Translating ideas into action: Brazilian studies of the role of the policy entrepreneur in the public policy process

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ABSTRACT
Over the past decades, research on policy formulation, especially research on agenda-setting, has demonstrated that the actions of individuals (or groups) labelled ‘policy entrepreneurs’ constitute a central aspect of the public policy process. Agenda-setting theoretical models (John Kingdon’s multiple streams model and Baumgartner and Jones’s punctuated equilibrium theory) view those actors from different perspectives, stressing different features of their role in the policy process. Both models consider the policy entrepreneur an essential actor in their explanations of policy maintenance or change. In Brazil, although the study of public policy has experienced periods of strong expansion during the past decades, there is still a lack of detailed data on the application of such models and the role of policy entrepreneurs in such analyses. This paper aims to present and discuss the centrality of policy entrepreneurs in agenda-setting models by analysing this important actor and the limits and contributions of this conceptualization for understanding the policy process. In addition, this research analyses the central role of the policy entrepreneur and presents empirical findings of Brazilian policy studies, thus highlighting implications regarding the concept for these three theoretical approaches.

KEYWORDS
Policy entrepreneur; policy process; Brazilian policy studies

Introduction
The purpose of this paper is to present and discuss a specific type of actor involved in the public policy formulation process: the policy entrepreneur. Over the past decades, some studies on public policy formulation – especially those devoted to agenda-setting formation – have stressed the role of policy entrepreneurs as change agents. Even though these entrepreneurs are understood differently in several studies, their actions are considered essential to the emergence, continuity or modification of public policy. To analyse the concept of policy entrepreneurs and the application of this concept in theoretical public policy models, we present some case studies on South American policies, especially
Brazilian studies. As a South American country, Brazilian cases were chosen because we understand that the diffusion process of methods and theories outside a North American or Western European context, where these studies were born, is very important for the global community regarding public policy studies, as well as outside Asia, where these approaches are well known and used to explain policy change, policy capacities and others perspectives on public policy studies. Several studies on public policies in Latin America have evidenced a strong institutional tradition, especially historical and sociological, in the theoretical and methodological approaches used in these studies. Descriptive case studies are prevalent in the public policy literature of these countries. According to Farah (2011) and Marques (2013), the multidisciplinarity of public policies, the construction of teaching bases and research on public policies in Brazil and in Latin America have contributed to the formation of a decentralized knowledge field with low theoretical and methodological cohesion, as well as low mapping of what has been produced for many years on the subject. The language and adaptation of analysis theories and models are yet another crucial factor for the late insertion of Latin American countries into the study network. As a consequence, the difficulty in mapping national studies that use this literature generates another problem for the field of knowledge in Latin countries, namely, the absence of comparative studies. This issue is pointed out by Sanjurjo (2017). As a Latin American and South American country, policy process and policy entrepreneur studies in Brazil can indicate convergences, but also divergences, regarding the use of methods and theories thought to explain public policies in other contexts.

We then verify the central role of policy entrepreneurs and the limits and challenges of this role as explanatory tools in each theoretical approach, which constitutes the main focus of this paper.

In the first section, we briefly discuss the emphasis on the entrepreneur in a public policy study context. Subsequently, we analyse how the policy entrepreneur becomes a central focus of the two most relevant theoretical approaches to policy process analyses, namely the multiple streams model and punctuated equilibrium theory. At the end of each section, we highlight one Brazilian case study that exemplifies how the authors emphasize the role of the policy entrepreneur in their analyses. In this regard, is important to note differences and similarities on how authors apply concepts, methods and theories in order to adapt them to Brazilian reality. As will be noted in further detail, at the same time that Brazilian studies adopt multiple stream and punctuated equilibrium in their case studies, some changes were made to these approaches, for example, in the ‘indicator of attention’ cited in a PE case study.

Beginning with the multiple streams model formulated by Kingdon (2003), we selected the first case study published in Brazil that used the MS model as a theoretical approach (Capella, 2004; Capella & Leite, 2016). Therein, the authors explain the Administrative Reform in Brazil in the mid-1990s, and it is possible to note the central role of an individual policy entrepreneur in the formation process of the governmental agenda and the selection of alternatives. Subsequently, we examined the role designated for the entrepreneur in Baumgartner and Jones (1993) punctuated equilibrium model, which seeks to explain the stability of and changes to public policies. The case study selected with the aim of examining the relation between policy entrepreneurs and policy changes is one of most recent studies on policy dynamics. By analysing health policy at the federal level over the past 20 years following the Brazilian democratization process, the author identifies both social
movements and pressure groups, such as the sanitary reform movement, as important to a policy entrepreneur that promoted several changes to health policy in Brazil after 1988 (Brasil, 2016).

Although the study of the public policy process has witnessed a period of strong expansion in the past decades in Brazil (Marques & Faria, 2013), studies concerning the role of policy entrepreneur in the Brazilian context are still lacking. Thus, as a contribution of this paper for policy studies, we chose three cases studies that applied the policy entrepreneur concept in their analysis, from a research performed in Brazil from 2003 to 2016, in which studies that used multiple stream and punctuated equilibrium in a Brazilian context were systemized (Capella, Brasil, & Soares, 2014). These case studies encompass master's theses, doctoral dissertations and journal publications over a 13-year period.

