Abstract

Over the last decades, research in policy formulation, especially agenda-setting studies, has shown that the action of individuals (or groups) named “policy entrepreneurs” constitutes a central aspect of the public policy process. The agenda-setting theoretical models (John Kingdon’s multiple streams model, Baumgartner and Jones’s punctuated equilibrium model) picture those individuals from different perspectives, stressing different features of their role in the policy process. Both models consider the policy entrepreneur as an essential actor in their explanations on policy maintenance or change. This paper aims at presenting and discussing the centrality of policy entrepreneurs in agenda-setting models, analyzing this important actor, as well as the limits and contributions of this conceptualization for the policy process understanding.

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to present and discuss a particular type of actor involved in the process of public policy formulation: the policy entrepreneur. Over the last decades, some studies on public policy formulation – especially those devoted to agenda-setting formation – have stressed the role of policy entrepreneur as change agents. Even though these entrepreneurs are understood differently in such studies, their acting is considered essential for the public policy’s emergence, continuity or change. To analyze the concept of policy entrepreneurs as well as the application of this concept in theoretical models of public policies, by verifying its limits and challenges as explanatory tools, constitute the main concern of this paper.

In the first section, we will briefly discuss the emphasis on the entrepreneur in the context of public policy studies. Then, we shall analyze how the policy entrepreneur takes centrality in the multiple streams model, formulated by John Kingdon (2003) in order to explain the formation process of the governmental agenda and the selection of alternatives. Then, we shall examine the role destined for the entrepreneur in the Frank Baumgartner’s and Bryan
Jones’ (1993) *punctuated equilibrium* model, which seeks to explain the stability as well as the changes in public policies. We will attempt to understand, also, how the *advocacy coalitions* model, suggested by Paul Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith (1993), can contribute to the understanding of the entrepreneur’s functions, even though the model doesn’t bestow him a central position. At last, we shall seek to discuss the contributions of these models in understanding the importance of the entrepreneurs in the public policy formulation, mainly by two specific means: the pleading of ideas, and innovation and change in public policies.

**Policy entrepreneurs and the study of the policy process**

In recent discussions in the field of policy studies, entrepreneurs are a central piece in the theoretical models designed to deal with policy formulation. These models share a lot in common and, in special, they take into account that “ideas matters”. In fact, this is a broader movement that spreads over public policy field (as well as other social sciences areas) during the 90s, when researchers came to point out the dynamic of ideas in the policy process (Majone, 1989; Fisher and Forester, 1993; Yanow, 1996; Stone, 1997). Although different researchers have distinct understandings about what the concept of ideas denotes and how to deal with them in a methodological frame,¹ these studies have a major influence on the policy studies (John, 1999; Faria, 2003). The traditional models, centered on well known categories of political science, used to demote ideas, understanding them as mechanisms of interest justification. In the words of Kingdon,

> “Political scientists are accustomed to such concepts as power, influence, pressure, and strategy. If we try to understand public policy solely in terms of these concepts, however, we miss a great deal. The content of the ideas themselves, far from being mere smokescreens or rationalizations, are integral parts of decision making in and around government” (Kingdon, 2003, 125)

In general, ideas appear as arguments in defense of different worldviews. Thus, the authors who emphasize the importance of ideas highlight the centrality of discourse, interpretation, and symbolic representation, understanding that the policy formulation is closer to the process of argument than to formal techniques of problem solving:

> “In a system of government by discussion, analysis – even professional analysis – has less to do with formal techniques of problem solving than with the process of argument. The job of analysts consists in large part of producing evidence and arguments to be used in public debate.” (Majone, 1999, 07).

¹ Ideas are understood as “argumentation” and “rhetorical” to Fisher and Forester (1993) as well as Majone (1989); it is also understood as “symbols” and “narrative” to Stone (1997); and as “interpretation” to Yanow (1996).
In this context – in which the argumentation and the pleading of ideas are central – the entrepreneur’s importance in the latest theoretical models is understandable, since generating ideas, spreading them and pleading them is precisely one of its primary roles. On the other hand, as we seek to understand policy stability and change, the role of ideas, interests and individual action might as well be fundamental. In the next sections, we shall analyze the role of the entrepreneur in three public policy theoretical models which grant centrality to ideas in the policymaking process.

Policy Entrepreneur in agenda-setting and alternatives selection

Policy entrepreneurs hold a key role in the *multiple streams* model developed by John Kingdon (2003). In the author’s view, entrepreneurs are individuals (sometimes small groups of people) whose main characteristic consists of the pleading of an idea. Such entrepreneurs may be positioned anywhere in a policy community, either inside or outside the government, and apply their resources (time, energy, reputation, funds) in defense of certain proposals based on expected future profits. These profits include, according to the author, three types of distinct benefits. The first set of benefits translates into practical and personal gains for the one defending an idea. These are material incentives resulting from the changes made by his ideas in a given policy. As examples of practical benefits, Kingdon (2003, 123) mentions the maintenance and expansion of budgets; employees and programs for the bureaucrats; electoral benefits for the politicians; and interest protection of members of a group for lobbyists. Another type of benefit is characterized by the promotion of given values in a policy. These are the intentional benefits, based on related ideology, for example, the one concerning the role of the State in the economy. The third type of profit the entrepreneur can achieve is the so-called solidary benefit, which emerges from the enjoyment of engaging in the pleading of ideas: “some entrepreneurs simply like the game. They enjoy advocacy, they enjoy being at or near the seat of power, they enjoy being part of action” (Kingdon, 2003, 123).

