

THE SOCIAL REPRESENTATIONS "OF" AND "WITHIN " THE CHANGING ORGANISATIONAL CONTEXTS: THE CASE OF THE ITALIAN NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR SOCIAL PROVISIONS AND PENSIONS (INPS)

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1. Introduction

The Social Representations Theory over the past 40 years has positioned itself within interdisciplinary cultural areas: social psychology, sociology, communication studies, anthropology, history of mentalities.

Empirical investigations on Social Representations have been oriented towards the most varied topics of the social world (mental illness, education, gender, work, modern technologies,...) and culture (psychoanalysis, Marxism and so forth). Only recently has research on SR located, within an institutional and organisational context, a fertile area of study very close to the economic psychology with considerable applied consequences (Abrieu, J.C., 1994; Kummerov, E.H. & Innes, J.M., 1994; Witte, E.H., 1994; Jesuino, J., 1998)

Among the various theoretic-methodological orientations on the study of organisational contents, the metaphoric approach that values the symbolic aspects of the organisational "culture" (Morgan, G., 1980; Deetz, S., 1986; Gagliardi, P., 1986; Morgan, G., 1986; Quinn, R., 1987; Cameron & Freeman, 1991; McKenna, D. & Wright, P., 1992; Morgan, G. 1993; Weick, K. ,1993; Jones, M.O. , 1996; Putnam, L., Phillips, N., Chapman, P., 1996) is of great interest for the study of Social Representations "of" and "within" the organisational contexts. Nevertheless, at present the research areas related to these two theoretical orientations are still independent. The few contributions which valorise the metaphorical and symbolic approach in the study of Social Representations are unrelated to the organisational culture (Wagner, W. Lahnsteiner, L. & Elejaberrieta, F., 1993; Verkuyten, M., 1995). A convergence of these orientations has an immediate methodological effect as we can see from the study presented here and from methods created by us for this research program.

2. The "object" and aims of the study: a changing public institution viewed internally and externally.

A study on Social Representations of a public institution such as INPS (National Institute for Social Provisions & Pensions) has taken this direction and is certainly proving to be innovative as well as of a noteworthy topical relevance, especially if one considers the profound changes that have occurred in the concept of Welfare State.

INPS is a non territorial "public corporation" with laws and management of its own entrusted with the task of defending social provisions as provided by the Italian Constitution. It is, therefore, part of the indirect state administration and it is also a national body since it concerns categories of people living in the national territory. The corporation has an exclusive and direct management of many cash departments and provisional funds divided by type of insured subjects and by type of intervention.

INPS has its main headquarters and numerous other structures. Following the establishment of a new law in 1989, n. 88, the corporation took on a new policy aimed at becoming more like an "enterprise". The Institute was given full power for its own organisation, having full responsibility for its choices the same as it is with private enterprises. This full responsibility "at its own risk" took on particular features in managing "specifically provisional" activities in view of the revision of the financial management plan between assistance and provisions. The three guidelines in the reorganisation of the Institute were conducted in three levels: decentralisation, automation, and formation (Porrari, F., 1991; Rosati, G., 1991; Della Porta, C., 1992).

The research programme was aimed at exploring the Social Representations of INPS as an organisation undergoing considerable change processes, with the aim of reconstructing and then analysing the map of representations and their relations (in terms of ideas, concepts, opinions, evaluations, and images) produced both by the internal population (INPS employees engaged in "front line" relations with users) and by externals (those who make or will make use of services provided by INPS, and the unemployed) (see Table 1) . In another section of the research programme - not presented here - we also carried out a study on INPS employees at different levels of the organisational hierarchy (top head and intermediate).

SAMPLE

TOTAL SAMPLE = 150 subjects

Internal population

* 19 employees INPS



External population

* 13 unemployed

* 36 non-users (students)

* 62 future users of INPS services

* 20 effective users of INPS services

Table 1

3. The multi-method approach

The study of SR was conducted adopting a multi-method approach by using the following tools specifically designed for this research programme, but probably of some interest for other research on the S.R. "of" and "within" the organisational context integrating the metaphorical approach. The techniques were administrated by starting from those of higher projective power according to the following order:

- a) "Associative Network": a projective tool directed to gather latent S.R. dimensions of INPS, referring also to the image that subjects have of the 'nation' (used as a socio-normative reference parameter in the representation and evaluation of functions and services related to the Welfare State and subjects' attachment to the Nation-State) and the 'self' (necessary indicator to value answers relative to other stimuli, referring to organisational and supra-personal dimensions according to the personal identity of subjects);

- b) “figurative semantic differential” combined with a method of ‘free adjectival relationships’, which called for responses to figurative stimuli with high metaphorical value in order to gather characteristics and associated descriptions of the figurative nucleus of the representation;
- c) a "metaphorical images detector", combined with the motivations that led to their choices, with the aim of stimulating the image dimensions underlying S.R. through highly representative objects and images of different organised "cultures";
- d) "metaphorical sentences evaluative scales";
- e) a "questionnaire" containing a series of open and closed questions (in two versions for people within and outside INPS) to gather informative and evaluating dimensions related to the S.R. of INPS as a changing organisation.

4. Some results

Due to synthesis reasons, we present in the following paragraph a brief description of each technique together with a selection of the results derived from each one of the above mentioned.

4.1. Associative network

According to the techniques developed by de Rosa (1995), subjects were asked to build up a '*network of associations*' with the keyword at the centre of each sheet (*INPS*, *nation*, *self*) and write all the terms, *adjectives* (i.e., prestigious, unreliable, serious, etc.,...) or *nouns* (i.e., productivity, security, professionalism, flexibility, non-freedom, mobility, competition, dissatisfaction, etc.,...) that came into their minds as they looked at the keyword. They were asked to put a number beside the word to show the order in which they thought of it. Following they were asked to indicate any further links between the words and mark each word as *positive*, *negative* or *neutral* according to the meaning that they had attributed to them in the specific test setting. Two packages were used to analyse this data: 1) S.P.S.S. for calculating the indexes of polarity on the different stimulus words, and 2) SPAD-T (Système Portable d'Analyse de donnée textuelles - Lebart, L., Morineau, A., Bécue, M., 1989) for analysing the structure and contents of the representation fields.

In reference to the evaluation (+, - or + -) given to each associated network, the frequencies analysis showed that 28,8% of the subjects defined INPS with a negative evaluation; 8% neutral; and 63,3%, positive. In general, the image subjects had of the “*nation*” was very negative (86,7%) - at least in this context -, while most subjects had a positive image of their “self”(67,3%).

The analysis derived from SPAD-T is presented in the table which gives both the active variables (the associated words with significant absolute and relative contribution) and the illustrative variables (the positioning of the groups according to the socio-demographic variables in the semantic space).

More pessimistic appeared the evaluation of INPS as compared to the polarity index calculated on the full dictionary of the word associated, when we look at the meaningful words that organise the structure of the semantic space, as derived from SPAD-T. The first factor represented in positive semi-axis INPS as a "bureaucratic state enterprise", while in the negative semi-axis as a "useless organisation" (see Table 2). The second factor organised a representation of INPS as having "bad functioning" versus "structural aspects" (see Table 3). The third factor contained in the positive semi-axis elements that referred to "activities" carried out by INPS, while the negative semi-axis referred to aspects relative to the "lack of honesty" in its representatives; the factor can be defined as INPS functions versus corruption (see Table 4).

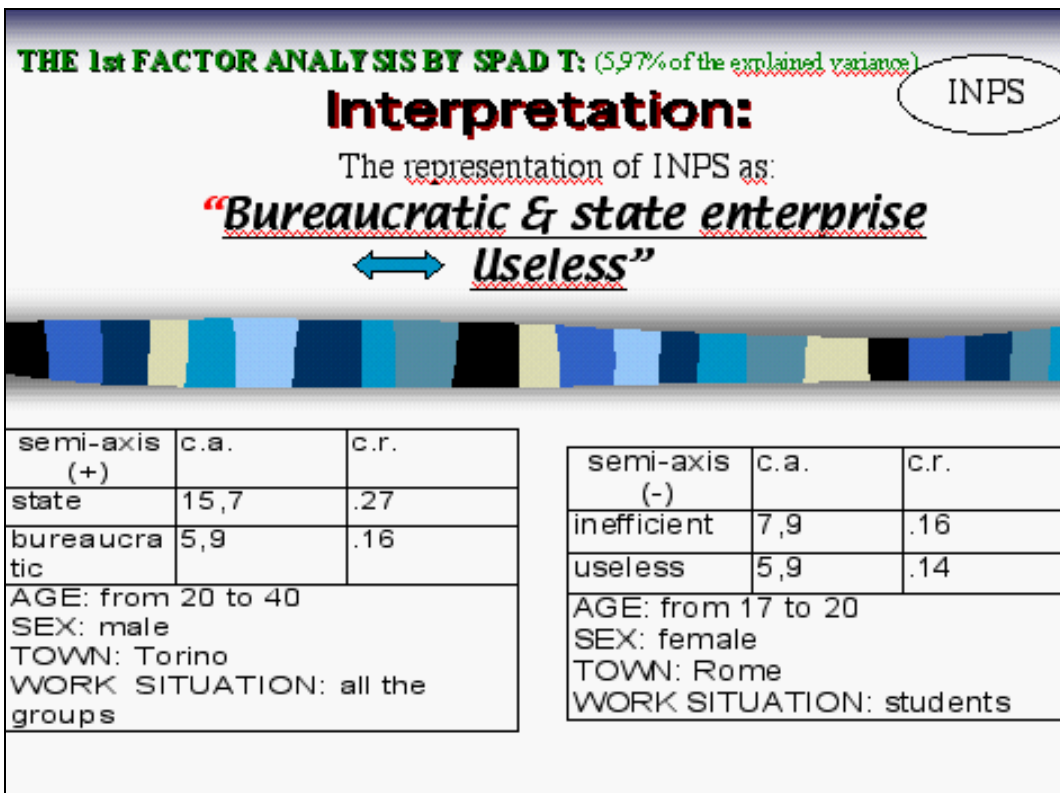


Table 2 - SPAD-T (INPS)