This article comprises four sections. The first has as main objective a review of the role of the policy entrepreneur in policy process studies, conveying the main theoretical contributions and concepts about entrepreneur action in the public policy process. The second section focuses on the agenda-setting process and the selection of alternatives, highlighting the relationship between the entrepreneur and the role of ideas in problem definition and selection of alternatives. At the end of this section, we present a Brazilian case study that applies the multiple streams model to explain the role of the policy entrepreneur in the Federal Administration Reform process in Brazil in the mid-1990s. The third section establishes conceptual relations between the role of the entrepreneur and policy stability and change. In this section, we retrieve Baumgartner and Jones' studies on the punctuated equilibrium model, as well as adjacent concepts, such as policy image and policy monopoly. The entrepreneur's role in this analysis is highlighted through the Brazilian case study on the dynamics of health and social security policies in Brazil. The indicators of government attention used in the case study indicate important adaptations in the model used to explain the policy change in the Brazilian context. Finally, we discuss the contributions of these case studies and theoretical approaches in understanding the importance of entrepreneurs in the formulation of public policy.

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

In recent discussions in the field of policy studies, entrepreneurs have been a central focus of theoretical models designed to address policy formulation. These models share many common features, and one of the most important is that they consider that ‘ideas matter.’ In fact, this notion reflects a broader movement that spread throughout the public policy field (as well as other areas of social science) during the 1990s, when researchers began to note the dynamic of ideas in the policy process (Fischer & Forester, 1993; Majone, 1989; Stone, 2002; Yanow 1996). Although different researchers have diverse understandings regarding what the concept of ideas means and how to address ideas in a methodological frame,¹ these studies have had substantial influence on policy studies (Faria, 2003; John, 1999). Traditional models, which focus on well-known categories of political science, have typically devalued the concept of ideas, understanding ideas simply 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, p. 125)

In general, ideas are arguments in defence of different worldviews. Thus, authors who emphasize the importance of ideas highlight the centrality of discourse, interpretation and symbolic representation, understanding that 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, p. 7)

In this context – in which the argumentation and advocacy of ideas are central – the entrepreneur’s importance in the latest theoretical models is understandable since generating, spreading and advocating ideas is one of the entrepreneur’s primary roles. However, as we seek to understand policy stability and change, the role of ideas, interests and individual actions may also be fundamental. In the next sections, we analyse the role of the entrepreneur in three public policy theoretical models that grant centrality to ideas in the policy-making process.

**Policy entrepreneurs in agenda-setting and the selection of alternatives**

Policy entrepreneurs play a key role in the *multiple streams* model developed by Kingdon (2003). In the author’s view, entrepreneurs are individuals (sometimes small groups of people) whose main characteristic consists of advocating 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 defence 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 entrepreneur defending an idea. These are material incentives resulting from the changes made to a given public policy based on the entrepreneur’s ideas. As examples of practical benefits, Kingdon (2003, p. 123) mentions the maintenance and expansion of budgets; programmes for employees and bureaucrats; electoral benefits for politicians; and the protection of the interests of members of a group by lobbyists. Another type of benefit is characterized by the promotion of specific values in a policy. These are intentional benefits and are based on related ideology; for example, the ideology concerning the role of the State in the economy. The third type of profit an entrepreneur can achieve is the so-called solidary benefit, which emerges from the enjoyment derived from advocating 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 the action’ (Kingdon, 2003, p. 123). According to Bakir (2009):

The adoption of John Kingdon’s concept of ‘policy entrepreneurship’ (Kingdon, 1995) is useful in incorporating agency, ideas, and discourse to illustrate the mechanisms involved in multilevel (i.e. systemic, national, and micro-organizational level) analysis of an institutional change in a punctuated equilibrium pattern at the various stages of a policymaking process. Thus, the theoretical underpinnings of the discussion stem from Kingdon’s pioneering work on governmental agenda setting, involving a framework of interpretation based on three policy streams within
the process: problems, policies, and politics. Policy change happens on occasions when these independent policy streams can be coupled (Kingdon, 1995, pp. 16–18, 172–179). This coupling happens when policy entrepreneurs, individuals who invest their effort to implement policy ideas they favor, seize a short-run opportunity (a ‘policy window’) to push for the solution or to focus attention on a certain problem. (Bakir, 2009, p. 573)

Three characteristics are highlighted by Kingdon (2003, pp. 178–181) regarding the qualities of an entrepreneur. First, entrepreneurs are individuals who demonstrate credibility to the audience, i.e. who have legitimacy due to factors such as their knowledge of the subject matter (expertise), their communication skill and their formal position in the decision-making process. The second characteristic of an entrepreneur is related to his political connections and negotiation skills. Finally, Kingdon notes persistence as the third vital characteristic of an entrepreneur’s activity, entailing the investment availability of a large amount 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, p. 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 (softening up) and in the moment when policy windows open and the opportunity for agenda change arises (coupling).