Three characteristics are highlighted by Kingdon regarding the qualities of an entrepreneur. First, they are individuals who show credibility to the audience, i.e., who hold legitimacy possibly due to factors such as their specialty in the subject matter (*expertise*), their communication skill, or their formal position in the decision-making process. The second characteristic of an entrepreneur is related to his political connections and negotiation skills. At last, the persistence is appointed by the author as the third vital characteristic for the entrepreneur’s activity, entailing the investment availability of big amounts of personal resources.

“Most of these people spend a great deal of time giving talks, writing position papers, sending letters to important people, drafting bills, testifying before congressional committees and executive branch commissions, and having lunch, all with the aim of pushing
their ideas in whatever way and forum might further the cause" (Kingdon, 2003, 181).

These qualities are useful in the two action fields of entrepreneurs in Kingdon’s model: the promotion of ideas, proposals and conceptions regarding problems (soften up) and in the moment when the policy windows are opened and the opportunity for agenda changes arise (coupling).

Whether because of personal interests, values, or the very satisfaction of participating in the process, the entrepreneurs, according to Kingdon, promote their ideas in policy communities, which consist of experts in a subject area. These experts – who may or not belong to the governmental framework – share a concern with a specific policy area, interact in communities, and know the other members, their proposals and ideas. One of the key roles played by policy entrepreneurs in Kingdon’s model is the process of presenting ideas (soften up) in such communities, since therein proposals about what to do in a given policy area are presented and spread by its participants. Communities, according to Kingdon, tend to be change resistant, and the activity of presenting and discussing certain ideas is essential to increase the acceptance chances of new proposals. Entrepreneurs also take the ideas beyond the frontiers of the communities in order to present them to the general public, as to get people used to the proposals. This activity of argumentation and pleading of ideas is developed by different means: politicians may introduce a bill to confront the people with an idea, the same way the holding of public hearings may serve to previous proposals discussions. Bureaucrats may present ideas by means of speeches and conferences throughout the country, elaborating and spreading studies and reports. Many times the entrepreneur merely tests the receptivity of an idea to the general public and inside the communities. According to the author, this process sometimes resembles the release of a trial balloon: “A bureaucrat tries out an idea by slipping a paragraph into a secretary’s speech to see what the reaction is. Or a senator introduces a bill, not because it will pass that year but because he tests the water and gauges the state of receptivity to an idea”. (Kingdon, 2003, 129). Ideas presented this way may not proceed, but they do help in making people focus on certain themes. According to Kingdon, this initial process in which various ideas are tested seems to be necessary for an issue to be pondered more seriously:

“Many good proposals have fallen on deaf ears because they arrived before the general public, the specialized publics, or the policy communities were ready to listen. Eventually, such a proposal might be resurrected, but only after a period of paving the way” (Kingdon, 2003, 130).

Beyond the promotion of ideas, entrepreneurs play a critical role in Kingdon’s model, more directly related to the governmental agenda change. In the author’s model of agenda-setting, the change in the governmental agenda is the result of a complex combination of factors, including the way in which a problem is perceived, the employment possibilities of a set of available solutions, and changes in the political dynamics and in the public opinion. Each of the three
dimensions (streams) develops in a relatively independent manner, as each one is governed by its own logic. The first stream consists of issues perceived as problems which became part of the governmental agenda. Considering the big amount of decisions and the inability to deal with all the issues at the same time, the attention of policy formulators depends on how they perceive and interpret these issues, and, most importantly, how the issues are defined as problems. Some mechanisms — such as systematically produced indicators (monitoring of governmental programs, performance reports), and, above all, important events (disasters, catastrophes, major accidents) — help to focus the attention on an issue. However, these mechanisms don’t turn the issues automatically into problems. The interpretation of such events and the understanding that they are problems which demand a governmental move are essential for the success of an agenda issue. In the second stream, a set of possible alternatives to the problems is developed by experts (researchers, ledge directors, academics, civil servants, analysts who belong to interest groups, among others). Such alternatives, which are not necessarily related to the perception of specific problems, circulate inside communities of experts and, whereas some of these alternatives are discarded, others succeed and may even get the attention of governmental actors. At last, the third stream consists of the dimension containing the public opinion (general perception about given issues), organized political forces (positioning of interest groups regarding an issue, for example), and the government itself (change of people in strategic positions inside the governmental structure, changes in management, changes in the congress composition, among other factors).

In certain circumstances, these three streams — problems, solutions and political dynamics — may converge, creating a concrete possibility of change in the governmental agenda. In such occasions (policy window), a problem is acknowledged, a solution is available and the political conditions make the moment prone to change, allowing the three streams to join and making it possible for the issues to ascend the agenda. In that moment, the entrepreneur must be ready, once Kingdon’s model assign him the responsibility for making a link between the three streams (coupling) and, therefore, for facilitating an issue’s admission in the agenda.

