7.0%           | 28<br>16.7%          | 11<br>18.3%         | 3<br>6.0%             | 58<br>11.5%          |
| Disagree completely                     | 7<br>3.1%            | 21<br>12.5%          | 29<br>48.3%         | 44<br>88.0%           | 101<br>20.0%         |
| Don't know                              | 4<br>1.8%            | 8<br>4.8%            | 3<br>5.0%           | 0<br>0.0%             | 15<br>3.0%           |
| <b>Total</b>                            | <b>228</b><br>100.0% | <b>168</b><br>100.0% | <b>60</b><br>100.0% | <b>50</b><br>100.0%   | <b>506</b><br>100.0% |

components. The rabbi in charge then writes a confirmation in which he states that he has examined the business and the details of the application, and recommends/does not recommend issuing a kosher certificate for specific reasons. When the certificate is granted (with a fee paid by the business), the rabbinical representative in charge of inspection runs periodical reviews according to his discretion, to make sure kashrut is indeed kept (Chief Rabbinate of Israel, 2023). It was last reported that 66% of the businesses in Israel are officially Kosher (Finkelstien & Even-Zur, 2021).

Although it is customary to view the state's kashrut system as a monolithic body, in fact, the local rabbis are largely not subject to the halakhic directives of the Chief Rabbinate in the field of kashrut, except for in exceptional cases. Thus, there are approximately 150 rabbis operating locally throughout the country who are allowed to use their discretion, making kashrut implementation by the inspectors very diverse (Finkelstien & Even-Zur, 2021). Overall, there are several regulations that are supervised, namely the ban on mixing meat and dairy products together, not allowing products produced from nonkosher animals, and making sure meat is properly slaughtered (Chief Rabbinate of Israel, 2023). Further regulations or the extent to which they are manifested differ among the rabbis in charge, and by proxy among inspectors. The halakhic requirements determine the duration of the inspection, and therefore, the number of hours that businesses are required to employ the inspector. These differences in requirements lead to differentiation in the costs imposed on businesses and create general ambiguity. Consequently, business owners feel frustrated and exploited in light of such reality (Finkelstien & Even-Zur, 2021).

This malfunctioned kashrut system brought about criticizing public opinion that accelerated the creation of two private inspection organizations; The first, titled Hashgacha Pratit, is an NGO that has offered alternative kosher inspection for restaurants and businesses since 2017<sup>19</sup> (Koren, 2017). Inspectors from this NGO supervise the businesses by creating a cooperative relationship with the owners and workers, based on shared values, and in accordance with *Halacha*. The signed “covenant of trust” is displayed in the business. In addition, every business has a binder that is available to the public detailing the kosher standards followed and the processes the restaurant has undergone.<sup>20</sup> Due to their similar nature, Hashgacha Pratit merged with the Tzohar Rabbis organization in 2018 (Greenwood, 2018).

The second initiative is a private kosher inspection program initiated by the Religious-Zionist Tzohar Rabbis organization, in a bid to “challenge” the monopoly of the state-run Chief Rabbinate. In its official website, this society-based kashrut organization is referred to as “classic Orthodox inspection,” only more cooperative and tolerant toward its clients. Tzohar established the service to help businesses meet the demand for kosher food and to allow more business owners to sell kosher food with ease. The Tzohar Food Inspection service is led by Rabbi Oren Duvdevani, an international expert on kashrut who oversees the implementation of Tzohar's kashrut inspection procedures that were set by a committee of expert rabbis (Tzohar Rabbis Organization, 2022).