Whether because of personal interests, values or the satisfaction derived from participating in the process, entrepreneurs, according to Kingdon, promote their ideas in policy communities that consist of experts in a subject area. These experts – who may or not belong to the government framework – share a concern regarding a specific policy area, interact in communities and know the other members and their proposals and ideas. One of the key roles played by policy entrepreneurs in Kingdon’s model is the process of presenting ideas (softening up) in such communities, where proposals regarding how to proceed in a given policy area are presented and spread by the members. Communities, according to Kingdon, tend to be change resistant, and the activity of presenting and discussing certain ideas is essential to increasing the chances that new proposals will be accepted. Entrepreneurs also advance their ideas beyond the frontiers of these communities by presenting them to the general public to help people become familiar with the proposals. This activity of argumentation and advocating ideas is developed through different means: politicians may introduce a bill to present an idea to the public in the same way that holding public hearings served to facilitate previous proposal discussions. Bureaucrats may present ideas via speeches and conferences throughout the country, elaborating and spreading studies and reports. In many cases, an entrepreneur merely tests the receptivity to an idea by the general public and relevant communities. According to Kingdon, this process occasionally 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, p. 129)

Ideas presented this way may not progress, but they help to encourage people to focus on certain themes. According to Kingdon, this initial process in which various ideas are tested appears to be necessary for an issue to be considered 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, p. 130)

Beyond the promotion of ideas, entrepreneurs play a critical role in Kingdon’s model that is directly related to changes to the governmental agenda. In the author’s model of agenda-setting, a change to the governmental agenda is the result of a complex combination of factors, including how a problem is perceived, the implementation possibilities of a set of available solutions and changes to political dynamics and public opinion. Each of the three dimensions (streams) develops in a relatively independent manner, as each is governed by its own logic. The first stream consists of issues perceived as problems that become part of the governmental agenda. Considering the large number of decisions and the inability to address all issues simultaneously, the attention of policy formulators depends on how they perceive and interpret these issues and, most importantly, whether 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 focus attention on an issue. However, these mechanisms do not automatically convert issues into problems. The interpretation of such events and the understanding that they are problems demanding a governmental response are essential to the success of an agenda issue. In the second stream, a set of possible alternatives for the problems is developed by experts (researchers, agency directors, academics, civil servants and 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 although some of these alternatives are discarded, others succeed and may even gain the attention of government actors. Finally, the third stream consists of the dimension of public opinion (general perception of given issues), organized political forces (positioning of interest groups regarding an issue, for example) and government (change of people in strategic positions inside the government structure, changes in management and changes in the composition of the congress, among other factors).

In certain circumstances, these three streams – problems, solutions and political dynamics – may converge, creating a concrete opportunity for change to the governmental agenda. On such occasions (policy window), a problem is acknowledged, a solution is available and the political conditions render the moment prone to change, allowing the three streams to join and enabling the issues to ascend on the agenda. In that moment, the entrepreneur must be ready, as Kingdon’s model assigns him the responsibility to link the three streams (coupling) and therefore facilitate the issue’s admission to the agenda.

Nevertheless, such opportunities are temporary. Some of these opportunities are somewhat predictable (such as the highly favourable moment for change at the beginning of a new government), and the entrepreneur’s task consists of developing ideas and proposals regarding a given policy (softening up) before the opportunity emerges. In this respect, Kingdon compares the entrepreneur to a ‘surfer waiting for the great wave’, balancing his sense of opportunity and skill with external forces. Individuals do not possess the power to control waves, just as they cannot control events and structures. However, they may ride the waves, in the same way that they can anticipate opportunities and take advantage of them. Thus, in pursuit of their goals, entrepreneurs combine solutions, problems and political context and employ opportunities that arise; thus, they play a central role in the multiple streams model, according to Kingdon (2003, p. 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, places special emphasis on the action of the entrepreneur, although the author draws attention to the fact that entrepreneurs do not have the ability to control the change process. The process through which a change to the agenda occurs is influenced by great events and structures, not by the will of a particular individual.

To demonstrate empirically the role of the policy entrepreneur in a Brazilian public policy, we use important data published in 2014 related to the adoption of the multiple streams model in studies of public policies in Brazil. The study found 35 dissertations and 25 theses performed between 2003 and 2014. It was possible to verify a broad variety of sectoral policies using this model. The most frequently studied policies based on the multiple streams model were related to education (8 studies), management/public administration (6 studies) and health and urban policies (5 studies each). Security policy was observed in four different studies; culture, solidarity economy and energy were each present in three studies; and defence, youth and sports, infrastructure and environmental policies were each found in two studies. Other policies were each found in only one study: social security, work, racial equality, telecommunication, third sector, indigenous, agriculture, tourism, fiscal and combating poverty policies (Capella et al., 2014).

Some of these studies adopt the MS model as their core element of analysis and as the main theoretical framework to understand how an issue may be included in the governmental agenda by identifying the streams and analysing how they enable agenda changes. These studies are strongly based on the concept of windows and on the actions of policy entrepreneurs directed towards the process of public policy development. These concepts are based on Kingdon’s ideas on the one hand and complemented by other theoretical approaches on the other hand.

We selected a case study (Capella, 2004; Capella & Leite, 2016) of the role of former Minister Luiz Carlos Bresser Pereira as an actor who meets the characteristics of a typical policy entrepreneur in the context of the Brazilian public administration reform that began in the 1990s. Because of the Minister’s strategic position as the main formulator of public management reform in Brazil, this case provides an explanation regarding how the political and intellectual construction of the problem definition and the selection of alternatives were the direct results of persuasive action by Bresser Pereira in exercising the ‘power of ideas’.

In that case study, the authors consider the Ministry of Federal Administration and State Reform as the fundamental political and institutional locus for the formulation of policy reform. Thus, through this analysis of the profile and policy measures undertaken by former minister Bresser, we verify the existence of a typical ‘policy entrepreneur in action’. The authors also demonstrate that Bresser Pereira exercised intellectual and political leadership at the time of the construction and dissemination of the main principles of the so-called ‘New Public Management’ in Brazil, which supported the reform policy of Fernando Henrique Cardoso’s first administration. The authors’ analysis of the performance and characteristics of the selected entrepreneur reveal that the individual action of actors is an important dimension of the public policy process (Capella, 2004; Capella et al., 2014).