Such opportunities are, nevertheless, temporary. Some of them are somewhat predictable (like the highly favorable moment for changes in the beginning of a new government), and the entrepreneur’s task consists of developing ideas and proposals regarding a given policy (soften up) before the opportunity emerges. In this respect, the author compares the entrepreneur to a “surfer waiting for the great wave”, balancing his sense of opportunity and skill with external forces. Individuals do not hold the power to control waves, just as they cannot control events and structures. However, they may ride the waves, the same way they can anticipate opportunities and take advantage of them. Thus, seeking their purposes, entrepreneurs combine solutions, problems and political context, employing opportunities that show up and holding a central role in the multiple streams model, according to Kingdon (2003, 182):

“Without the presence of an entrepreneur, the linking of the streams may not take place. Good ideas lie fallow for lack of an advocate.”
Problems are unsolved for lack of a solution. Political events are not capitalized for lack of inventive and developed proposals”.

Kingdon’s model, therefore, gives special emphasis to the action of the entrepreneur, even though the author draws attention to the fact that entrepreneurs do not have the ability to control the change processes. The process by which the change in the agenda takes place is influenced by great events and structures, not by the will of a particular individual.

**Policy stability, policy change and the entrepreneur**

According to Baumgartner and Jones (*Punctuated Equilibrium Model*), analyzing the entrepreneur’s proceeding is also essential to understand changes in a given policy. The authors develop the entrepreneur concept (Baumgartner and Jones, 1993) following the study on *agenda-setting* developed by John Kingdon (2003) and based on William Riker's studies (1986) on political manipulation.

Baumgartner and Jones highlight, in Kingdon’s study (2003), the entrepreneur’s important role as the one responsible for linking solutions and problems. According to the authors, similarly to the *multiple streams* approach, problems are not necessarily linked to solutions in the process of policy formulation. And one of the entrepreneur’s main tasks consists in showing that his solutions represent the best response to a new problem, when policy formulators are focused on a certain issue. Even if the solution existed before the problem or even if it has no direct relation whatsoever to the problem, it’s up to the entrepreneur to argue and create new understandings about the issue in order to favor his perspective. “The trick for a policy entrepreneur is to ensure that the solution he or she favors is adopted once a given problem has emerged on the national agenda” (Baumgartner and Jones, 1993, 29). The public policy formulation is influenced not only by the redefinition of problems, but, at the same time, by the redefinition of the most effective ways of dealing with the perceived situations, i. e., the elaboration of suitable solutions.

Another source for the model is Riker’s study (1986), which develops the *heresthetics* concept in order to designate political action based on the ability of changing the structure of preferences and alternatives that incur on the decision-making process in such a way as to determine the participant’s opinions. For this, Riker shows that political action may involve three forms of manipulation: agenda control, strategic voting and dimensionality. These three forms of manipulation involve both control over formal rules and the decision-making institutional dimension, and the rhetoric arguments used in the debate – the understandings which were developed around an issue. Riker’s study is essential to the policy entrepreneur concept formulation in Baumgartner and Jones (1993), which highlight his proceeding both in the institutional dimension, by means of creation and maintenance of policy monopolies, and in the symbolic dimension, by the definition and diffusion of the policy image.

The policy monopoly notion is developed by Baumgartner and Jones (1993) in order to designate a subsystem dominated by only one interest which
shows two main characteristics. First, the monopoly as a whole has a recognizable institutional structure, in which the decision-making process concerning a policy is developed. These monopolies, strengthened by institutional arrangements, keep the decision-making process limited to a small group of actors, restricting the access of others. Second, the monopolies have a supportive idea, an image (policy image) associated with this institutional structure\(^2\). Thus, the policy monopoly notion represents a set of insights into a certain issue that becomes dominant, from which the actors gain the ability to control the interpretation over a problem and the way it is perceived and discussed. These monopolies are responsible for the stability maintenance in the public policy formulation and the restriction of new issues to the governmental agenda. Policy changes take place when the monopolies are disrupted. So, one of the most important actions of the entrepreneurs consists of the creation and maintenance of a policy monopoly, so that the political system keeps stable around some issues. The entrepreneur, according to the authors, is the individual who seeks to act in such a way as to make the government do something in a certain policy or, on the other hand, avoid doing something in it (Baumgartner and Jones, 1993, 23). Once the establishment of a monopoly is one of the determining factors for the political system stability, one of the greatest interests of these actors is to establish policy monopolies, say Baumgartner and Jones. According to them,

“Every interest, every group, every policy entrepreneur has a primary interest in establishing a monopoly – a monopoly on political understandings concerning the policy of interest, and an institutional arrangement that reinforces that understanding. Nobody likes protracted conflict and continual competition. Much preferable to a system of constant conflict is one where each side retreats into a given area where its influence is uncontested” (Baumgartner e Jones, 1993, 06).

Policy monopolies are elements that provide balance and stability for political systems, a situation that may persist for long periods. However, the same mechanism employed to explain the stability also brings forth explanations about the changes that happen, frequently, in a quick way (and not in a incremental way). Such ruptures, or punctuations, result from changes in the balance previously produced by the monopolies. A monopoly’s destruction is related to the mobilization of actors which were previously removed from the decision-making process. As long as a shared vision about symbols, problems, solutions and causal relations regarding a certain policy (policy image) prevails, the monopoly subsists, restraining the access to the decision-making process for