The announcement of the formation of the Tzohar's private kosher inspection followed a High Court of Justice's ruling in late 2017 (HCR 5026/16,<sup>21</sup> September 12, 2017), according to which restaurateurs could inform their clientele that they serve kosher food, but without designating themselves as a state-recognized “kosher establishment” (Staff, 2018). As part of its efforts to improve the level of service and set high standards in the field, Tzohar developed an ethical code for its inspectors. Among the innovations was a rule forbidding the inspector from eating for free in a restaurant under his inspection, even if the owner agreed to allow him to do

so and made the offer himself. This stipulation was introduced to eliminate any accusations about corruption leveled against the inspectors. It also underscored the approach of Tzohar as attempting to operate transparently and in accordance with the highest ethical standards (Nachshoni, 2022).

Notably, according to Tzohar, the majority of restaurants in Israel under Tzohar's Kashrut inspection were not kosher before. These restaurant owners are said to be eager and willing to subscribe to Kashrut Tzohar, although they were previously unwilling to enroll with inspection under the Israeli Rabbinat. With meaningful societal support, Kashrut Tzohar is said to continue to improve its services as it presently develops the *KeepKosher* app, that will avail the user of full information on Kosher foods and Kosher restaurants throughout the world (Tzohar Rabbis Organization, 2022). Nonetheless, the societal kashrut initiatives are not officially recognized by the state.

## 4.1 | The bureaucratic policy entrepreneurship generating the reform

Faced with the societal conditions that criticized the existing inspection system and the external initiatives supplying alternative kashrut services, and with the political zeitgeist that contributed to it, the Acting General Director of the Chief Rabbinat of Israel, Adv. Harel Goldberg, has identified a window of opportunity. This statement is confirmed as one interviewee stated, "what actually increased the urgency to modify the kashrut system was the lack of satisfaction among the public, along with the growing societal attention private organizations (specifically Tzohar) received. The professional bureaucracy felt it" (Interviewee 5). As for the timing, one of the advisors to the reform said: "I must say, other General Directors have tried to resolve this issue, but the time was not right" (Interviewee 1).

Traditionally, the General Director sets and implements the policy of the Chief Rabbinat in accordance with its instructions and the decisions of the Council of the Chief Rabbinat. He is responsible for shaping the Chief Rabbinat's vision for determining its policies in a wide variety of areas including human resources, administration, service provision, systems analysis, budgeting, training, and employee welfare (General Director Office, 2022). Goldberg is a unique high-ranked bureaucrat due to his two decades long experience in bureaucratic appointments, and his organizational position as committed (policy design-wise) both to his appointed minister in the government and to the Chief Rabbinical Council, which is the supreme halachic authority for the Government and the array of religious services in the State of Israel.<sup>22</sup> As a high-ranked manager, he is committed to plan and inspect the implementation of their agendas.

Personally, Adv. Harel Goldberg, a Modern-Zionist religious person in his approach, has served as the legal advisor to the Chief Rabbinat of Israel for the past 7 years and previously held legal positions in the Israeli Prime Minister's Office and the Ministry of Justice. He holds a bachelor's degree in law and a master's degree in business administration and a rabbinical certificate from the Chief Rabbinat of Israel (Ettinger, 2021), hence he used to be a practitioner himself, thus familiar with existing inefficiencies. Throughout the processes of reform, Goldberg has designed, managed, and articulated the policy reform along with the appointed minister, practitioners, and clients, while accounting to the Chief Rabbinical Council's criticism of the reform. Generally, his work is tightly associated with the service suppliers and the

clients. Goldberg engages with others (e.g., meetings, correspondence, field visits) while designing and implementing his policies. In a recent newspaper interview, he has stated: “My job is to provide the most professional service available, hence we have turned to our clients in what we call a *Request for Information*—asking for ideas and proposals to improve our services (Yiftach, 2022).

Well-versed in the sociopolitical context in which he operates, Goldberg realized that the public regards the Rabbinat's inspectors as performing poorly in a monopolized and corrupt system. He also understood that the Rabbinat was facing external competition from the NGOs offering kosher inspection services. Consequently, he engaged in entrepreneurship strategies designed to promote a policy reform that would better reorganize the kashrut system, while maintaining the Rabbinat's control over it. As one of our interviewees states: “the reform aimed to resolve all previous demands to remedy the kashrut system made by the High Court of Justice and the state comptroller” (Interviewee 1).