The Capella study, 2004, updated a few years later by Capella & Leite, 2015, was the first study in Brazil to use the multiple streams model as the main theoretical and methodological reference to explain the change of a reform in a certain subject of Brazilian politics. Some
considerations are relevant to the use of the model and to the role of policy entrepreneurs: the central concepts of entrepreneurs and ideas are used by Capella (2004) and Capella and Leite (2015) to clarify the process of change and construction of problems and alternatives. The figure of Bresser Pereira is defined in detail around the profile and characteristics of the entrepreneur of policies. Their actions in promoting the image of a problem, the proposition of a solution that fits with this defined problem, are inherent in the studies of entrepreneurs and the policy process. The study approaches much of what was being produced at the time by the international literature, using the same theoretical framework. However, it is exactly in the definition of the central actor that the Brazilian study draws attention: the definition of an individual, a unique actor, characterized as the figure of a political entrepreneur. Supported by an entire structure of actors and institutions, Bresser Pereira is defined by Capella (2004) and Capella and Leite (2015) as the main articulator and responsible for building the image of the problem and conquering adepts for a specific alternative that resulted in the ‘Reform of the Brazilian Public Administration’ in the mid-1990s.

It is important to remember that in the early 1990s, the issue of ‘administrative reform’ was not on the agenda and was not a government priority. This concept was competing for political attention and resources with other reforms considered more important at the time; thus, Bresser’s entrepreneurial performance, both outside and inside the government, was crucial to spreading these new managerial ideas and raising administrative reform to a level of greater political visibility. An extended process of diffusion and softening – the softening-up process – driven by Bresser Pereira was based on the dissemination of ideas relating to managerial reform through newspaper articles; technical reports; academic papers; publications targeting federal employees; and seminars, conferences and lectures involving different stakeholders associated with the alternatives presented. (Capella & Leite, 2016).

Thus, we note an important aspect of the performance of a policy entrepreneur in this case that confirms the general view around policy entrepreneur in the international literature, as Capella states:

‘In this process of generating alternatives and soften up, the performance of a policy entrepreneur – role played by Bresser Pereira – is crucial. To disseminate Reform’s proposals for different audiences, ideas are placed for circulation as ‘trial balloons’, with some reviews considering the observed reactions. Others are drawn again, emphasizing different aspects, such as strengthening the positive aspects of an idea, strategy adopted by Bresser Pereira with respect to publications in the media.’ (Capella, 2004, p. 194)

Capella and Leite (2016) describe the dissemination strategy of reformist ideas by MARE by analysing publications by former Minister Bresser in open media and in the specialized academic literature and demonstrate that the entrepreneur used the ‘White Paper on the Reform of the State Apparatus’ as a powerful instrument for persuasion that sought to synthesize the objectives of the Reform and to broadly disseminate its key ideas. Furthermore, according to Capella (2004), print media was employed as a strategic resource, and 34 articles were published between 1995 and 1997 that focused on the reform, and more specifically the proposed constitutional amendments, to influence opinion public and the work of the National Congress to advance the reform agenda.

Hence, Bresser Pereira personally engaged in presenting the ideas of managerial reform. These strategic persuasion actions played a vital role in raising the issue and the proposals of the reform to highly visible positions and in triggering a public debate about them. Consequently, we perceive the vital importance that Bresser attributed to public debates,
and his participation in these debates was a condition for holding them and therefore a strategic and deliberate choice. In short, Bresser Pereira adopted the strategy of persuasion and dissemination of ideas as a means to overcome the resistance of his opponents and advance his proposals for managerial reform in Brazil. The privileged condition of a public intellectual highly experienced in government practices was decisive in the success of this endeavour, which was proven by the advancement of a prominent national debate on public administration.

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

According to Baumgartner and Jones (*punctuated equilibrium model*), analysing an entrepreneur’s actions is also essential to understanding changes to a given policy. The authors developed the entrepreneur concept (Baumgartner & Jones, 1993) following the study on *agenda-setting* by Kingdon (2003) and based on Riker’s studies (Riker, 1986) of political manipulation.

Baumgartner and Jones highlight the entrepreneur’s important role as the one responsible for linking solutions and problems in Kingdon’s study (2003). According to the authors, similar to the *multiple streams* approach, problems are not necessarily linked to solutions in the process of policy formulation. In addition, one of the entrepreneur’s main tasks consists of demonstrating 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 has no direct relation to the problem, it is the entrepreneur’s responsibility to argue and create new understandings regarding the issue in order to benefit 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 & Jones, 1993, p. 29). Public policy formulation is influenced not only by the redefinition of problems but also by the redefinition of the most effective means of addressing the perceived situations, i.e. the elaboration of suitable solutions.

Another source for the model is Riker (1986), who develops the *heresthetics* concept, which describes political action based on the ability to alter the structure of preferences and alternatives that arise during the decision-making process, thus enabling an actor to influence participants’ opinions. Riker demonstrates that political action may involve three forms of manipulation: agenda control, strategic voting and dimensionality. These three forms of manipulation involve control over formal rules and the decision-making institutional dimension and the rhetoric used in the debate – the understandings that have developed around an issue. Riker’s study is essential to the development of the policy entrepreneur concept by Baumgartner and Jones (1993), who highlight his findings in terms of both the institutional dimension, through the creation and maintenance of policy monopolies, and the symbolic dimension, through the definition and diffusion of the policy image.