\(^2\) It’s precisely because of this characteristic that the authors distinguish policy monopolies and other formulations used in the literature: “Political scientists have studied what we have termed policy monopolies in a variety of settings and have used several different terms for the phenomenon, including iron triangles, policy whirlpools, and subsystem politics (…) All have stressed the lack of interference by broader political forces in subsystems, and the deference to the judgments of experts. None, however, has stressed the importance of positive images in supporting the system of deference and noninterference” (Baumgartner and Jones, 1993, 07).
those actors who do not agree with this image. There is, thus, the predominance of slow, gradual and incremental changes, constituting a situation of balance in the public policy formulation. However, in some moments, new actors gain access to the monopolies, creating instability and the opportunity for changes in the agenda. According to the authors, that happens because of alterations in the way an issue is understood, i.e., by means of modifications in a policy’s image. Changes in issue perception, events that draw the government’s attention, and changes in public opinion, for example, may contribute to the policy’s image modification, allowing the access of different groups to the decision-making process and, this way, favoring the issue access to the governmental agenda. When an issue ascends the agenda, the monopoly ceases to exist and the system becomes prone to change, since the attention of governmental leaders and of the public may lead to the introduction of new ideas and new actors. New ideas and institutions tend to subsist over time (policy legacy), creating a new equilibrium state in the political system, which, after a while, tend to get back to stability.

Hence, according to Baumgartner and Jones, one of the main activities of the entrepreneur consists of the definition and redefinition of issues, i.e., creation and maintenance of a symbolical representation regarding a policy (policy image). In this respect, the formulation of the entrepreneur notion as stated by the authors approaches the understanding about the entrepreneur in Kingdon’s model. The entrepreneur is the individual who understands the importance of ideas in the policy process and promote them in such a way as to convince the other actors about an issue. In case of changes in the agenda, the entrepreneurs try to redefine the issues as to make them attractive to previously apathetic groups, and, if these groups chose to take part in political dispute, they may disrupt existent monopolies. The basis of mobilization is, according to Baumgartner and Jones, the understanding about an issue shared by individuals. Entrepreneurs, operating in the creation and propagation of images, are able to mobilize the actors and create or disarrange monopolies. With the attention they mobilize, after the change of a policy’s image, entrepreneurs seek to quickly ensure – by the government – institutional arenas with greater chances of success for the development of decision-making process regarding the decisions about the policy in question. The aim of entrepreneurs is always to establish a monopoly for such policy.

Even though the authors do not specify, like Kingdon, the entrepreneur’s types of activities in the issue’s redefinition process, they add an important ingredient to his explanations, for they show that, beyond playing a central role in the establishment and propagation of given understandings about a policy, they also look for more favorable arenas for their ideas.

“Images and venues are closely associated with each other. Policymakers attempt both to manipulate the dominant understanding of the issues with they deal and to influence the institutions that exert jurisdiction over them (…) So the searches for favorable venues and reinforcing images are related” (Baumgartner and Jones, 1993, 35).
The authors call policy venues the institutions or groups with authority to make decisions regarding a policy. The same issue may be the object of a single institution’s decisions or many of them at the same time. Besides that, in each institution, the same issue may get attention and support in a different way: “Each institutional venue is home to a different image of the same question” (Baumgartner and Jones, 1993, 31). Certain policy’s definitions are best supported by a group than another, and it’s up to the entrepreneur to look for institutional arenas in which an idea may succeed. The federal system is appointed by the authors as a characteristic that enhances the entrepreneur’s opportunities, since he has distinct arenas to try his ideas (Baumgartner and Jones, 1993, 216). An entrepreneur who doesn’t achieve success in convincing people about a given problem in the federal level, for example, may (and the authors show that he frequently does that) seek support for his ideas in the state level or in the local level.

Thus, the basic force for the explanation of both an agenda’s maintenance and its modification is, precisely, a public policy image, considered an essential element in the political fight. The agenda-setting process, according to the authors, consists in allocating the government attention for some specific subjects, and, in this process, the modifications in the way an issue is defined may lead to changes in the attention level obtained by the issues from policy formulators. The entrepreneur’s role is central in this process, by the arrangement (or disruption) of monopolies based on specific images about a policy and its respective institutional arrangement, added to the possibility of running through different arenas looking for better opportunities for their ideas.

Coalitions, policy learning and the lack of entrepreneurial action

Even though the Advocacy Coalition Framework model does not focus specifically on the policy entrepreneur’s role, there are interpretations which show that the model gives room to the activities of individuals both in the formation and in the maintenance of coalitions (Mintrom and Vergari, 1996). This role would be played mainly by the strategic representation of problems, inducing the system of beliefs shared by a coalition (Mintrom and Norman 2009). This way, we would have an operation very similar to the one performed by the entrepreneur in Kingdon’s and Baumgartner and Jones’ models.

Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith’s analysis (1993) on policy changes are based on the understanding of public policies as a system of beliefs. According to the authors, policies and government programs embody implicit theories on how to reach goals involving values, perceptions on cause and effect, understandings on the efficacy of political instruments, among others. Such beliefs constitute the subsystems functioning basis (policy subsystem), a unit of analysis privileged by the model. The subsystems – group of people and organizations which interact systematically during a period of time in order to induce a certain policy (policy area/domain) – consist of actors in all levels of government, besides other actors outside the governmental structure. Such actors remain united by the sharing of common beliefs and their effort in coordinate actions around a policy, creating, thus, real “defense coalitions”.
The set of beliefs that support coalitions constitutes a somewhat hierarchized system, in which abstract beliefs are more evident and change resistant than the more specific ones. In a more general and abstract level, lie the deep core beliefs, which include ontological and normative values, and this type of belief is highly change resistant. Following these, lie the policy core beliefs, a little less strict than the first ones, and represent the common perceptions about the subsystem and the shared values about the interest policy of this subsystem. The authors understand that these policy beliefs are essential to the survival of the subsystems themselves. At last, a third component consists of more specific beliefs, related to the view on the problem and the causal relations among them, as well as the design of institutions, the actor’s performance evaluation and budget allocations. Changes in this set of secondary beliefs represent changes of small impact. Coalitions, this way, keep united around beliefs that guide their action in the policy formulation process.