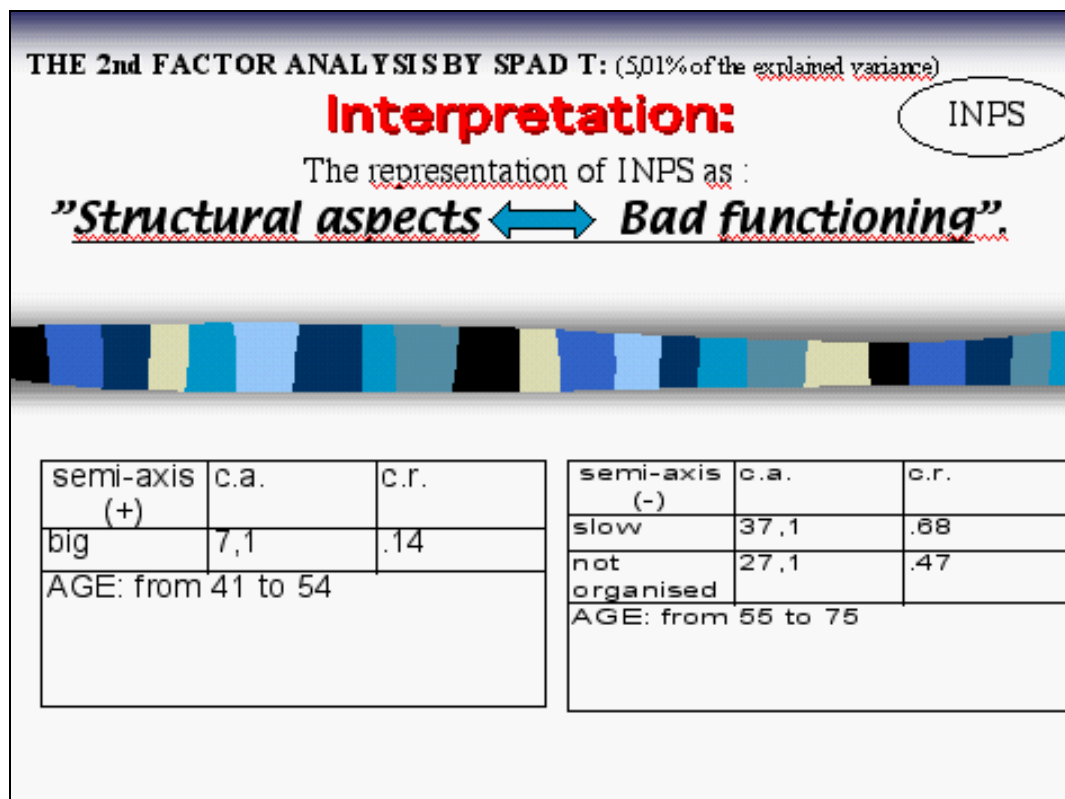


Table 3 - SPAD-T (INPS)

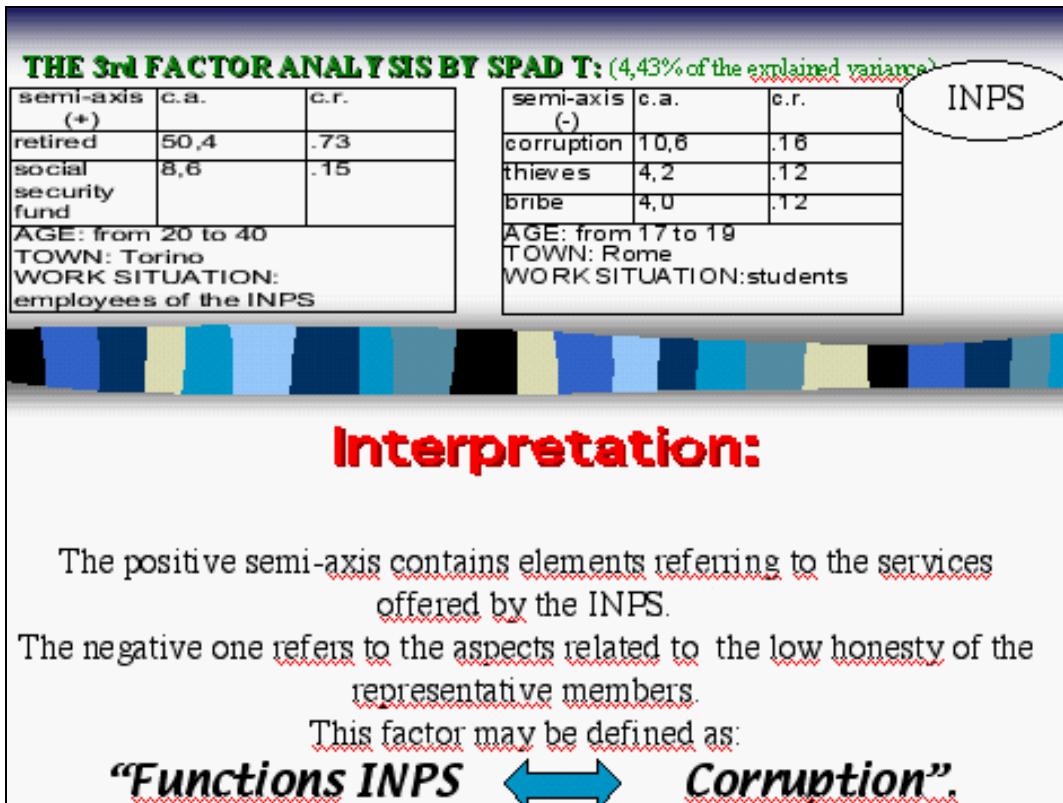


Table 4 - SPAD-T (INPS)

Related to the negative representation of INPS, also appeared the representation of the nation as derived by the three factorial axis. The first factor organised the representation of the nation centred on "thieves" - expressed by the elderly and male subjects, INPS employees and retired persons - as opposed to the "citizens" and "justice" dimension - expressed by young subjects and females (see Table 5). Again the second factor organised the negative elements relative to the idea of the nation as being an inefficient and bureaucratic organisation, corrupted, and incompetent (see Table 6). The third factor can be interpreted as a slow functioning government. The negative representation related both to INPS and the nation did not depend on the evaluative bias of subjects oriented to a negative judgement, but rather to the social climate spread in Italy as a result of a "cleaning up" policy of the justice versus the state and political corruption ("mani pulite"). In fact, highly positive are the representations related to the "self" now focused on the social role, now related more to the private self and personality characteristics (see Tables 7, 8).