The policy monopoly notion was developed by Baumgartner and Jones (1993) to designate a subsystem dominated by only one interest that exhibits two main characteristics. First, the monopoly as a whole has a recognizable institutional structure, in which the decision-making process concerning a policy is conducted. These monopolies, strengthened by institutional arrangements, limit the decision-making process to a small group of actors, thus restricting the access of others. Second, the monopolies have a supportive
idea, an image (policy image) associated with this institutional structure. Thus, the policy monopoly notion represents a set of insights into a certain issue that becomes dominant and from which actors gain the ability to control the interpretation of a problem and how it is perceived and discussed. These monopolies are responsible for the maintenance of stability in the formulation of public policy and the restriction of new issues to the governmental agenda. Policy changes occur when these monopolies are disrupted. Therefore, one of the most important actions of entrepreneurs involves the creation and maintenance of a policy monopoly to ensure the stability of the political systems relating to some issues. An entrepreneur, according to the authors, is an individual who seeks to act in a manner that compels the government to act on something in a certain policy or to avoid acting on it (Baumgartner & Jones, 1993, p. 23). The establishment of a monopoly is one of the determining factors for the stability of the political system, and one of the greatest interests of these actors is to establish policy monopolies, according to Baumgartner and Jones:

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 & Jones, 1993, p. 6)

Policy monopolies are elements that provide balance and stability for political systems, and they may persist for long periods. However, the same mechanism employed to explain that stability also generates explanations regarding the changes that frequently occur in a rapid manner (and not in an incremental manner). Such ruptures, or punctuations, result from changes to the balance previously produced by the monopolies. A monopoly’s destruction is related to the mobilization of actors who were previously excluded from the decision-making process. As long as a shared vision of the symbols, problems, solutions and causal relations regarding a certain policy (policy image) prevails, the monopoly subsists, thereby constraining access to the decision-making process for those actors who do not agree with this image. Thus, there is a predominance of slow, gradual and incremental changes, constituting a situation of balance in public policy formulation. However, in some moments, new actors gain access to the monopolies, creating instability and the opportunity for changes to the agenda. According to the authors, this occurs because of alterations in how an issue is understood, i.e. by means of modifications to 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 modification of a policy’s image, allowing different groups access to the decision-making process and favouring the issue’s 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 the public may lead to the introduction of new ideas and new actors. New ideas and institutions tend to

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2It is 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 & Jones, 1993, p. 7)
subsist over time (policy legacy), creating a new equilibrium state in the political system, which, tends to return to stability after a period of time.

Hence, according to Baumgartner and Jones, one of the main activities of the entrepreneur involves the definition and redefinition of issues, i.e. the creation and maintenance of a symbolic representation of a policy (policy image). In this respect, the formulation of the entrepreneur notion as stated by the authors resembles the understanding of the entrepreneur in Kingdon's model. The entrepreneur is an individual or group that understands the importance of ideas in the policy process and promotes them in a manner that convinces other actors. In the case of changes to the agenda, entrepreneurs attempt to redefine the issues to make them attractive to previously apathetic groups, and if these groups choose to participate in the political dispute, they may disrupt the existing monopolies. The basis of mobilization is, according to Baumgartner and Jones, the understanding of an issue that is shared by individuals. Entrepreneurs, operating in the creation and propagation of images, can mobilize actors and create or disband monopolies. With the attention they mobilize following a change to a policy’s image, entrepreneurs seek to quickly acquire – through the government – institutional arenas that represent greater chances of success for the development of a decision-making process for the policy in question. The aim of entrepreneurs is always to establish a monopoly for a policy.

Even though, unlike Kingdon, the authors do not specify the types of activities in which an entrepreneur engages in the issue redefinition process, they add an important ingredient to Kingdon’s explanations. They demonstrate that beyond playing a central role in the establishment and propagation of given understandings regarding a policy, entrepreneurs also seek more favourable 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 & Jones, 1993, p. 35)

Certain policy definitions are better supported by one group than another, and it is the entrepreneur’s responsibility to identify institutional arenas in which an idea may succeed. The federal system is mentioned by the authors as a venue that enhances an entrepreneur’s opportunities since the federal system offers distinct arenas in which an entrepreneur can test his ideas (Baumgartner & Jones, 1993, p. 216). An entrepreneur who is not successful in convincing people of a given problem at the federal level may, for example, (and the authors show that he frequently does) seek support for his ideas at the state or local level.

Thus, the foundation of the explanation for both an agenda’s maintenance and its modification is the public policy image, which is considered an essential element of the political fight. The agenda-setting process, according to the authors, consists of allocating the government’s attention to some specific subjects, and, through this process, modifications to how an issue is defined may lead to changes in the attention level of policy formulators. The entrepreneur’s role is central to this process through the arrangement (or disruption) of monopolies based on specific images of a policy and the policy’s respective institutional arrangement, combined with the possibility of testing different arenas to identify better opportunities for the entrepreneur’s ideas.