According to the model, we may find, inside each subsystem, coalitions (usually from two to four coalitions) that share beliefs and, at times, adopt different strategies to fulfill their change objectives. The choice of clashing strategies among coalitions of the same subsystem produces a situation of competition, in which the performance of brokers becomes essential to conflict reduction. These mediators, called policy brokers, are policy agents that act as mediators in conflict among coalitions.

“Not everyone active in a policy subsystem will belong to an advocacy coalition or share the major belief systems. (...) In addiction, there will almost certainly be a category of actors – here termed policy brokers - whose dominant concerns are with keeping the level of political conflict within acceptable limits and reaching some reasonable solution to the problem. This is a traditional function of some elected officials and (...) of high civil servants” (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1993, 27)3.

An important characteristic of policy brokers lies in the differentiation established by the authors between this actor and those who act in the defense of a policy (advocate). An individual concerned with the defense of a policy will have serious concerns about the system maintenance, whereas the policy broker is able to indulge some policy modifications in case they reduce the conflict among coalitions in a subsystem. Besides that, the same individual acting in the defense of a policy may, eventually, take on the role of a broker to the other coalitions. According to the authors,

“The framework merely insists that policy brokering is an empirical matter that may or may not correlate with institutional affiliation: While high civil servants may be brokers, they are also often policy advocates – particularly when their agency has a clearly defined mission”. (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1993, 27).

---

3 Original emphasis.
This way, the model does not draw a very clear line between policy brokers and coalition members in a subsystem, since the coalition members are not seen as neutral agents and may act according to a group’s interests. Besides acting as brokers, these individuals may also occupy and express positions which are closer to a given coalition inside a subsystem (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1993).

Policy change, according to the 
advocacy coalitions
model, is explained by two processes. First, policies change due to the interaction of defense coalitions in competition inside a subsystem. The result of the choices made by the coalitions is the subsystem’s production of governmental policies, generating changes in the external conditions and in expectations and beliefs about the results of those policies. This result also changes the coalitions’ actions in a process which, by the adequacy perception of governmental decisions, by produced impacts, and by new information, creates constant learning (policy-oriented learning).

The second source of policy change consists of alterations outside the coalition subsystem. Two sets of variables are appointed by the authors as responsible for affecting the incentives and restrictions presented to the actors inside the subsystems. The first set comprises stable variables – more difficult to be changed – and include institutional rules, social structure elements, essential sociocultural values and political system resources. The second set of variables gathers more dynamical elements – more easily changed – and comprises great socioeconomic changes, governmental coalition system changes, as well as decisions and impacts of other subsystems. Changes, either in stable parameters or in dynamical variables, promote incentives to policy changes.

Thus, the model proposed by Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith shares some of the characteristics of previously analyzed models. In common, it breaks up with the idea of policy development as a sequential and linear process, in which the identification of a problem would expect a solution proposal. It also brings the idea issue to the center of the analysis. Even though the authors do not focus only on the agenda-setting process, they understand that agenda change is the result of the dynamics of these ideas inside the coalitions. Just as the punctuated equilibrium model and the multiple streams model, the authors emphasize the subsystems idea (or policy communities), in which the ideas develop and spread. The advocacy coalition framework provides insight on the interaction dynamics of actors united in coalitions. The institutional arena, that may limit and induce the action of coalitions, is an important component of the model, just like the punctuated equilibrium model.

As to policy entrepreneurs, the model does not deal specifically with this kind of actor. A different role is set apart to the policy broker, which does not present characteristics of entrepreneurs for Kingdon or Baumgartner and Jones. One of the explanations for this difference lies in the fact that both the multiple streams model and the punctuated equilibrium model deal with change processes that take place in a quick and dynamic way, whereas the advocacy coalition model, based on actions developed systematically in the subsystems during a period of at least ten years, tends to see short-term events as incremental changes. On the other hand, there are studies that show the complementarity between the entrepreneur idea and the advocacy coalitions
model. Mintrom and Vergari (1996) show that the model could be improved by deepening the explanations about how the coalitions are formed. In this respect, according to the authors, the entrepreneur’s performance would be essential, especially to the issues’ definition. The entrepreneur’s insertion in the model could help to explain the approximation between the members of the coalitions and also their cohesion around a set of beliefs. Thus, the entrepreneur, according to Mintrom and Vergari (1996), would have an essential role in the coalitions’ formation, a role that is still not explored by the model. Another possibility appointed by the authors is that the entrepreneurs could help the coalitions get support from the policymakers, supporting their actions. According to the authors, developing the analysis about the entrepreneurs in the model would result in more detailed explanations about the policy formulation process.

Advocacy and policy entrepreneurs

In order to play the role of an idea advocate, the entrepreneur gets involved with some identifiable activities, such as: the search for an strategic definition of problems; the arrangement of the discussion about a policy, offering alternatives for its conducting; the pursuit for establishing contacts with different groups, which makes it circulate inside a community of policies and beyond its limits; and, at last, the search for supportive institutional basis for their ideas.