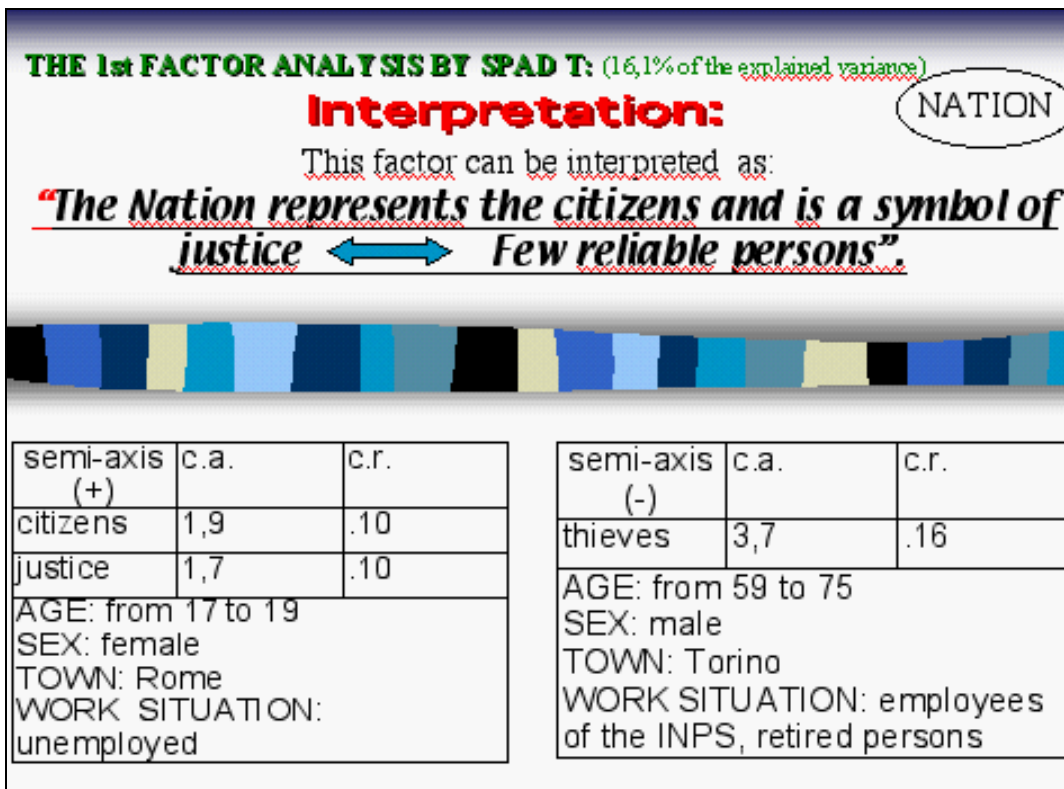


Table 5

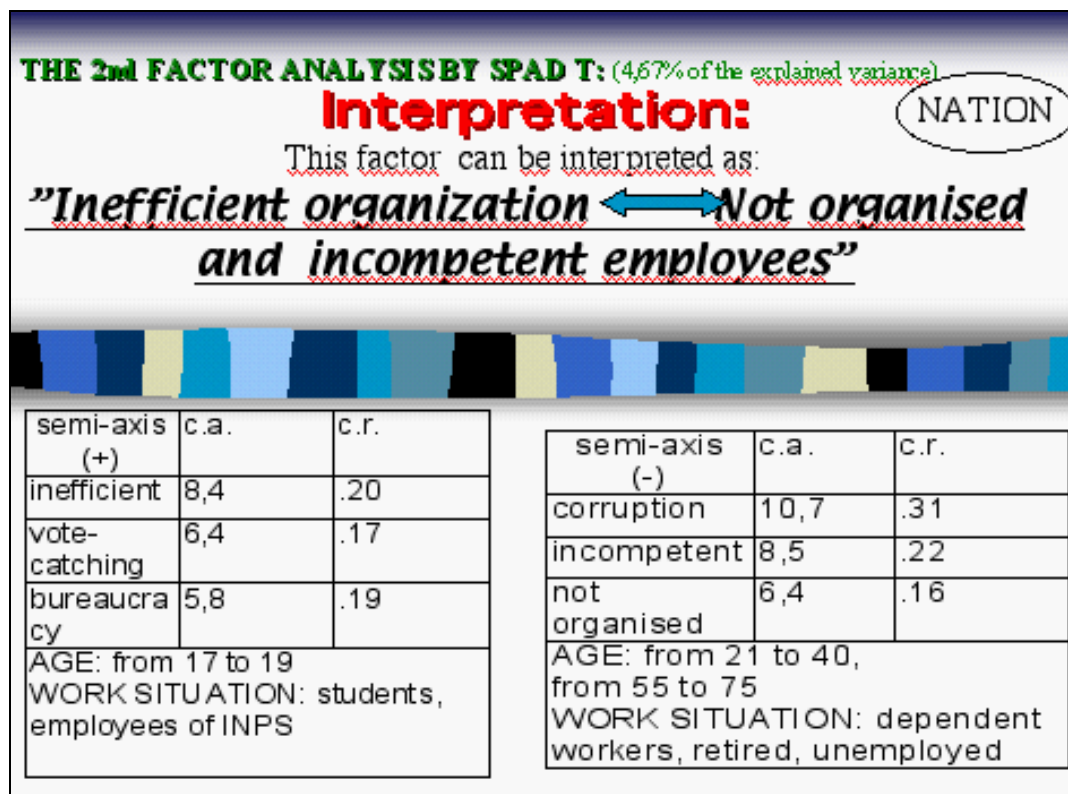


Table 6

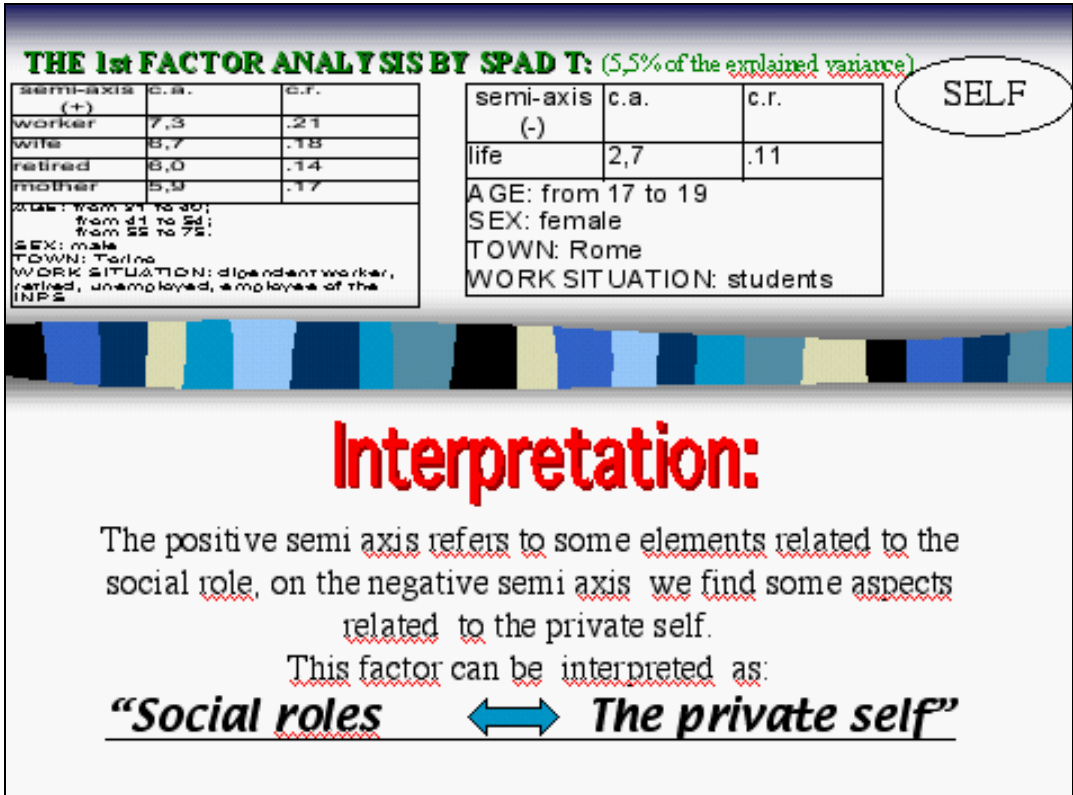


Table 7

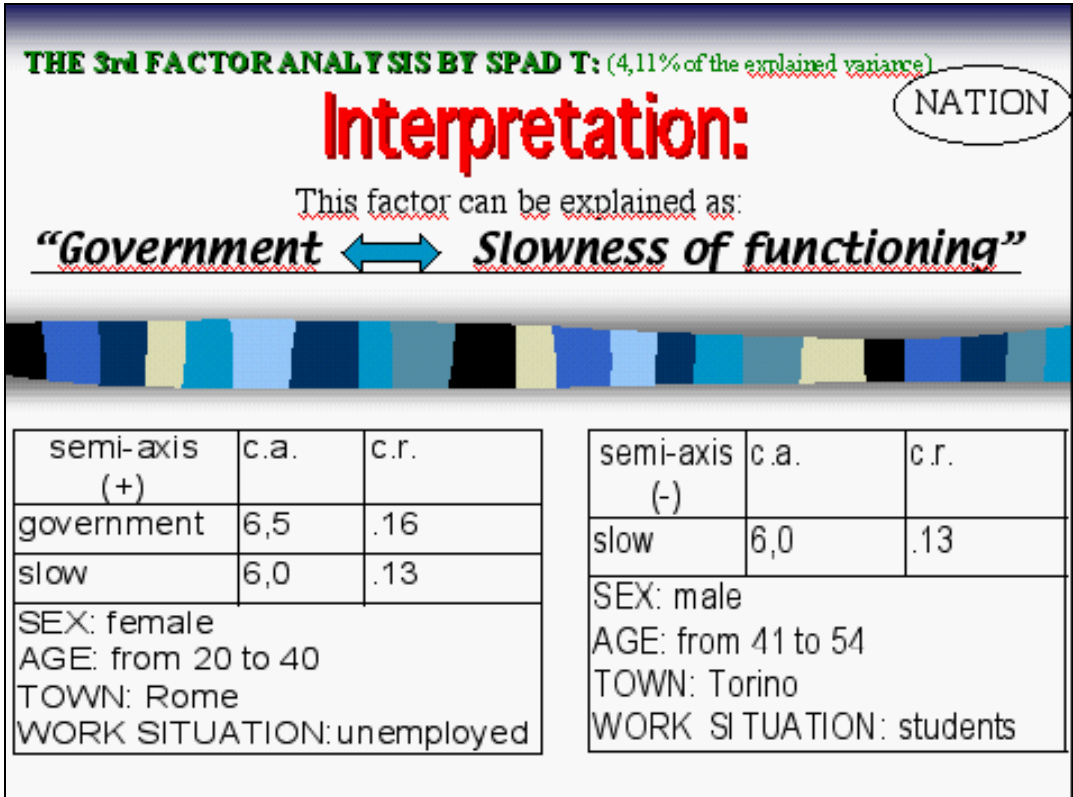


Table 8

4.2. Figurative Semantic Differential

Six images of animals (see Fig. 1) were proposed to subjects (elephant, fox, bee, turtle, spider, ostrich). Linked to this a scale from 0 to 5 was given through which subjects were asked to indicate their degree of disapproval/approval and to what extent the image represented their idea of INPS (see Fig. 2).