As described vastly by Interviewee 5, Goldberg had a central role in designing the reform. He was muddling through genuine efforts to improve the kashrut services, while maintaining still the monopoly of the Chief Rabbinat on its regulation. Within this framework, Goldberg was working closely with Minister Kahana who has mostly painted on the end-goals for the reform, namely ones that meet both his and Goldberg's Modern-Zionist ideological agenda. The Minister's goals were to streamline the kashrut system to optimize its services, reduce the organizational costs of kosher food inspection, eliminate corruption, and benefit the business owners who by now have paid dearly for their kashrut certificate. Ultimately, the Minister aimed to protect the rabbinat's monopoly on kosher food inspection, but hoped to modernize the lines of the organization with a more Zionist-oriented zeitgeist, rather than the dominant ultra-Orthodox (Haredi) one. Consequently, as one interviewee stated, “the reform raised a lot of concerns among ultra-Orthodox (Haredi) politicians. It was more accepted among the more liberal Modern-Zionist religious politicians” (Interviewee 2).

With the accelerated process of designing and passing the reform, Goldberg could not risk it to fail due to procedural inefficiencies. Hence, he has build a team of professional managerial think tank to follow each step in designing the reform; human resources that assured the allocation of employees, the Rabbinat's legal counsel that advised on the due diligence of the reform, and a representative of the rabbinical national kashrut department, for advice on implementation. Despite his central role, Goldberg needed these managers as well as the minister to succeed in his entrepreneurial efforts (Interviewees 1–5). It was stated that, “he needed a supportive, yet ‘devil advocate’-kind of think tank” (Interviewee 4).

As our interviewees who were working closely with Goldberg indicated (Interviewees 1–5), in 2021, Goldberg led the highly innovative reform process that was outside his managerial position. Goldberg's aspiration to reform the kashrut system began in 2017, with his establishment of a large-scale committee to suggest improvements to the malfunctioning and criticized system (Interviewee 5). Following, he articulated a report that suggested remedies to the varied inefficiencies. With Minister of Religious Services, Matan Kahana entering office in 2021, and appointing Goldberg as the Acting General Director, the two cooperated in reforming the kashrut system (Interviewees 1–3). In multiple discussions and vast brainstorming, the reform was designed to include Goldberg's past suggestions to improve the kashrut system, and a joint decision was made to open the market for other private Orthodox organizations. Importantly, improving the kashrut system and keeping the Rabbinat's power as the sole regulator were always on their agenda. Goldberg articulated the reform, identified difficulties, as well as reassured inner practitioners who were suspicious of the reform (Interviewees 1–4).

Finally, Goldberg was also the one responsible to direct the implementation of this reform (German, 2022). Practically, following the design of the policy, Kahana held official discussions where Goldberg introduced several paths for reform. These paths included different tactics of implementation for the latter, but the goal—the grand strategy—remained intact throughout.

Finally, the designated committee decided on the policy that includes the privatization of kashrut services with rabbinical regulation (Interviewees 1–2). As well documented in the Knesset's archive, the bill was sent for wording and was quickly sent to the Ministerial Committee for Legislative Affairs, and then to the Knesset for the process of legislation. Due to political considerations that might have jeopardized the window of opportunity, the bill was added as a part of the Arrangements Law which necessitates a rapid (though in-depth) legislative process, which assisted in the quick approval of the law (Interviewees 1–4). Consequently, after less than a year of committee discussions and mandatory phases of legislation, the bill to reform kashrut services passed on November 18, 2021,<sup>23</sup> by the former Prime Minister Naftali Bennett's unity government. It was titled, *Optimizing the Kosher Inspection System*.<sup>24</sup> The law opened up the kosher inspection market to additional Orthodox organizations (but not to non-Orthodox ones). According to the law, as of 1 January 2023, these organizations may grant kosher certificates. The Chief Rabbinate, nevertheless, retains its role as the regulatory body that still has authority over all the kosher organizations (Interviewee 5).