Defining a problem involves the transformation of perceived situations – existing social dynamics, but which do not demand governmental action – into problems that draw governmental attention and expect concrete actions, a transformation wrought by symbolic processes of representation. Perceived situations turn into problems by mechanisms that establish values and comparisons (Kingdon, 2003), and images that convey shared ideas about a policy (policy images) in a simple and straight manner (Baumgartner and Jones, 1993). “Problems are not simply the conditions or external events themselves: there is also a perceptual, interpretative element.” (Kingdon, 2003, 109-110). It’s precisely in promoting a specific interpretation of a problem that the entrepreneur acts. Defining a problem in a public policy does not consist only in the observation of social dynamics and in the establishment of aims and goals for the change. Above all, it consists in the interpretation – elaboration of strategic representations of a given situation. The political world is socially built, and each understanding about a situation is, in fact, a possible point of view among many others. These interpretations are strategically drawn by the entrepreneur so that the chosen point of view facilitates the supportive mobilization for a given set of ideas, assisting a desired course of action. The representation of problems is essential both in Kingdon’s model and in Baumgartner and Jones’, and both emphasize this action as one of the main functions of the entrepreneur. It’s important to underline that the entrepreneur does not create problems, but helps to highlight aspects of a given issue by drawing the transformation of perceived social situations into problems that demand governmental action. This way, he is able to draw governmental attention to an issue and also point at some political responses considered adequate to that problem representation.
Another important dimension of the entrepreneur's performance focuses on the arrangement of the discussion about the changes to be introduced in a policy, i.e., the elaboration and circulation of ideas regarding alternatives to be developed. Representing a problem strategically is as important as presenting effective ways to deal with it. Some characteristics, like technical feasibility, consistency with community values, public acceptance and budget constraints are appointed by Kingdon (2003) as essential factors for a solution to be seriously considered and eventually selected. Baumgartner and Jones (1993) also show how the ability in building a policy image is important not only to mobilize attention and support to certain propositions. In their opinion, almost all the issues may be represented in a way as to assume characteristics of almost irrefutable legitimacy (valence issues), so that the opposite point of view's defense becomes an extremely hard task, if not impossible. Thus, the entrepreneurs are usually skillful not only in developing arguments on desirable alternatives, but also in hindering the acceptance of rival alternatives.

The third activity of the entrepreneur is related to the introduction of his ideas to other individuals and groups by establishing contact with different audiences. This is an important task for the entrepreneur, considering that the policy communities and subsystems are usually understood as refractory to changes in its belief system. In the process of soften up described by Kingdon, the entrepreneur tests the proposals with different groups, doing a preliminary task of reaction observation, as if he were examining a “trial balloon”, as the author himself declares. It's important to remember that this experiment is directed not only to communities related to a policy, but also to the general public. Baumgartner and Jones also show how the entrepreneurs act in the attention mobilization of groups previously apathetic to an issue, looking for the support of an idea in different institutional arenas (policy venues), in a way as to modify the balance of an existing policy and enable changes. In both cases, it’s important to highlight the importance of the interaction between the entrepreneur and groups/institutions looking for attention and support of these groups to the ideas defended by him, in a way as to enlarge the chances of acceptance of a given problem representation and a set of proposed actions. This way, the entrepreneur strives in the strategy development for the introduction of his ideas to different audiences, both inside and around the government, besides looking for more favorable arenas for his ideas. In this process, even though the primary objective of the entrepreneur is to convince others of his ideas, he also tries to understand how these groups perceive the issues, learning with the communities the most adequate ways to portray an issue and define a problem. Additionally, entrepreneurs seek to enhance their visibility in these circles, which may be an important ingredient to leverage their legitimacy as proposers of changes in a policy.

At last, entrepreneurs try to establish supportive institutional basis to their ideas. As Baumgartner and Jones present, policy changes take place based not only on ideas about problems and solutions (policy image) and in their defense in policy communities and other actors. Besides acting in the level of ideas, entrepreneurs are alert to institutional arrangements that may both hinder and encourage decisions related to the policy in question. The authors reveal that
there is a rather strong relation between institutions and ideas: institutions tend to promote certain ideas more than others. An institutional arrangement is based on understandings about relevant questions regarding a policy, and it may remain this way for a long time, as in the case of the policy monopolies constitution. Thus, many times the entrepreneurs will try to change institutional structures in order to promote certain ideas, breaking up with the balance in the political system and favoring the change. Alternatively, they’ll try to find institutional arenas (policy venues) in which they may get bigger chances of success for their ideas.

In promoting these activities, the characteristics appointed by Kingdon as essential to the entrepreneur become elemental: to enjoy legitimacy before audiences, to keep political connections and negotiation skills, and to be persistent in the defense of ideas. Another important aspect is that, besides those important abilities in the defense of ideas regarding a policy (policy advocacy), the entrepreneur, at times, carries out the activity of intermediation of such ideas (policy brokerage). Entrepreneurs defend their proposals (as in the soften up moments described by Kingdon), but they also act as mediators, negotiating with different groups and promoting the relation between problems and solutions (coupling, in Kingdon), looking for more convenient institutional arenas (venue shopping, in Baumgartner e Jones). These are distinct activities and comments for the entrepreneur’s success. Through the analysis of the two actions, Kingdon declares: “Sometimes, the two activities are combined in a single person; at other times, entrepreneurs specialize, as in the instance of one pushing from an extreme position and another negotiating the compromises” (Kingdon, 2003, 183.) According to the author, entrepreneurs play the role of policy brokers, but the reverse is not true (precisely as we verify in the analysis of the role set apart for the policy brokers in the advocacy coalition model).