The technique of free association was added to the one of figurative differential (in this case an image and not a word), by asking subjects to define this figurative stimulus by writing the first 3 adjectives that came into their mind. The goal for using these two comparative techniques was to provide two kinds of information: 1) how subjects defined the figurative stimulus; 2) to what extent the stimulus reflected the image they had of INPS.


FIGURATIVE SEMANTIC DIFFERENTIAL						
• The I.N.P.S. IS LIKE...						
<i>(Please express if you AGREE / DISAGREE with each one of following affirmations, motivating it with the 3 first adjectives that come up in your mind for each one of them)</i>						
DISAGREE						AGREE
•	0	1	2	3	4	5
•	_____					
•	_____					
•	_____					

Fig. 1

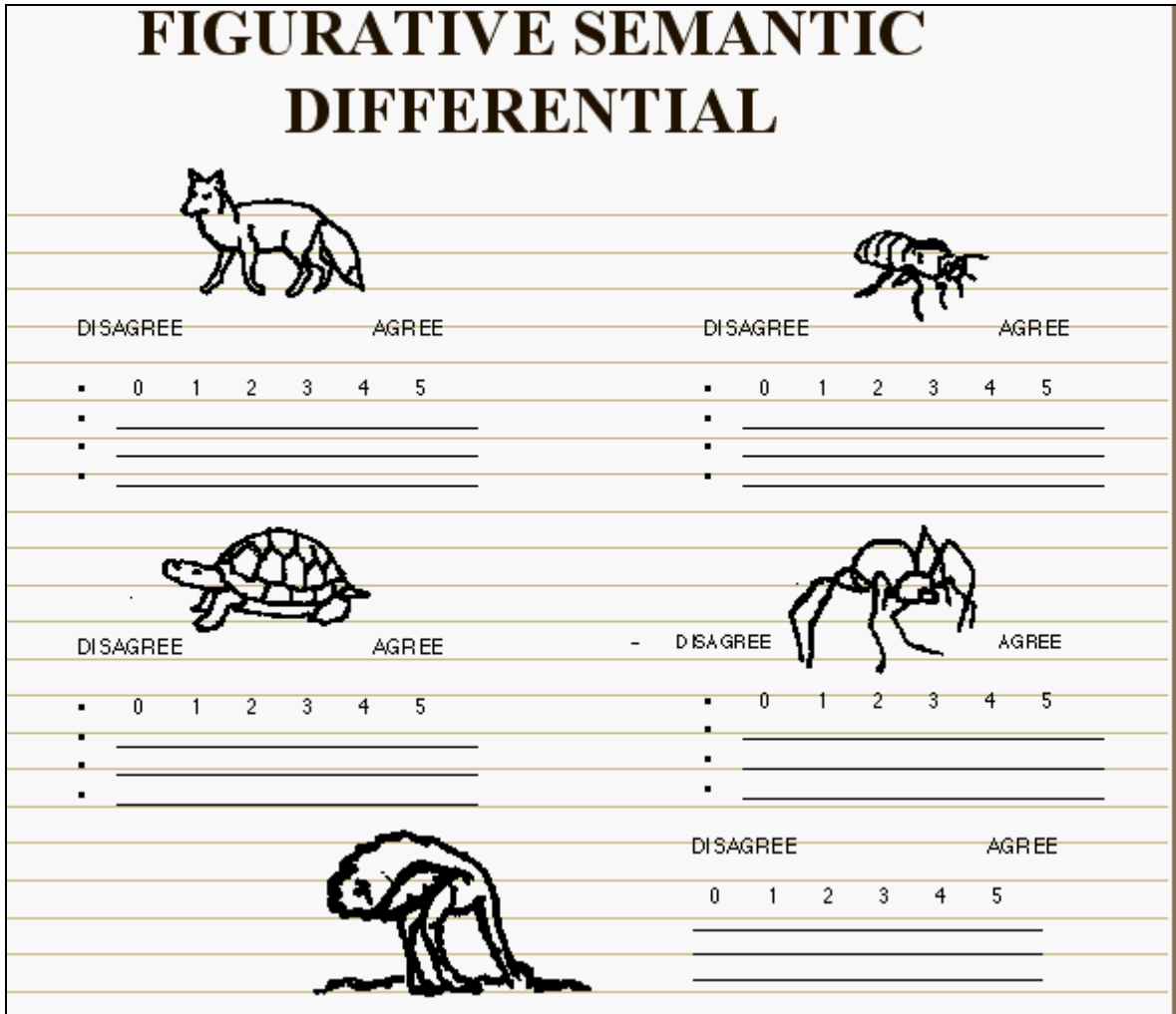


Fig. 2

The images that resulted as positive were the bee, considered mostly "active", "productive" and "quick", and the fox, defined as "sly", "quick", "agile", and "clever". Descriptive and negative characteristics were instead those of the turtle, seen as particularly slow, heavy and armoured, and the elephant, also slow, but heavy and big. While the spider and the ostrich were defined with mainly negative adjectives, the spider was seen as ugly, patient, predator, disgusting, and hairy, while the ostrich was seen as quick, fearful, indifferent, blind, incapable, coward.

In observing the graphic of profiles relative to the figurative differential in various groups of the population, we can see that INPS users (dependent workers, retired people) and INPS employees choose the "elephant" as the image representing best their idea of INPS, a metaphorical image that generally appeared constructed as

negative and neutral. Dependent workers and retired people indicated the "turtle", the "spider", and the "ostrich", while the bee and the fox were the two positively constructed metaphorical images least chosen by the total population to represent INPS (see Fig. 3).

In short, the "turtle" and the "elephant" (symbols of slowness) were the images that subjects indicated as best representing INPS according to the external population, while the image of a "bee" was chosen when the class of INPS employees tried to recuperate a positive view of the organisation indicating it as active and productive (see Fig. 4).