## 5 | DISCUSSION

As presented here, reforming the kashrut system to be more efficient, while maintaining the rabbinical Orthodox monopoly on regulating kosher food inspection were the bureaucrat's entrepreneurial goals. The supply-side theory of religion posits that state-supported religious monopolies rely on the government for support, and have less incentive to make themselves attractive to the people (Iannaccone, 1995; Madeley, 2003). Such a theoretical approach may explain the decade's delay in implementing NPM or post-NPM-like reforms (Cohen, 2016a) that to a large extent, were demanded of the Rabbinate by the state's supervising institutions.

As a high-ranked bureaucrat, Harel Goldberg's actions seem to confirm our contention that bureaucratic organizations, and specifically its managers, which the public criticizes for inefficiency and regards as running a monopolistic and even corrupt service will engage in bureaucratic policy entrepreneurship strategies when confronted with external competition. The goals of these actions are not just to provide better services to the public, but also to ensure that the monopoly on the regulation of these services is maintained by the organization. Hence, in accordance with the policy entrepreneurship theory, we see that savvy bureaucrats who understand how the system works and have the social acuity and political understanding necessary can exploit the window of opportunity (Kingdon, 2011) provided by mounting public criticism. They reduce the latter by initiating a policy that to some extent accounts for public demand, yet jeopardizes neither their status nor their organization.

Nevertheless, despite these actions, studies have demonstrated that when there is a monopoly, the likelihood of dissatisfaction with the policy and its implementation increases, as people's needs vary and cannot be satisfied by a single provider (Berger & Hefner, 2003; Gill & Jelen, 2002; Pollack & Olson, 2012), hence the critical public opinion about the kosher inspection service is likely to endure despite the reform, especially among non-Orthodox communities (e.g. Conservative and Reform Judaism).



Further, despite that definition-wise, policy entrepreneurs are actors who act to break the status quo (Gunn, 2017), in the case in point the demand for change in kashrut inspection policy would have removed the Rabbinate's monopoly on inspection services entirely. Hence, the bureaucratic policy entrepreneurs did not maintain the status quo practically (i.e., Rabbinate as the only inspection body), but rather embraced change by inserting private inspection organizations into its turf and formally acknowledging them. Nonetheless, they have put much entrepreneurial effort to create a new framework of regulation that maintains the Rabbinate's bureaucratic power as sole regulator as it always has been.

Consequently, it may be argued that bureaucrats who operate as policy entrepreneurs wish to modify and design efficient services, while protecting their monopoly as service suppliers as much as they can (preserving the status quo). This, we argue, does not reduce the extent of innovation in their actions to change reality to the benefit of the organizational framework they operate in.

## 6 | CONCLUSION

This study investigated how external macrolevel factors encourage bureaucrats to become policy entrepreneurs. It also questioned what are their organizational goals in pursuing entrepreneurship? We have argued that: (1) bureaucratic inefficiency, leading to (2) societal pressure as expressed via public opinion, and consequently to (3) pressure from potential new providers offering bottom-up competition will lead to bureaucrats taking policy entrepreneurship strategies. In addition, we have claimed that the goals of the bureaucrats in doing so are to design efficient services, while protecting their monopoly on service provision. Our results confirm with the suggested hypothesis.

Importantly, despite that for the causal mechanism suggested here bureaucratic inefficiency is necessary, but insufficient (as it encourages criticizing public opinion and social solutions), there could be cases where efficient bureaus still engage in reforms. Furthermore, despite that this accumulative causal mechanism necessitates three conditions, there could be cases where condition 1 and 2 are sufficient to initiate bureaucratic policy entrepreneurship; namely, bureaucratic policy entrepreneurship can emerge even before pressure from potential new providers offering bottom-up competition.