**Entrepreneurs and public policy changes**

Acting for the defense of ideas (policy advocacy) is one of the most important roles played by entrepreneurs in public policy theoretic models. There is, still, another elemental dimension in these actors’ performance: their performance as actors who facilitate the introduction of changes in public policies.

Both Kingdon’s and Baumgartner/Jones’ analysis deal with the issue of public policy changes. Both agree that there is a strong incremental component in the decision-making process, which results in slow and gradual changes. However, both models also show that, many times, a change is presented suddenly, breaking up with the incremental logics. Reaffirming the difference between agendas and alternatives⁴, Kingdon shows that the conception of

---

⁴ Kingdon considers public policies as a set that comprises four processes, including: the establishment of a policy agenda; the specification of alternatives from which the choices about a policy are going to be made; the prevailing choice in the set of available alternatives; and, at last, the decision implementation. In his model, the author is specifically concerned about the two first processes, called pre-decision stages: the agenda formation (agenda-setting) and the alternatives specification (policy formulation).
alternatives obeys incrementalism parameters, which does not happen in the agenda formation. In his opinion,

“To return to our distinction between the agenda and the alternatives, agenda change appears quite discontinuous and nonincremental. But incrementalism might still characterize the generation of alternatives. As policy makers consider the alternatives from which they will choose, the repair to ideas and approaches with which they are already familiar” (Kingdon, 2003, 82).

This way, Kingdon concludes that the content of ideas is more stable than its emergence in the agenda. Baumgartner, Jones and True show that, in the same way we can perceive the incremental change mechanism, there are moments in which sudden changes happen and, for these ones, political science does not propose adequate explanations, and it’s exactly this gap that the model proposed by the authors aims at supplying:

“Punctuated-equilibrium theory seeks to explain a simple observation: Political processes are often driven by a logic of stability and incrementalism, but occasionally they also produce large-scale departures from the past. (…) The observation, then, is that both stability and change are important elements of the policy process, Most policy models have been design to explain, or at least have been more successful at explaining, either the stability or the change. The punctuated-equilibrium theory encompasses both” (Baumgartner, Jones and True, 1999, 97).

The author’s verification resembles Schumpeter’s formulation (1982). After noticing that the existing balance-based economic theories did not provide explanations about discontinuous changes, which were increasingly frequent in an uncertain and risky environment, Schumpeter formulates the innovation concept, in which the entrepreneur’s performance is essential. In a similar way to Schumpeter’s entrepreneur, Kingdon’s and Baumgartner/Jones’ entrepreneur also lies in the middle of the explanations about quick changes, and his performance is essential to the understanding of this type of change. The entrepreneur, according to Schumpeter, produces the so-called “creative destruction” as a way to establish the new. This action derives from his perception of innovation opportunities, i.e., to “do things differently”. It’s elemental to the entrepreneur, therefore, to perceive opportunities for policy change. Both the punctuations in Baumgartner and Jones and the policy windows in Kingdon are explanatory mechanisms for policy changes, in which the entrepreneurs play an active role. While in Baumgartner and Jones’ model the entrepreneur seeks access to the agenda by manipulating ideas and institutions (policy images and policy venues), in Kingdon the same mechanisms are processed by the “joint” of problem streams, solutions and policies. In both cases, the “sense of opportunity” is basic for the entrepreneur.
On the other hand, it’s not only about the perception of the timely moment: without a constructed image, Baumgartner and Jones’ entrepreneur is not able to establish his policy monopoly (or limited in his pursuit for the rupture of an existent monopoly); without a clear definition of the problems, Kingdon’s entrepreneur may watch the shutting of “policy windows” without being able to make changes in a policy. The entrepreneur is the individual who is able to perceive external factors – present opportunities in the political, social and economical realms – and conciliate them with his hard task of generation, spreading and defense of ideas. Presented this way, the entrepreneur approaches, somehow, the characteristics attributed by Machiavelli to the Prince: *virtue* and *fortune*\(^5\).

The traditional function attributed by Schumpeter to the entrepreneur is innovation, i. e., the introduction to the new. Innovation may derive both from the introduction of non-existing production factors and the recombination of existing factors, resulting in a new arrangement. Innovation related to production factors in Schumpeterian thinking gives place, in the studies on public policies, to innovations associated to the world of ideas. The activity of the public policy entrepreneur is directly related to policy changes (Mintrom and Norman, 2009) and to the diffusion of innovation (Mintrom, 1997). Entrepreneurs perform three specific functions according to Mintrom and Vergari (1996). First, entrepreneurs find “unmet needs” and suggest ways to meet them, and for such activity they need to be aware of opportunities. The second function involves risks (concerning their personal reputation, financial and even emotional resources) in which the entrepreneur gets involved in the search for actions that engender uncertain consequences. And, at last, entrepreneurs coordinate networks involving groups of people and organizations, which are required to ensure the changes. This being so, entrepreneurs are not atomized individuals – on the contrary, they are (and need to be) inserted in social networks. Such characteristics are present both in Kingdon’s entrepreneur and in Baumgartner/Jones’.