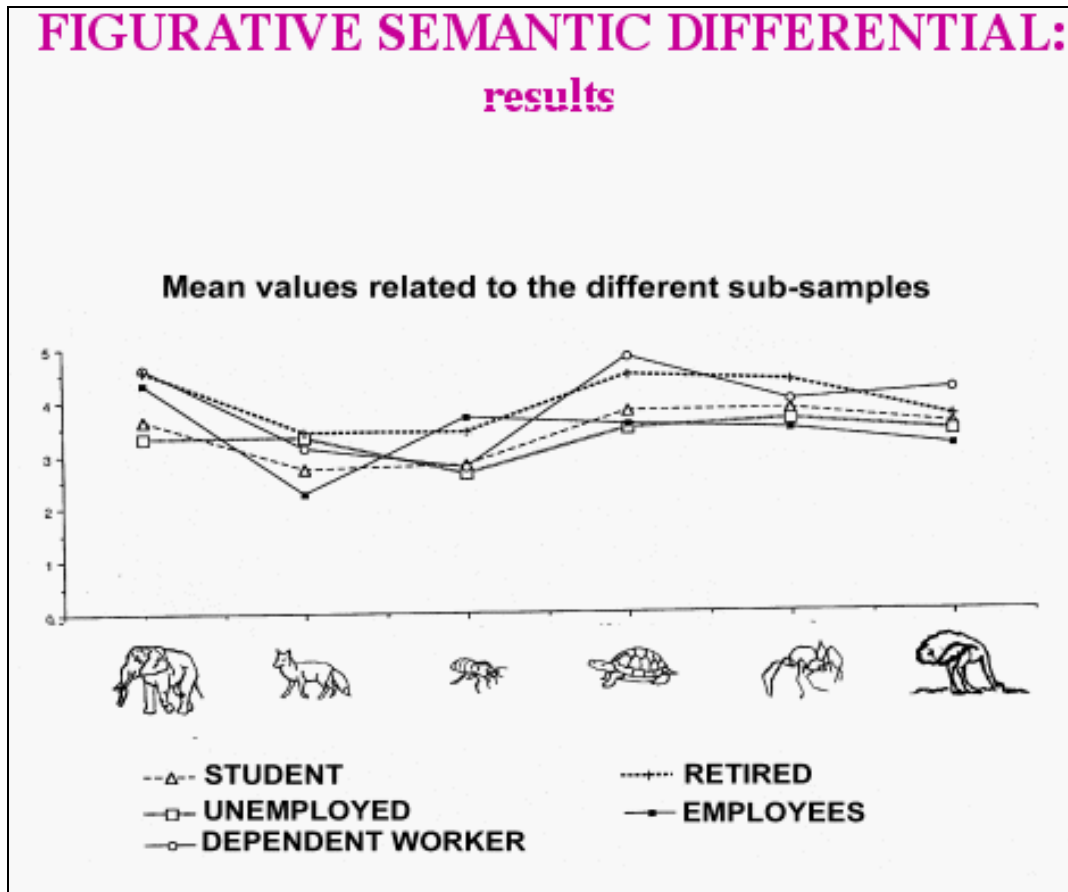


Fig. 3

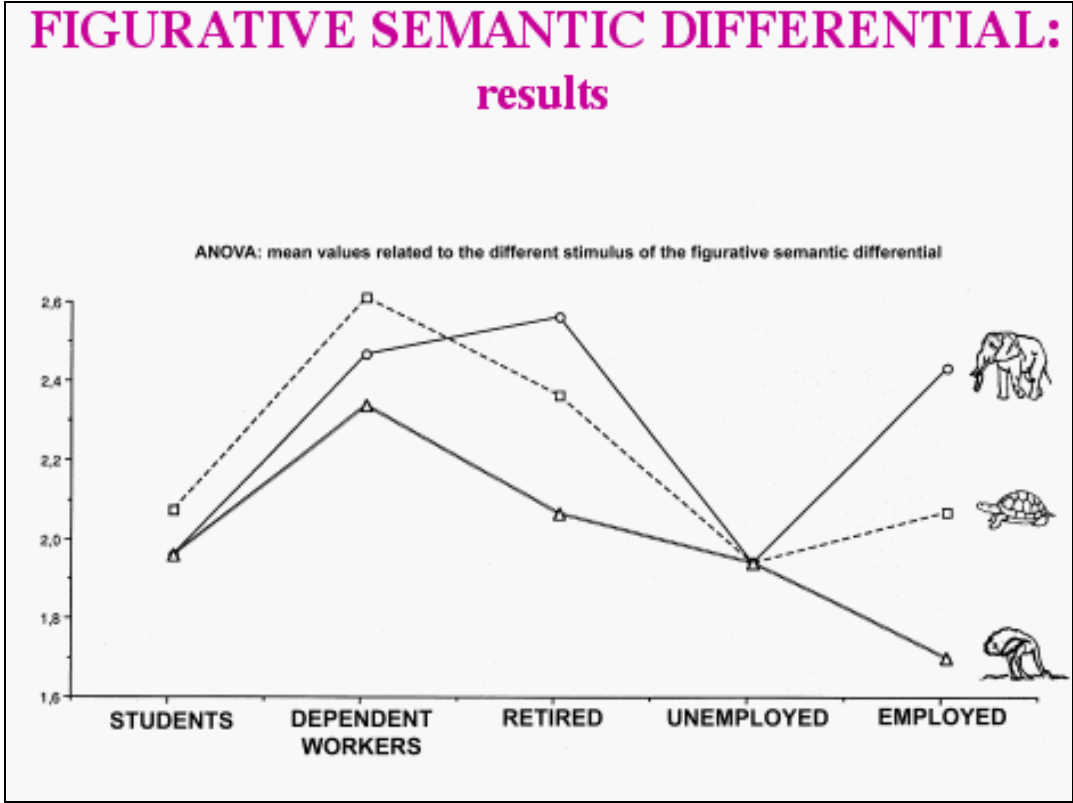


Fig. 4

Through the variance analysis (Fisher test), we checked to see if there were significant differences among the different population groups. The graph “Mean values related to the different stimulus of the figurative semantic differential” indicates the significant mean values derived by ANOVA. It is very interesting to point out the similar pattern elicited by students and the unemployed in opposition to those of the effective users of INPS services and INPS employees (see Fig.4).

4.3. Metaphorical images detector

Subjects were given a series of images with a metaphor value chosen among a wider number of images identified in literature (for a synthesis see note)¹. The most popular metaphors as derived by the literature with regard to the organisation were identified on the basis of free interviews carried out in a previous pilot study aimed at defining the techniques. The metaphorical objects were: "chain", "car", "watch", "umbrella", "cigarette", "can", "puzzle", "brain". Subjects were asked not only to choose among those objects the one that resembled the most his image of INPS, but also to explain "why" (see Fig.5).

METAPHORICAL IMAGES DETECTOR

Sign with a cross the objects that represents the best, the image you have of the I.N.P.S.

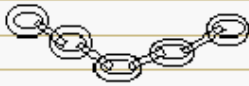
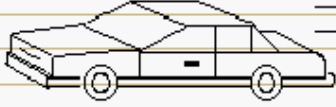
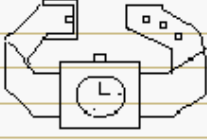



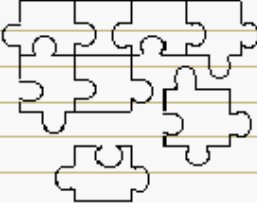

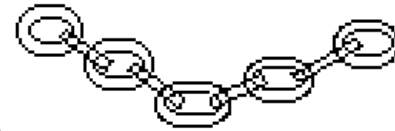
	Why? _____ _____		Why? _____ _____
	Why? _____ _____		Why? _____ _____
	Why? _____ _____		Why? _____ _____
	Why? _____ _____		Why? _____ _____

Fig. 5

The reasons for their choices of metaphors were classified according to their description (positive, negative, neutral). The metaphorical images of "chain", "watch", "cigarette", and "can" didn't receive any positive evaluation, in fact, they were valued very negative, while positive evaluations were attributed only to the images of "umbrella" and "brain" from 13,889% of the subjects. The image of the "watch" was chosen by more than half of the subjects, while the image not chosen by the majority of the subjects was the "car" (83,333%). More interesting is to look at the frequency related to the explanation of the choice of the metaphorical image detector for the different groups which contribute to make less ambiguous the meaning of the choice in relation to INPS (see Tables 9-16). Just as an example, let's quote the negative connotation implicit in the explanation provided by all the groups (students, unemployed, workers, and retired people) who chose the "can" as a symbol of INPS because "antique structure to throw away" as opposed to the positive explanation

provided by INPS employees who chose the same metaphorical image detector (the can) because "it collects the problems of all" (see Table 15). Another example is the choice of "car" for representing INPS only chosen by a student and an INPS employee as a symbol of "fast, modern, and sprint" as opposed to the INPS users that see it as a "bureaucratic machine or to service because antique" (see Table 13).

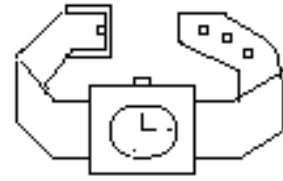
**FREQUENCIES RELATED TO THE EXPLANATION OF THE CHOICE OF
THE "METAPHORICAL IMAGES DETECTOR" FOR THE DIFFERENT GROUPS**



	STUDENTS		UNEMPLOYED		WORKERS (1)		WORKERS (2)		RETIRED		EMPL. INPS		TOTAL		EVALUATION		
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	+	+ -	-
• IT'S SLAVERY, YOU ARE BINDED BY PAYMENTS	10	27,8	2	15,4	6	18,8	5	16,7	5	25,0	1	5,3	29	19,3			*
• YOU ARE BINDED TO BUREAUCRATY	5	13,9	1	7,7	3	9,4	3	10,0	2	10,0			14	9,3			*
• A STRUCTURE BINDED TO OTHER ENTERPRISES			1	7,7			2	6,7	1	5,0	1	5,3	5	3,3			*
• THEIR ACTIVITIES ARE LINKED ONE TO ANOTHER	1	2,8					2	6,7			1	5,3	4	2,7			*
• IT IS THE OPPOSITE OF A BOUND									4	20,0			4	2,7			*
• THE WORKER IS WITHOUT ALTERNATIVE AND SECURITY					3	9,4							3	2,0			*
• A BOND WITH A BRIBE	2	5,6			1	3,1							3	2,0			*
• TIED FOR YEARS TO AN OLD SYSTEM	1	2,8									1	5,3	2	1,3			*
• CLOSELY TIED TO THE STATE							2	6,7					2	1,3			*
• THE PENSIONS ARE BINDED TO THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE YOUNG WORKERS					1	3,1							1	0,7			*
• WE CAN'T DO WITHOUT					1	3,1							1	0,7			*
• EVERUYIS ENVOLVED	1	2,8											1	0,7			*
TOTAL	20		4		15		14		12		4		69		0	17	52

Table 9

**FREQUENCIES RELATED TO THE EXPLANATION OF THE CHOICE OF THE "METAPHORICAL IMAGES DETECTOR"
FOR THE DIFFERENT GROUPS**



- NOT ENOUGH PRECISE AND PUNCTUAL
- PROMPT WITH THE PAYMENT OF PENSIONS
- ASKS REGULARLY WHO MUCH REMAINS
- WORK SCHEDULE
- DURING THE LAST YEARS OF WORK, YOU KEEP ON WATCHING IT
- EFFORTS ARE MADE TO BE MOVES WITH THE TIMES
- THERE ARE CONTINUOUSLY DEADLINES, DAMAGING THE QUALITY
- EMPLOYEES WAITING FOR THEIR WORK TO FINISH
- IT SEEMS THEY ALWAYS RECEIVES YOU AT THE WRONG MOMENT
- FOLLOW PRECISE AND GIVEN SCHEMES
- YOU NEED TO WAIT A LONG PERIOD, BEFORE RECEIVING YOUR PENSION
- ONE ALWAYS FEELS OOUT OF THE SCHEDULE
- EXISTS IN THE THE TIME
- THINK ABOUT YOUR TOMORROW
- HAS A FLEXIBLE WORK SCHEDULE

