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Chapter 10: Policy entrepreneurs and agenda setting

**Nissim Cohen**

Abstract

Policy entrepreneurs are individuals who exploit opportunities to influence policy outcomes to increase their self-interests – without having the necessary resources required for achieving this goal alone. They are not satisfied with merely promoting their self-interests within institutions that others have established. Rather, they try to influence a given reality to create new horizons of opportunity using innovative ideas and strategies. While agenda setting is not the only element of policy entrepreneurship, it is perhaps the most crucial and important stage in the process of policy entrepreneurship; one that involves translating ideas into feasible policies. Given that agenda setting is the basis for any change in public policy, establishing a solid agenda that has a reasonable chance of succeeding is crucial in determining whether or not the entrepreneur can proceed to the next step: investing resources to promote and ultimately change public policy. Successful policy entrepreneurs invest a great deal of effort in garnering attention for their proposed policies. Defining problems and placing their proposed solutions to them on the political agenda are among the main challenges policy entrepreneurs face. Nevertheless, even when they are successful in these endeavors, experienced policy entrepreneurs know that they must keep up the pressure to formulate policies in the direction they desire, legitimize them, facilitate their implementation and promote their evaluation. In order to provide a better grounding for policy entrepreneurs and agenda setting, we began by outlining the history and intellectual development of the concept of policy entrepreneurship. Next, we present a categorization of the characteristics, strategies and motivations of policy entrepreneurs. Finally, we focus on public entrepreneurs and agenda setting.

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