Bureaucratic policy entrepreneurship is a highly adequate theoretical framework to test our hypothesis. Evidently, competing explanatory theories fail to account for the phenomenon described here. Namely, that public choice theory has no valid way of accounting for the variation and the complexity in bureaucratic motivations (Dunleavy, 1985; Self, 2021). Further, the New Institutionalism, which stresses that policy choices made when an institution is being formed will have a continuing and largely determinate influence over the policy far into the future (King, 1995; Skocpol, 1992), cannot account for bureaucrat's policy entrepreneurship from within the institution; this is because an institutional change is perceived as slow and gradual as it is largely locked-in, and agency is embedded in the existing structure. Also, agent-based approaches that emphasize the impact of political agents (i.e., veto players), on institutional changes in decision making (Tsebelis, 2002) cannot account for bureaucrat's policy entrepreneurship, since the manager—as highly ranked as he or she might be—is not placed in a place to make a political veto.

Hence, the theoretical contribution of this study lays in adding to traditional public choice literature on bureaucracy (Michels, 1911; Niskanen, 1971; Tullock, 1965) that sees the latter as change-resistant. Contrary to this notion, this study stressed that bureaucracies can and do change; they are not as insulated from reformist pressure as many scholarly work stresses. Second, this study used the realm of religion to indicate that bureaucratic policy entrepreneurship may be aimed at improving bureaucratic efficiency, but also—due to religion's monopolistic nature—to protect the institutional monopoly it holds. This is contrary to the accepted assumption in policy entrepreneurship literature, that their objective is to break the status quo (Gunn, 2017).

As a case study research relying on survey methodology combined with documentation and elite interviews, this study offers a suggestive path ahead for scholars studying bureaucracy, with a roadmap with suggestion to where else we might look for confirming (or disconfirming) evidence. Indeed, this study suggested a causal mechanism that encourages bureaucrats to take on policy entrepreneurship strategies. Additionally, although other—or additional factors may be added in other contexts—the factors, as presented here, make a preliminary framework for future research. Hence, transferability-wise (Hellström, 2008), the theoretical phenomenon examined here is applicable to be tested in future research, while using different case studies. Importantly, while we have validated our hypothesis using data about the relationship between religion and state, we maintain that it may be relevant to other policy realms, namely, tax collection, social work, the environment, or education. In the realm of higher education, this theoretical framework might be applicable to university bureaucracy, one that at times is in need of efficiency improvements, but constantly protects the status quo and maintains its power and abilities. This is to illustrate that religion may be considered a paradigmatic case study of bureaucratic policy entrepreneurship, just as in any other realm.

Finally, future research in other countries and policy realms should focus on the varied factors that encourage bureaucratic policy entrepreneurship, as well as the goals they serve. Other research directions should also focus on the crossroads between the role played by governments seeking to pass laws, and bureaucrat managers' ability to become policy entrepreneurs. In such circumstances, the political and bureaucratic windows of opportunity might overlap, accelerating the process of policy entrepreneurship, despite that it does not constitute as one of the mere factors that lead to bureaucratic policy entrepreneurship, but rather the structure surrounding it.

Finally, the described phenomenon also raises normative concerns that are worth studying, namely the involvement of unelected functionaries in local and national politics and policymaking. Such studies would improve our understanding of bureaucratic policy entrepreneurship.