TOTAL

	STUDENTS		UNEMPLOYED		WORKERS (1)		WORKERS (2)		RETIRED		EMPL. INPS		TOTAL		EVALUATION		
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	+	+-	-
	14	38,9	6	46,2	4	42,5	7	23,3	6	30,0			3	24,7			*
							2	6,7	1	5,0	4	31,1	7	4,7	*		
	1	2,8			1	3,1	1	3,3	2	10,0			5	3,3		*	
	1	2,8			1	3,1							2	1,3		*	
							2	6,7					2	1,3		*	
											2	10,5	2	1,3	*		
											2	10,5	2	1,3			*
					1	3,1					1	5,3	2	1,3		*	
	1	2,8											1	0,7			*
	1	2,8											1	0,7	*		
							1	3,3					1	0,7			*
							1	3,3					1	0,7			*
					1	3,1							1	0,7	*		
									1	5,0			1	0,7	*		
											1	5,3	1	0,7	*		
TOTAL	18		6		8		14		10		10		66		13	11	42

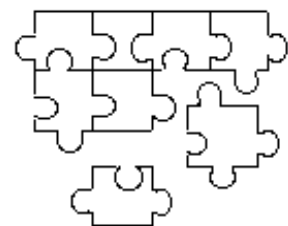
Table 10

**FREQUENCIES RELATED TO THE EXPLANATION OF THE CHOICE OF THE "METAPHORICAL IMAGES DETECTOR"
FOR THE DIFFERENT GROUPS**

	STUDENTS		UNEMPLOYED		WORKERS (1)		WORKERS (2)		RETIRED		EMPL. INPS		TOTAL		EVALUATION		
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	+	+-	-
• FOR THE YOUNG, ONLY ASHES WILL REMAIN	4	11,1	1	7,7	6	18,8	6	20,0	2	10,0			19	12,7			*
• YOU SEE SMOKE, A LONG TIME BEFORE THEY ACT	6	16,7	1	7,7	3	9,4			2	10,0			12	8,0			*
• ATTRACTIVE BUT NOCIVE	8	22,2			1	3,1							9	6,0			*
• BREAK/ABSENT	2	5,6	1	7,7	1	3,1	1	3,3	1	5,0			6	4,0			*
• IT DOESN'T GUARANTEE, WHAT IT WAS CREATED FOR	2	5,6					1	3,3	1	5,0			4	2,7			*
• WAITING AND LONG QUEUES	1	2,8	1	7,7									2	1,3			*
• NOT EVERYONE SMOKES											2	10,5	2	1,3	*		
• WASTE OF PUBLIC MONIES							1	3,3					1	0,7			*
• FEW GOOD RESULTS							1	3,3					1	0,7			*
• USE TO ISSUE UNCLEAR CIRCULARS											1	5,3	1	0,7			*
TOTAL	23		4		11		10		6		3		57		2 55		

Table 11

**FREQUENCIES RELATED TO THE EXPLANATION OF THE CHOICE OF THE "METAPHORICAL IMAGES DETECTOR"
FOR THE DIFFERENT GROUPS**



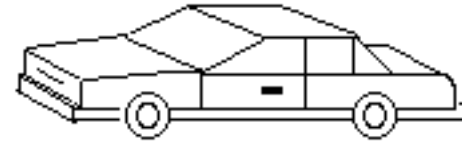
- **COMPLEX, INTERDEPENDENT & CHAOTIC**
- **THE OFFICES ARE LINKED AND INTERDEPENDENT**
- **IF YOU MISS A PIECE, YOU CAN'T GO FURTHER**
- **LACK OF STRUCTURE = UNEFFICIENT**
- **LOT OUT BY POLITICIANS**
- **ENTERPRISE WHICH EXISTS ONLY THANKS TO THE RETIRED**
- **NOT VERY CLEAR WHEN THEY APPLY NORMS**
- **WHEN IT IS TIME TO RETIRE, THERE IS NO MORE**
- **YOU NEED LOTS OF PIECES, BEFORE RECEIVING WHAT IS DUE TO YOU**
- **ONE CAN MAKE IT, WITH PATIENCE**
- **TO MANY DIFFERENT PERSONS RECEIVING WELFARE**
- **IN THE END THE SATISFACTION IS NOT EQUAL TO THE EFFORTS**

TOTAL

STUDENTS	UNEMPLOYED		WORKERS (1)		WORKERS (2)		RETIRED		EMPL. INPS		TOTAL		EVALUATION			
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	+	+-	-	
6	16,7	1	7,7	6	18,8	8	26,7	4	20,0	5	26,3	30	20,0			*
4	11,1			1	3,1			1	5,0	9	47,4	15	10,0		*	
1	2,8	2	15,4	4	12,5	1	3,3	2	10,0			10	6,7			*
6	16,7			3	9,4							9	6,0			*
				1	3,1	1	3,3	1	5,0	1	5,3	4	2,7			*
						2	6,7	1	5,0			3	2,0		*	
				1	3,1	1	3,3	1	5,0			3	2,0			*
				2	6,3			1	5,0			3	2,0			*
		2	15,4									2	1,3			*
						1	3,3					1	0,7		*	
						1	3,3					1	0,7			*
									1	5,3		1	0,7			*
17		5		18		15		11		16		82		19		63

Table 12

**FREQUENCIES RELATED TO THE EXPLANATION OF THE CHOICE OF THE "METAPHORICAL IMAGES DETECTOR"
FOR THE DIFFERENT GROUPS**



- TO SERVICE BECAUSE ANTIQUE
- BUREAUCRATIC MACHINE
- SYMBOL OF A STATUS, WHICH IS ONLY A MASK
- FAST, MODERN, SPRINT

TOTAL

	STUDENTS		UNEMPLOYED		WORKERS (1)		WORKERS (2)		RETIRED		EMPL. INPS		TOTAL		EVALUATION		
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	+	+ -	-
• TO SERVICE BECAUSE ANTIQUE	3	8,3	2	15,4	1	3,1	1	3,3	1	5,0			8	5,3			*
• BUREAUCRATIC MACHINE	1	2,8			2	6,3							3	2,0			*
• SYMBOL OF A STATUS, WHICH IS ONLY A MASK									1	5,0	1	5,3	2	1,3		*	
• FAST, MODERN, SPRINT	1	2,8									1	5,3	2	1,3	*		
TOTAL	5		2		3		1		2		2		15		2	2	11

Table 13

**FREQUENCIES RELATED TO THE EXPLANATION OF THE CHOICE OF THE "METAPHORICAL IMAGES DETECTOR"
FOR THE DIFFERENT GROUPS**



- **COMPENSATES THE PROBLEMS OF THE OLD AGE**
- **GOOD OR BAD, IT IS A WAY OF SOCIAL SECURITY**
- **IT DOESN'T COMPENSATES MUCH, IT DOESN'T STOP THE WATER**
- **IT PROTECTS, BUT THE OWN INTRESTS**
- **LOTS OF ENTERPRISES FIND A COMPENSATION HERE**
- **THEY ARE IN CHARGE OF MANY THINGS**
- **COVERS SOME OF THE ITALIAN BAD HABITS**

TOTAL

STUDENTS		UNEMPLOYED		WORKERS (1)		WORKERS (2)		RETIRED		EMPL. INPS		TOTAL		EVALUATION		
F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	+	+ -	-
4	11,1	3	23,1	2	6,3	10	33,3	5	25,0	6	31,6	30	20,0	*		
1	2,8					5	16,7	1	5,0	1	5,3	8	5,3	*		
4	11,1	1	7,7	1	3,1			2	10,0			8	5,3			*
				1	3,1			1	5,0			2	1,3			*
										2	10,5	2	1,3		*	
1	2,8											1	0,7		*	
				1	3,1							1	0,7			*
10		4		5		15		9		9		52		38	3	11