Concluding remarks

The theoretical approaches examined in this paper explore distinctively the actions of entrepreneurs, besides dealing differently with the context in which they act, i. e., with existing institutional arrangements. In common, all of them underline the importance of argumentation for a policy “defense”. To analyze the performance of an entrepreneur may, therefore, shed new lights on the way these actors introduce and defend new ideas related to a policy, on how they

---

\(^5\) According to Machiavelli, even though the reality determines the limits of the action, decided personalities would have the power to interfere in the history. The *fortune* consists in the “unpredictable”, in the external dimension of the individual which cannot be ruled by him. The ruler possessing *virtue* is the one with ability to adapt himself to the situations, evincing to have flexibility to respond to any situation. He is also the individual who perceives the exact moment created by the *fortune*, in which the action is able to work successfully. The relation established by Kingdon between the entrepreneur, the *coupling* actions and the *policy windows* activities comes very close to the perspective suggested by Machiavelli on the performance of the Prince.
challenge institutional and intellectual obstacles that oppose these ideas, on how they develop the logic and the argumentative content combined with performance and articulation before the audience, i.e., how they make technical analysis and political articulation – central elements of argumentation and “defense” of a policy (Fischer and Forester, 1993). Many empirical analyses have confronted the explanations of the theoretical models examined here, about entrepreneurs, with particular study cases (Mintrom, 1997). Besides, the entrepreneur’s performance has been examined not only in more specific types of literature on agenda-setting, but also in studies on innovation and spreading of policies (Berry and Berry, 1999). However, some remarks must be made regarding the role of the protagonism assumed by the entrepreneur in these studies.

First, a causal and voluntarist perspective regarding the entrepreneurs must be avoided. In the studies conducted by John Kingdon, nowhere a single individual was identified as the only responsible for the ascension of an issue to the agenda. By the way, the actions of Kingdon’s entrepreneur are limited by the political stream, a dimension that escapes the individual’s control. After all, even an entrepreneur who succeeds in problem representation, in the introduction of socially acceptable, technically feasible alternatives, and even if this same individual is skillful in jointing the two dimensions, his efforts will do nothing while the public opinion (public mood) do not support the idea or the political system do not support the change. In Baumgartner and Jones’ analyses, there are many elements that interact in order to produce explanations for policy changes. The change is not a product derived exclusively from the entrepreneur’s action, but, certainly, the entrepreneur’s action is central especially in approaches that analyze the changes by considering the function of ideas and which seek to analyze periods of quick and deep changes. Entrepreneurs are not “omnipotent”, but their actions are visible – according to Kingdon, as “central characters of the drama” (Kingdon, 2003, 180). In the author’s own words,

“Our treatment of policy entrepreneur in this book argues that much of the process is governed by large events and structures not under any individual’s control. But entrepreneurs take advantage of those events and work within those structures, which is the way we include the importance of both individuals and structures” (Kingdon, 2003, 225).

Another important point to highlight is that not all entrepreneurs are skillful. Many times, in describing the actions of these actors, the models seem to attribute almost “superhuman” qualities to entrepreneurs. Many of them may wait years for a wave that will never come – using Kingdon’s metaphor. Or they may simply lose balance in the exact moment it could take them to the shore. Entrepreneurs may simply lose the opportunity to change; they may defend a proposal for a long time without any success.

Entrepreneurs should also not be understood as atomized individuals, “loose” individuals inside a universe of policies. It’s not about an “individual in the crowd” that stands out for his qualities or personal characteristics. In order to understand the entrepreneur’s actions, it’s elemental to consider that he is
immersed in social networks. It's true that the entrepreneur's position in the governmental structure is less important than his actions: an entrepreneur may be anywhere in a network of actors that articulate around a policy, inside or outside the government. However, there is no way to consider the performance of an entrepreneur disentailed from social networks: from the networks and communities directly involved with the issue related to the policy and the network itself in which this entrepreneur circulates.

A remark regarding entrepreneurs, made by Kingdon himself, should not be forgotten. His theory about agenda formulation, based on the organizational model of the garbage can presupposes a rather peculiar perspective about the decision-making process and the organizational dynamics itself. In the garbage can model, organizations are considered “organized anarchies”, operating in conditions of great uncertainty and doubtfulness, in which the participation in the decision-making process develops in a fluid and unstable way and with great rotativity. The participant’s preferences are inconsistent and ill-defined, the processes and organizational procedures are not clear and, in general, they are misunderstood by the participants. Based on these presuppositions, the entrepreneur perspective suggested by Kingdon would be feasible. However, if the goals and objectives of a policy are, for example, defined in a precise way, there would be no room for the entrepreneur to look for opportunities. Innovative ideas develop in imprecise and uncertain systems, such as the garbage can model describes, promoting creativity and the change itself.

At last, it’s important to underline that the focus on the entrepreneur’s action reveals that the individual action is an important dimension of public policy formulation, especially when considering moments of quick changes. Even though they are not “superheroes” (titanic individuals, in Kingdon’s words), in many occasions it’s possible to identify a particular individual that takes advantage of an occasion to try to change a policy along with his “sense of opportunity”. His skills in the defense of ideas, in the negotiation with different groups, in the pursuit of supportive institutional basis for his proposals, are essential to understand the changes. The change in a policy takes place due to reasons that are out of the reach of the individual, but it’s him who takes advantage of the opportunities. Thus, the emphasis on the role of the entrepreneur may be a way to contribute to the deepening of the understanding about the relations between the individual action and the institutional structure in the process of public policy formulation.

References


YANOW, Dvora. How Does a Policy Mean? Interpreting Policy and