Following research by Capella et al. (2014), authors found 17 Brazilian studies that used punctuated equilibrium theory as the methodological core for studies conducted in Brazil. About that research, Capella et al. used keywords on public data-sets of dissertations and
theses to find researches published in Brazil that used PE as the main methodological/theoretical instrument for it analysis. As a result of this research, even though PET was introduced in 2003, Brazilian studies began using the model in 2010. Policies from 11 different sectors were found among the 17 studies mapped. Only public security, regulation, transport, health and social assistance appeared in two or more studies. Among the studies identified by Capella et al. (2014), we selected the doctoral thesis, ‘The process of institutionalization of popular participation in Brazil: An analysis of the Public Policy Councils in the light of the Punctuated Equilibrium Theory’ (Brasil, 2016). This doctoral thesis was chosen because it is one of the most recent Brazilian researches that used punctuated equilibrium theory as methodological support in its research. It is a study on the policy dynamics that uses traditional references in the studies of policy process used by the international network CAP – Comparative Agendas Project.

This thesis, in the multidisciplinary field of policy sciences, is an agenda-setting and policy change study whose objective is to analyse the process of formulating Local Councils in Brazil, especially the councils for health and social assistance. Through an analysis of the dynamics of health and social assistance policies over 20 years, Brasil, 2016 seeks to understand incremental changes and abrupt changes that ascend to the governmental agenda in these two sectors. To accomplish this, the author uses Baumgartner and Jones’s (1993) punctuated equilibrium framework and seeks to demonstrate, using indicators of governmental attention and ideas, symbols and institutions, how an issue ascends the governmental agenda. The methodology used in this research includes an analysis of the content of government documents such as laws, decrees and meeting minutes – that reflect the frequency with which the topics appeared – and a bibliographic analysis of the literature on the Local Councils in Brazil. Consequently, the role of entrepreneurs in health and social assistance sector policies is highlighted during a time characterized by substantial turnover – transformations in the national political system – and changes to the priorities of decision-makers.

The study covers the dynamics of health and social assistance policies over 20 years (1986–2006). More than 26,000 data elements were collected and analysed from laws, decrees, presidential speeches, minutes of meetings and hearings and demonstrate the important role of cohesive and articulated groups in the democratization of access to health and social assistance in Brazil after 1988. The author highlights the existence of moments of both stateliness and incremental change as well as moments of rapid and important changes to the dynamics of these policies. Instances of turnover, involving the alteration of political parties, offer a better understanding of policy changes. Policy entrepreneurs involved in specific moments during this period possess their own characteristics and are similar in the cases of health and social assistance. These entrepreneurs primarily consisted of militants and professionals from the relevant areas who, at one point, were part of the direct or indirect public administration. Thus, these actors gained some decision-making and formulation power and began to press for changes, such as the creation of participatory municipal councils.

Through the data gathered from the legislative and executive branches and from the Minutes of the National Assemblies of Health and the National Assemblies of Social Assistance, it is possible to trace a trajectory of changes that began with the insertion of new actors and changes to the images of certain policies. These actors, defined as policy entrepreneurs, have different characteristics from members who previously had decision-making power over health and welfare policies in Brazil. The most notable example presented
by the author is the creation of Local Councils of mandatory character. These spaces are open to civil society and professional representatives and offer the chance to participate in decisions regarding the allocation of resources within municipalities. This policy was only made feasible and came into force following a major change to the policy images.

In this Brazilian study that approaches concepts and methodology of the PET, some important adaptations were necessary to highlight the figure of the entrepreneur of policies. The international literature, especially that produced by members of the CAP – Comparative Agendas Project – uses common governmental attention indicators in several countries. These indicators are derived from data from the executive branch, such as speeches, data from the legislature, such as legislative production, laws, decrees and also media data, obtained through the cover of daily newspapers. In the case study on the policy dynamics in Brazil, another indicator of attention had to be inserted, disagreeing with what is often produced in the international literature. Brasil, 2016 identified that the change in health and care policies in Brazil came from pressure from outside the government. Institutions of social participation, such as the National Conferences of Health and Social Assistance, organized what we can call the policy community. Integral groups of these arenas are identified in the analysis as policy entrepreneurs acting in the shifting of themes from these participatory spaces to institutional spaces. The reflexes of the debate that occurred in this arena reflected in decisions of the governmental agents of the executive and legislative branches. The source, however, of such a shift in paradigms and ideas about health and care policies has occurred, especially in these National Conferences.

The international literature has already noted cases such as these in which policy-makers act at the interface between institutional and non-institutional arenas, ‘crossing’ not only demands but ideas, problems and possible alternatives. In this case, the analysis shows that changes in the dynamics of health and care policies in Brazil were born in spaces of popular and professional participation, constituted as a coalition or a policy community, and were taken to institutional spaces, especially for the national legislature. The result can be conferred with consequential publication of laws and decrees relating to the demands of the National Conferences.

**Entrepreneurs and policy changes**

Acting in the defence of ideas (policy advocacy) is one of the most important roles played by entrepreneurs in public policy theoretical models. There is yet another elemental dimension of these actors’ performance: their role as actors who facilitate the introduction of changes to public policies.