Table 14

**FREQUENCIES RELATED TO THE EXPLANATION OF THE CHOICE OF THE "METAPHORICAL IMAGES DETECTOR"
FOR THE DIFFERENT GROUPS**

	STUDENTS		UNEMPLOYED		WORKERS (1)		WORKERS (2)		RETIRED		EMPL. INPS		TOTAL		EVALUATION		
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	+	+ -	-
• ANTIQUE STRUCTURE TO THROW AWAY	5	13,9	1	7,7	7	21,9	4	13,3	3	15,0			20	13,3			*
• A CAN THAT IS NEVER EMPTIED	2	5,6			1	3,1			2	10,0	2	10,5	7	4,7			*
• UNEFFICIENT EMPLOYEES	2	5,6	1	7,7	1	3,1	1	3,3					5	3,3			*
• OUR MONEY ENDS UP LIKE GARBAGE	1	2,8			3	9,4			1	5,0			5	3,3			*
• COLLECTS THE PROBLEMS OF ALL			1	7,7	1	3,1					3	15,8	5	3,3	*		
• ALL THE PUBLIC CORPOTATIONS OR BAD FUNCTIONING ENTERPRISES	1	2,8					1	3,3					2	1,3			*
• TODAY IT'S NOT WORTH MUCH	1	2,8											1	0,7			*
• DOESN'T RESPECT THE INDIVIDUALS	1	2,8											1	0,7			*
• UNJUSTICE							1	3,3					1	0,7			*
• NEGLECTS THE THINGS THEY SHOULD DO							1	3,3					1	0,7			*
TOTAL	13		3		13		8		6		5		48		5	0	48

Table 15

FREQUENCIES RELATED TO THE EXPLANATION OF THE CHOICE OF THE "METAPHORICAL IMAGES DETECTOR"

FOR THE DIFFERENT GROUPS



- **MANAGED WITH COMPLEX AND ENTANGLED RULES AND LAWS**
- **WOULD BE NEEDED TO PUT THINGS IN ORDER**
- **IT IS THE OPPOSITE**
- **COULD BE MORE ORGANISED**
- **DIFFERENT MINDS TOGETHER**
- **ONE'S ENGAGEMENT IS ALWAYS ESSENTIAL**
- **VERY BUREAUCRATIC**
- **DEPENDS ONLY OF THE SORT OF WORK**

TOTAL

STUDENTS		UNEMPLOYED		WORKERS (1)		WORKERS (2)		RETIRED		EMPL. INPS		TOTAL		EVALUATION		
F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	+	+ -	-
2	5,6	2	15,4	1	3,1	1	3,3	1	5,0			7	4,7			*
2	5,6			1	3,1			2	10,0			5	3,3			*
1	2,8	1	7,7	1	3,1			1	5,0			4	2,7			*
2	5,6			1	3,1	1	3,3					4	2,7		*	
2	5,6	1	7,7									3	2,0	*		
										2	10,5	2	1,3	*		
				1	3,1							1	0,7			*
										1	5,3	1	0,7	*		
9		4		5		2		4		3		27		5	5	17

Table 16

4.4. Metaphorical sentence evaluation scale

On the basis of the results derived from the previous pilot study, six affirmations in the form of metaphors were formulated that recall different images of INPS, they point out aspects relative to the organisational structure, personnel, efficiency, and technology.

For every affirmation subjects had to indicate how the various statements reflected their image of INPS.

The statements used were formulated as such:

- "this institute looks like a parking area for elephants" (Scale 1);
- 5. "when you go to INPS you feel like entering kindergarten" (Scale 2);
- "people who work at INPS go up and down, back and forth, they are hardly able to work, they just do their job" (Scale 3);
- "this corporation is like an elderly lady full of wrinkles with a lifting done and a lot of make up" (Scale 4);
- "INPS is like a train that runs on a track, everyone knows it's wrong, but in order to change one would need to stop the train, but nobody had the courage to do it, even though many pull the alarm" (Scale 5);
- "People who work at INPS look like they are under bombing, they could get there in the morning and not find either the room or the desk" (Scale 6).

The pattern of results shown in figure 6 is very similar in all groups of the population for all the metaphorical scales, except for the first and the third scales (see as an example figure 6). In fact, the metaphor referring to the organisation as a "parking area for elephants" (scale 1) was considered true by all the population groups and received the highest percentage from retired people (60%), except INPS employees (47%) who considered it 'not true'. Moreover - contrary to all the other groups - INPS employees in 63% of the subjects felt that "people who work at INPS go up and down, back and forth, they just do their job" (scale 3), probably trying to legitimate their own professional role.

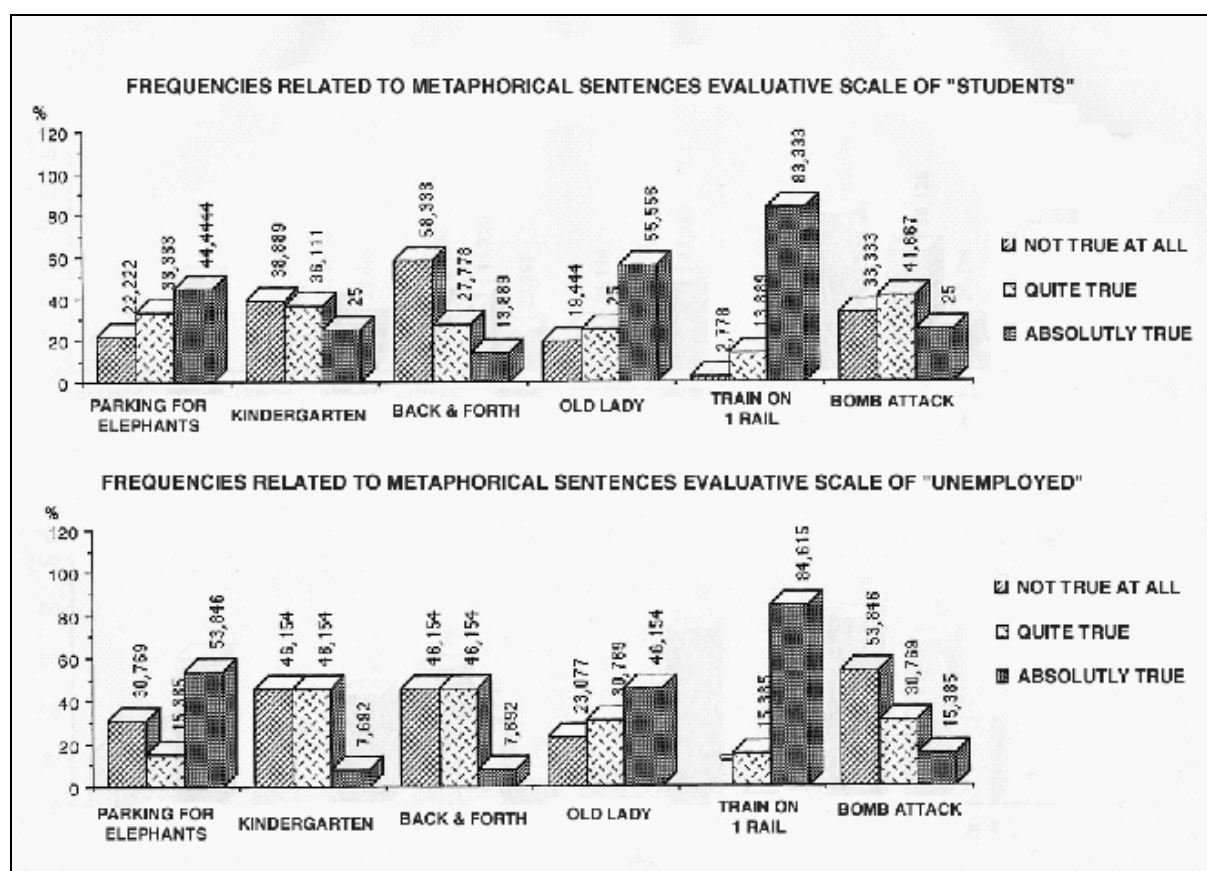


Fig. 6

4.5. Questionnaire

Results derived from the two versions of the questionnaire indicated that subjects considered INPS as generally not meeting citizens' needs. In particular, the Institute pays insufficient pensions, employees are often absent and without a sense of responsibility, computers do not guarantee efficiency and perhaps if INPS were a private enterprise it would function more efficiently. The six dimensions that were found by the factorial analysis were interpreted as: 1) anti-state conception / privatisation; 2) problematic conception of its functioning; 3) positive conception of the enterprise; 4) concept of changing the enterprise; 5) negative concept of the enterprise productivity; 6) concept of improving strategies to change the enterprise (see Table 17). Significant difference was obtained by ANOVA, by using as a dependent variable the mean score derived from the factorial analysis and as independent variable respectively the age, sex, the source of provisions (INPS provisions, INPS plus private, or none), the different groups (students, dependent workers, retired, unemployed and INPS

employees) and their working role (clerks, secretaries, no role). Significant differences emerged in the third and fourth factors relatively to the age of subjects, in the fourth factor in relation to sex, in the third and fourth in relation to the social provision; in the first, the fifth and the sixth factors with regard to the different groups; and in the third and fifth factor relative to the working role. Space is insufficient here to comment all these significant differences. Just as an example, in the fifth factor interpreted as "negative conception" of the productivity of the enterprise, we found negative evaluation in INPS service users, more sensitive than the other groups to receiving an insufficient pension.

The following sentences about the INPS have been given to the subjects in order to study their opinions about INPS in relation to the changes made by the re-organizing programme.