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## CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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## ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Also see in: Bakir & Jarvis, 2017; Béland & Howlett, 2016; Cairney & Jones, 2016; Cohen, 2012; Gunn, 2017; Jabotinsky & Cohen, 2020; Mintrom et al., 2014; Zahariadis, 2008.
- <sup>2</sup> Also see in: Rainey, 1982; Romzek, 1990.
- <sup>3</sup> Also referred to as *neo-Weberian reforms*.
- <sup>4</sup> Book of Laws number 1088, July 28, 1983.
- <sup>5</sup> Book of Laws number 1350, March 26, 1991.
- <sup>6</sup> Book of Laws number 2040, December 15, 2005.
- <sup>7</sup> Book of Laws number 2933, November 18, 2021.
- <sup>8</sup> *Tzohar* is a grassroots organization, established in 1995. It has emerged as a national movement of 1000 Zionist Rabbis and women volunteers who state that they are leading the revolution for an ethical, inclusive, and inspiring Jewish Israel. In their actions they protest against the conservative state religious establishment. See in: <https://tzohar-eng.org/>.
- <sup>9</sup> As the Knesset archive exemplifies, one of the 36 governments the state of Israel has ever seen did not include Religious-Zionist or ultra-Orthodox parties, 13 have included Religious-Zionist parties but did not include ultra-Orthodox ones, and 22 have included ultra-Orthodox parties alone or paired with Religious Zionist parties.
- <sup>10</sup> Protocol No. 6, Meeting of the Committee for Special National Infrastructure Initiatives and Jewish Religious Services, the 24 Knesset, September 30, 2021, p. 11.
- <sup>11</sup> According to the Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics, 74% of Israelis identify as Jews (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2021b), of whom: 44.8% are nonreligious or secular, 33% are traditional, 11.7% are religious, and 10% are ultra-Orthodox (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2021a). Subsequently, since our samples for both surveys included only 2.9% ultra-Orthodox Jews, instead of 10% as in the general population (due to difficulties recruiting participants), we corrected the underrepresentation of this segment of the population using a weighting technique.
- <sup>12</sup> <https://www.ipanel.co.il/en/>.
- <sup>13</sup> *iPanel* created representative quotas in accordance with the Israeli Bureau of Statistics' official data.
- <sup>14</sup> See official website at: <https://www.mevaker.gov.il/En/About/Pages/default.aspx>.
- <sup>15</sup> See verdict at: [https://supremedecisions.court.gov.il/Home/Download?path=HebrewVerdicts/14/940/064/o11&fileName=14064940\\_o11.txt&type=4](https://supremedecisions.court.gov.il/Home/Download?path=HebrewVerdicts/14/940/064/o11&fileName=14064940_o11.txt&type=4).
- <sup>16</sup> See verdict at: <https://supremedecisions.court.gov.il/Home/Download?path=HebrewVerdicts%5C04/360/033/t90&fileName=04033360.t90&type=4>.
- <sup>17</sup> Public opinion surveys on state institutions mainly evaluate the trust citizens have in these institutions.
- <sup>18</sup> *The Hiddush Association for Religious Freedom and Equality* supports the liberalization of religion in Israel. Hence, such bias should be taken under consideration. Consequently, this data is brought along with other research centers' data to avoid any bias.
- <sup>19</sup> As a consequence of HCR 6494/14 in June 2016, mentioned here.
- <sup>20</sup> See official website: <http://www.kashrut.org.il/en/faqs/>.
- <sup>21</sup> See verdict at: <https://he.afiklaw.com/caselaw/4668>.
- <sup>22</sup> The council consists of 15 rabbis and is headed by the chief rabbis, one of whom serves as the president of the council.
- <sup>23</sup> See the Knesset archive: <https://main.knesset.gov.il/Activity/Legislation/Laws/Pages/LawBill.aspx?t=LawReshumot&lawitemid=2161820>.
- <sup>24</sup> Book of Laws number 2933, November 18, 2021, p. 80.

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## APPENDIX A

### List of interviews:

Interviewee 1—Advisor, Knesset, September 19, 2022.

Interviewee 2—Advisor, Knesset, October 5, 2022.

Interviewee 3—Politician, Knesset, October 11, 2022.

Interviewee 4—Bureaucrat, Chief Rabbinate of Israel, October 19, 2022.

Interviewee 5—Bureaucrat, Chief Rabbinate of Israel, November 15, 2022.

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