Both Kingdon’s and Baumgartner and Jones’ analyses address the issue of public policy changes. These authors agree that there is a strong incremental component in the decision-making process, resulting in slow and gradual changes. However, both models also demonstrate that in many cases, a change is presented suddenly, breaking with the incremental logic. Reaffirming the difference between agendas and alternatives, Kingdon reveals

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3Kingdon considers public policy to comprise four processes: 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, finally, the implementation of the decision. In his model, the author is specifically concerned about the two first processes, termed the pre-decision stages: agenda formation (agenda-setting) and the specification of alternatives (policy formulation).
that the conception of alternatives obeys incrementalism parameters, which does not occur in 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, p. 82)

Thus, Kingdon concludes that the content of ideas is more stable than the emergence of those ideas on the agenda. Baumgartner, Jones and True reveal that, in the same way that we can perceive the incremental change mechanism, there are moments in which sudden changes occur, and for these, political science does not offer adequate explanations. It is precisely this gap that the model proposed by the authors aims to fill:

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, & Mortensen, 1999, p. 97)

The authors’ verification resembles Schumpeter’s formulation (1982). After noticing that existing balance-based economic theories did not provide explanations for discontinuous changes, which were increasingly frequent in an uncertain and risky environment, Schumpeter formulated the innovation concept, in which the entrepreneur’s performance is essential. Similar to Schumpeter’s entrepreneur, Kingdon’s and Baumgartner/Jones’ entrepreneur is also positioned in the centre of explanations of rapid change, and his performance is essential to understanding this type of change. The entrepreneur, according to Schumpeter, produces so-called ‘creative destruction’ as a means to establish new production. This action derives from an entrepreneur’s perception of innovation opportunities, i.e. opportunities to ‘do things differently’. It is therefore crucial for the entrepreneur to perceive opportunities for policy change. Both the punctuations in Baumgartner and Jones and the policy windows in Kingdon are explanatory mechanisms for policy change in which entrepreneurs play an active role. While an entrepreneur seeks access to the agenda by manipulating ideas and institutions (policy images and policy venues) in Baumgartner and Jones’ model, the same mechanisms are activated by ‘joining’ problem streams, solutions and policies in Kingdon’s model. In both cases, the ‘sense of opportunity’ is foundational for the entrepreneur.

However, this sense of opportunity relates not only to the perception of the timeliness of the moment: without a constructed image, Baumgartner and Jones’ entrepreneur is unable to establish his policy monopoly (or is limited in his pursuit of the disruption of an existing monopoly); without a clear definition of the problems, Kingdon’s entrepreneur may watch as ‘policy windows’ close without being able to make changes to the policy. An entrepreneur is an individual who is able to perceive external factors – current opportunities in the political, social and economic realms – and reconcile them with his difficult task of generating,
spreading and defending ideas. Presented in this manner, the features of the entrepreneur resemble the characteristics that Machiavelli attributed to the Prince: *virtue* and *fortune*.

The traditional function that Schumpeter attributed to the entrepreneur is innovation, i.e. the introduction of the new. Innovation may derive both from the introduction of non-existent production factors and the recombination of existing factors, resulting in a new arrangement. Innovation related to production factors in Schumpeterian thinking gives way, in studies of public policies, to innovations associated with the world of ideas. The actions of a public policy entrepreneur are directly related to policy changes (Mintrom & 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 to accomplish this activity they must be aware of opportunities. The second function involves the risks (concerning the entrepreneur’s personal reputation and financial and emotional resources) involved in becoming involved in the search for actions that engender uncertain consequences. Finally, entrepreneurs coordinate networks involving groups of people and organizations that are required to ensure these changes. Consequently, entrepreneurs are not atomized individuals – on the contrary, they are (and must be) perceived as part of social networks. Such characteristics are present in both Kingdon’s and Baumgartner/Jones’ entrepreneurs.

The conclusions of Capella’s work (2004) brought enormous gains for the introduction of policy process literature in Brazilian studies, as well as for the concept of policy entrepreneur as a relevant actor in the processes of policy change. Usually supported by historical concepts and methods or institutionalist approaches, analysis through ideas, identification and understanding of problems and solutions inaugurates a new way of thinking and analysing public policies in the Brazilian and South American contexts. Great lessons are drawn from this study. The first of these refers to the possibility of applying their models of analysis and their concepts in a society and a country different from those in which models were thought and elaborated. Focusing attention on rules, governments and parties, for example, for ideas, subsystems and actors, such as entrepreneurs, has opened a new research agenda on policy change in the country and region. Similarly, Brasil’s paper (2016) inserts the country into a study network (CAP) composed of more than 20 countries, especially in Europe and North America, highlighting the possibility of accompanying and analysing the dynamics of policies in South Americas under the same methods and theoretical approaches. With adaptations to the local reality, especially in the spaces of dialogue between civil society and government, both works allow the growth of research in the agenda, policy changes and policy dynamics, opening space for the emergence and understanding of the role of ideas, of policy entrepreneurs and other concepts unknown or not applied in the region until then. One of the greatest gains pointed out by this study is precisely to observe how different countries, with other political systems, different social and economic realities, appropriate models of policy analysis, and what results they show for the academic community. Both the Kingdon’s multiple streams model and the Baumgartner and Jones’ punctuated equilibrium

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4According to Machiavelli, even though reality determines the limits of an action, determined individuals have the power to interfere in history. *Fortune* consists of the ‘unpredictable’, the external dimension of an individual that he cannot control. A ruler possessing *virtue* is one with the ability to adapt to situations and the flexibility to respond to any situation. He is also an individual who perceives the precise moment created by *fortune* in which an action may be successful. The relation established by Kingdon between the entrepreneur’s *coupling* actions and *policy windows* activities is very similar to the perspective suggested by Machiavelli regarding the performance of the Prince.

5Original emphasis.
model are applicable in the Brazilian case studies presented, indicating the role of ideas and entrepreneurs as the core of the analysis.