OPINIONS about the INPS	average
We can't do without this corporation	4,867
Main responsible of the public debt	5,113
Independent of the political power	2,447
Employers are often absent and without sense of responsibility	5,68
It is more efficient today	4,333
Does not meet the requirements of the citizens	5,367
It adapts, improving the technology	4,467
Pay insufficient pensions	5,66
If it would be private, it would be more efficient	5,378
It would work better in agreement with other enterprises	4,553
It won't change until it remains public	4,807
To guaranty pensions is not uneasy thing to do	4,647
Computers don't guarantee the efficiency	5,013
Waiting too long for the pension	4,827

Table 17

Figure 7 summarises the opinions about INPS in relation to the changes made by the re-organising programme, with the highest averages expressed by all the groups (see Fig. 7).

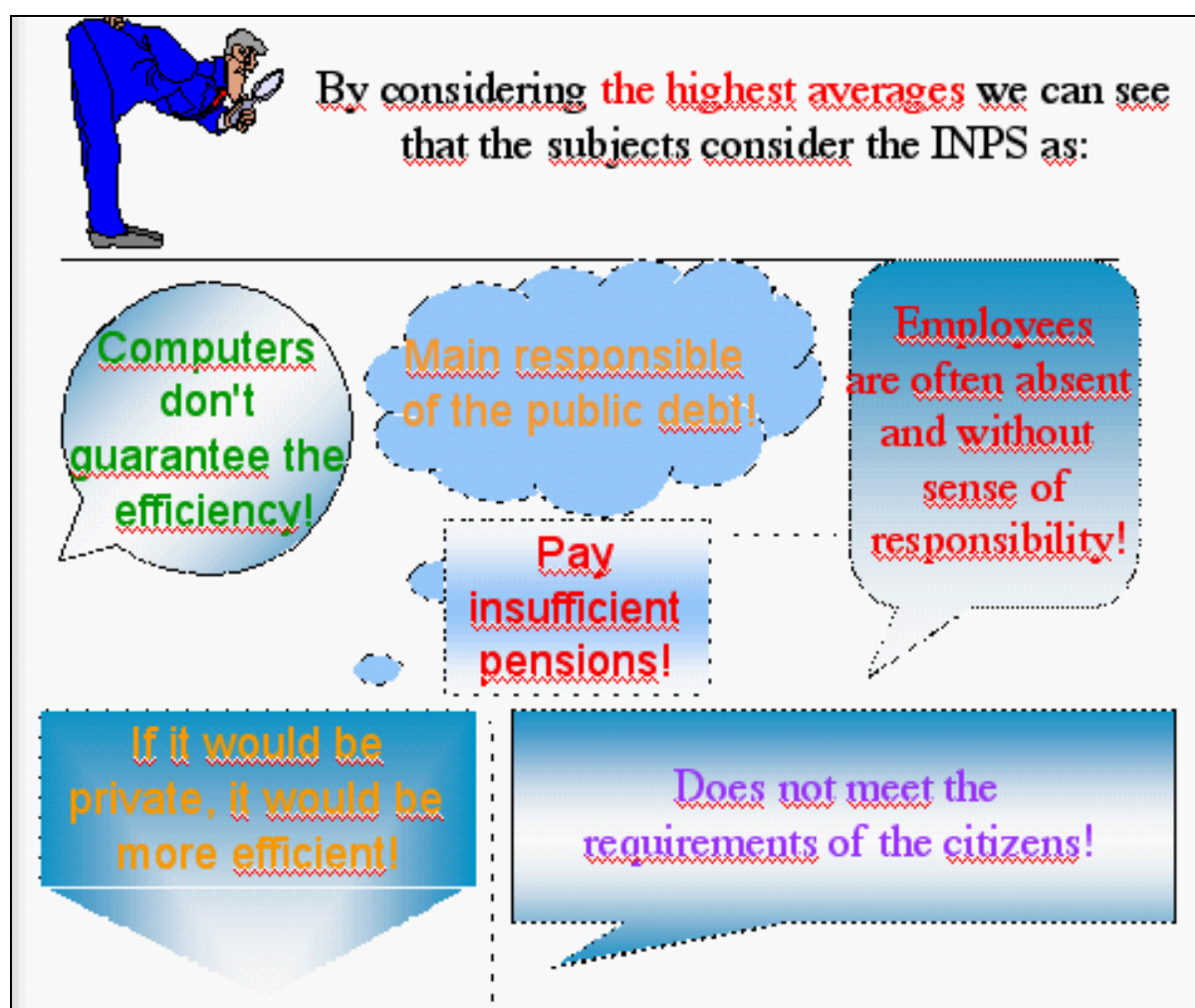


Figure 7

As regards to the open questions addressed both to the external and internal population on what they thought of INPS employees, a selection of replies is given in respectively in Fig. 8 and 9. These confirm a coherence between the perception of present and future users of INPS services and the meta perception expressed by INPS employees, who are aware of the users' negative representation about their own professional role.

What do you think the users about the I.N.P.S. employee ?

- they have a bad image until they get their pension
- negative, they waste our money and won't be able to pay our pensions in the future, because all means are exhausted
- in theory a useful enterprise, but in reality badly managed, ungovernable, unreliable
- that we steal or that we do nothing



Fig. 8

What do you think about the I.N.P.S. employee ?

- I would like to be in his place (because he doesn't work much)
- slow, lazy, incompetent, not attentive, often absent
- Like all employees of the public administration, he doesn't want to work
- The classical employee of public administration: unsatisfied, impatient, not willing to work, doesn't believe in his social task



Fig. 9

With reference to the transformation that INPS is going through, INPS employees were asked a series of closed and open questions relative to the institutional and organisational aspects that should be changed and those that should be considered more in order to meet users' needs.

The inquiry indicated some general reflections on the part of INPS employees for improving the Institute, these included: restructuring the organisation and functions, turn it into a private institution, provide a computerisation service, train employees and give more incentives, make it less politicised, and have greater control on the grant of pensions. Also, subjects indicated those elements that should be changed; in particular, these referred to relations with the unions, the mentality of executive staff, personnel formation, incentive bonus system, public image, internal relations. Technology, relations among colleagues and within the territory tended to be considered as elements that should be kept.

The answers given to the open questions included in the last section of the questionnaire and grouped in three different categories (*deficiencies of INPS, improvement strategies, change*) confirmed the pattern of results derived from the closed questions.

In relation to the age of INPS employees, significant differences were noted relative to changing or maintaining certain aspects of the organisation, in particular the public image and services offered. A difference is shown between the younger and elder subjects, while the middle age class 46/58 felt that both the public image and services should be kept, the younger subjects aged 22/35 and 36/45 felt that both elements should be changed.

There were also differences in relation to the subjects' education on whether the two elements regarding relationships among colleagues and services should be kept or changed. Subjects who had a secondary school education felt that both elements should be kept while those having a university education felt that they should be changed. It seems that the younger class is open to a change of some aspects of the organisation as compared to those subjects between ages of 46 and 58.

INPS employees were also questioned on their perception of the "*work setting*". Considerations relative to the physical environment of work setting were negative. The majority of employees considered it as very noisy and old fashioned, uncomfortable, with little space and somewhat unfit for work. Significant differences emerged in relation to their age and sex. It was noted that the younger the employees are, the less they considered the work setting as noisy, while it was considered very noisy by those

aged 46/58. The work setting was also seen as old fashioned more by women than by men. Subjects were asked to indicate among the proposed elements, those that according to the organisation were the most important requisites for a successful career. The greater part of employees considered "seniority" and "political and trade union vote catching" as the most important.

If we consider the answers to the question in the double perspective of the external and internal population, significant differences arose in reference to the evaluation of INPS according to the various sub-samples: retired people, students, unemployed people and dependent workers mention especially moral deficiencies with little attention on the part of employees to users' needs, while INPS employees mention deficiencies relative to the lack of employees incentives and unclear norms. Improvement strategies that the majority of subjects suggested were to make the Institute private (31%), other suggested personnel training courses and more incentives (23%), while 19% stated that a restructuring of the organisation is needed to render INPS more efficient.

5. Conclusion

The restructuring policy of INPS was directed towards the functioning evaluation of the Headquarters "Directional Centre", articulated in "staff" structures for the support of management politics and of "product" with responsibility on the entire cycle of the institutional area. This policy determined important structural changes, the Regional Seat has more responsibility in the direction, and the seats of autonomous production took on the role of an enterprise having their own management and organisation. The evolution process taking place in the Institute was oriented towards a modern corporation characterised by flexibility and organisational innovation.

However, as we could see in relation to the results of the inquiry on both INPS service users, future users and non users and INPS employees in frequent contacts with users, the image that arose of INPS did not correspond to the one proposed in the restructuring process.

Evidently, to change a social representation of an institution embedded in a long term daily life social practices requires more time than to change the institutional policy by legal measures.

NOTE

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- ¹ Morgan (1986): machines, organisms, brains, cultures, psychic prisons, flux & transformation, instruments of domination, political systems.
McKena & Wright (1992): machine, organism, brain, family, political arena.
Weick (1993): theatre, building
Cameron & Freeman (1991): clan, hierarchy, autocracy, market
Deetz (1986): family, zoos, savage tribes, sporting games
Quinn (1987): the irresponsible country club, the tumultuous anarchy, the oppressive sweat shop, the frozen bureaucracy
Putnam, Phillips & Chapman (1996): Conduits, lens, linkage, performance, symbol, voice, discourse.

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