**Concluding remarks**

The theoretical approaches examined in this paper and the empirical examples of case studies of Brazilian research explore the actions of entrepreneurs and address the various contexts in which entrepreneurs act, i.e. with existing institutional arrangements. All these approaches underline the importance of argumentation for policy ‘defence’. Analysing the performance of policy entrepreneurs in Brazilian case studies, a different context in which these theoretical approaches were thought, may, therefore, shed new light on differences or similarities on how these actors introduce and defend novel ideas related to a policy. The selected examples showed how policy entrepreneurs challenge institutional and intellectual obstacles that oppose these ideas, and how they develop logic and argumentative content and combine them with performance and articulation for an audience. All that perspective found on Brazilian case studies is in touch with the central elements of the argumentation and ‘defence’ of a policy in policy process. (Fischer & Forester, 1993).

Many empirical analyses have investigated the rationale of the theoretical models examined here in relation to entrepreneurs (Mintrom, 1997). In addition, the performance of entrepreneurs has been examined not only in more specific types of literature on agenda-setting but also in studies of innovation and policy dissemination (Berry & Berry, 1999). However, few studies have been devoted to understanding the diffusion of these models and methods, especially in countries or regions where the political, economic and social contexts are very singular, such as South America and Latin America. The justification of the choice of Brazilian case studies had as main objective to understand how models and concepts can be applied to this reality. Similarities, differences and adaptations can be noted. Thus, some remarks are warranted regarding the protagonist role assumed by the entrepreneur in these studies.

First, a causal and voluntarist perspective regarding entrepreneurs must be avoided. In the studies conducted by John Kingdon, at no point is a single individual identified as the only person responsible for the ascension of an issue on the agenda. This point can also be noted in the study conducted by Capella (2004) and Capella and Leite (2015). Although Minister Bresser Pereira was the main character in the Public Administration Reform process, the case study highlighted the entire institutional arrangement mobilized by him, both inside and outside the government, to support the image of the problem and to support the reforms as a better way to overcome such problems. Capella & Leite, (2016). After all, even an entrepreneur who succeeds in problem representation and the introduction of socially acceptable, technically feasible alternatives and who is skilful in linking the two dimensions will discover that his efforts are futile if public opinion (public mood) does not support the idea or the political system does not support the change. The Brazilian study evidences Bresser Pereira’s concern to mobilize public opinion and, above all, the opinion of specialized actors such as academics, for example, through reports, large circulation news, interviews and special issues in scientific journals about problems of the Brazilian public administration and the possible solutions to this problem. Thus, there is a clear convergence in the performance of the policy entrepreneur described by Kingdon in his studies, and the role of the entrepreneur in the Brazilian case study, more than a decade later.
It is important to underline that the focus of an entrepreneur’s action reveals that the actions of an individual are an important dimension of public policy formulation, especially when considering moments of rapid change. Even though they are not ‘superheroes’ (titanic individuals, in Kingdon’s words), in many cases it is possible to identify a particular individual who takes advantage of an occasion to endeavour to change a policy based on his ‘sense of opportunity’. His skills in the defence of ideas, negotiation with different groups and the pursuit of a supportive institutional basis for his proposals are essential to understanding the change. A policy change occurs due to reasons that are beyond the control of the individual, but it is the individual who takes advantage of the opportunity. Thus, emphasizing the role of the entrepreneur may contribute to deepening the understanding of the relation between individual action and institutional structure in the process of public policy formulation.

Second, entrepreneurs should also not be understood as atomized individuals, ‘loose’ individuals inside a universe of policies. It is not about an ‘individual in the crowd’ that stands out for his qualities or personal characteristics. To understand an entrepreneur’s actions, it is essential to consider that he is immersed in social networks. It is true that an entrepreneur’s position in the governmental structure is less important than his actions: an entrepreneur may be anywhere in the network of actors who articulate around a policy, inside or outside the government. However, it is impossible to consider the performance of an entrepreneur without considering social networks: the networks and communities directly involved with the policy issue and the network in which a specific entrepreneur circulates. At this point, the paper of Felipe Brasil (2016) becomes an important reference for the public policy literature in Brazil and Latin America when considering the institutional spaces of popular participation as a locus of governmental attention. The adaptation proposed by Brasil (2016), considering the method proposed by CAP members, shows that, in order to understand the dynamics of public policies, it is also necessary to understand where the entrepreneurs act. The inclusion of Councils and Conferences as part of the Subsystem of Policies in the Brazilian context aims to broaden the spaces of action of the entrepreneurs, understanding their actions, tools and networks. Also, it launches new possibilities for the adaptation of these models in closer countries, such as those of South America.

Finally, this paper presented some examples of how the international literature on policy process and on policy entrepreneurs has been reproduced and adapted in case studies in Brazil. We hope, therefore, to confirm what the studies produced over the past two decades over the world have already indicated: the John Kingdon and Baumgartner and Jones models, designed to explain changes in US policy, are able to explain and analyse different political contexts in different regions with specific and discrete adjustments. The definitions of the concepts of policy entrepreneur, advocacy, policy subsystem and policy community, as well as the description of the way in which these actors play a key role in policy process and policy chance are, in fact, essential for policy analysis in any country. With this, we hope to motivate researchers from Latin American and South American countries to use this literature, thus contributing to the growth and enhancement of policy analysis in the region. The adoption of these theoretical and methodological approaches can contribute to the opening of new research agendas, especially of comparative studies within Latin America, but also between Latin America and Europe, Asia and North America.
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