

## Global Policy Entrepreneurs and the Dynamics of Influence: Examining Individuals, Organizations, and Their Networks

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### Abstract

The ‘policy entrepreneur’ concept arises from the Multiple Streams’ theory of agenda setting in Policy Studies. Through conceptual stretching’, the concept is extended to global policy dynamics. Unlike ‘advocacy networks’ and ‘norm entrepreneurs’, the discussion addresses the strategies of ‘insider’ or ‘near-governmental’ non-state actors. The analysis advances the policy entrepreneur concept in three directions. First, the discussion develops the transnational dimensions of this activity through a case study of International Crisis Group. Second, rather than focusing on charismatic individuals, the discussion emphasizes the importance of organizational resources and reputations for policy entrepreneurship and access into international policy communities. Organizations maintain momentum behind policy solutions and pressures for change over the long term when individuals retire or depart for other positions. Third, the discussion outlines four distinct entrepreneur strategies and techniques that both individuals and organizations cultivate and deploy to enhance their power and persuasion in global policy processes and politics.

### Introduction

The Policy Studies literature on ‘policy entrepreneurs’ has focused on individuals operating in national, or sub-national, policy settings. Analyses have looked at the characteristics of these individuals as sometimes charismatic and ‘authoritative leaders’ or ‘knowledge brokers’ or ‘political mavericks’. Consequently, the policy entrepreneur can appear too “heroic” (Nay, 2012). This paper conceptually stretches the idea of ‘policy entrepreneur’ to consider on the one hand, the organizational dimensions of this phenomenon and, on the other hand, the international domains of policy deliberation where policy entrepreneurs are increasingly active. The paper argues that while individual transnational policy entrepreneurs exist, their entrepreneurship in the cultivation of transnational influence is better understood by focusing on their organizational context and networking inside international policy communities.

The paper is organized around two themes. The first conceptual theme concentrates on the ‘policy entrepreneur’ concept developed by John Kingdon (1995) in the ‘multiple streams’ theory of the policy process. The conceptual innovation is to advance *the idea of policy entrepreneurship as an organizational capacity* rather than one vested solely in individuals. The second empirical theme takes as a primary illustration of transnational policy entrepreneurship the case of the International Crisis Group (hereafter ICG or Crisis Group). While there are other entrepreneurial non-governmental organizations (NGO), Crisis Group makes a good case because: a) it was established as an analytic and advocacy organization and thereby has to make its case via the power of persuasion to shape policy rather than on any material incentive or authority basis; b) Crisis Group is transnational in its operations, its organization and political connections, as well as the international policy communities where it targets its analysis and advocacy; c) in its quarter century history it has received a remarkable degree of political acclamation; and d) as a media information body it has readily accessible files.

International Crisis Group was established in 1995 as an advocacy organization committed to preventing and resolving deadly conflict working primarily through “field-based analysis, practical policy prescriptions and high-level advocacy” (ICG 2013). By 2010, Crisis Group had obtained official accreditation as an international development organization from the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). Focusing on *organizational* policy entrepreneurialism of ICG, this paper does not address the causes of conflict or mechanics of ‘crisis intelligence gathering’. Instead, the concern is to identify factors that facilitate or obstruct individual and organizational ‘policy entrepreneurs’.

As individuals, policy entrepreneurs wield power through personal connections and their persuasive policy proposals, but this power can be enhanced by organizational resources and strategic networking. Organizations are essential to the longevity of policy campaigns, combating communication problems and sustaining transnational activism. That is, “it is the interactions among several types of individuals and organizations that might be of greater importance” (Rosen and Olsson, 2015: 201). ICG has been highly effective to the extent that it is sometimes regarded as a ‘new diplomat’ (interview 1).

While ICG presents as non-governmental, its key personnel are characterized by an “overwhelming presence of (former) politicians and diplomats” to such an extent as to be “near-governmental” (Oberg, 2005). Herein lies a key distinction of policy entrepreneur to that of the ‘transnational advocacy network’ (TAN) actor. Policy entrepreneurs are ‘insiders’ to international policy communities. By contrast, the TAN literature is mostly concerned with outsiders, norm promotion and the campaigns of ‘alternative policy groups’ (Carroll, 2015) hence its central concept of the ‘boomerang effect’. In cases where “the channels between the state and its domestic actors are blocked, the boomerang pattern of influence characteristic of transnational networks may occur: domestic NGOs bypass their state and directly search out international allies to try to bring pressure on their states from outside” (Keck and Sikkink 1999, 13).

After first extending the Multiple Streams approach to transnational domains, the discussion draws upon the policy entrepreneur tool-kit developed by another transnational actor – the Overseas Development Institute (ODI). Using the theories of John Kingdon, ODI outlined distinct entrepreneur styles and techniques that both individuals and organizations cultivate and deploy in global policy processes. However, the problem definition and agenda-setting powers of policy entrepreneurs is constrained by several ‘communication paradoxes’. These are outlined and related to ICG in the second half of the paper.

### **Policy Entrepreneurs**

The phrase of ‘policy entrepreneur’ has entered the popular lexicon. However, there is relatively little conceptualization on such creatures (see the meta-review by Jones *et al*, 2016 and for an exception, see Arieli and Cohen, 2013: 240-43). The policy entrepreneur idea has yet to be systematically integrated with theories of policy change (Mintrom and Norman, 2009: 650). This has been compounded by the extrapolation of the idea of ‘policy entrepreneur’ from broader theorizing on the policy process. Even in the Multiple Streams (MS) approach of John Kingdon, the policy entrepreneur idea is considered to be one of the least developed components in the literature (Jones, *et al*, 2016).

In cross disciplinary terms, the policy entrepreneur concept is cognate with but often unconnected to notions of ‘norm entrepreneurship’ in International Relations and Peace Studies (see *inter alia* Thakur and Weiss 2009, Wexler, 2003) on the one hand, and on the other, to ‘social entrepreneur’ concepts in both Business Studies and Third Sector Studies (*inter alia*, Bouteligier 2011; Desa 2012; Zhu 2008). Further disciplinary disjuncture occurs with social policy ideas of ‘policy flexians’ (Stubbs, 2013; Kostić, 2014) and organization theory developments around ‘issue

professionals' (Henrikson and Seabrooke, 2015). There is a degree of 'epistemic rivalry' among different concepts across disciplines (Shwed and Bearman, 2010: 818).

A core concept in Policy Studies, 'policy entrepreneurs' are generally defined as proactive 'change agents' in policy formulation and decision making. They have been described as individuals:

"...who exploit opportunities to influence policy outcomes to maximize self-interest—without having the necessary resources required for achieving this goal alone. They are not satisfied by merely increasing their self-interest within given institutions or constraints that others have established. Rather, they try to influence a given public policy in order to open up new horizons of opportunities" (Arieli and Cohen, 2013: 238).

Policy entrepreneurs can sometimes be found outside the formal institutions of governance, quite often in a NGO, a political party or a university. Yet, the policy entrepreneur is more likely to be working within the architecture of the state, sometimes behind-the-scenes and not necessarily seeking to be engaged with public discourse. They target decision making elites in government or the key players and interests in policy communities and political parties. They gravitate to, and oscillate around centres of power.

The policy entrepreneur idea sometimes approximates the 'great man' theory of history. There is a tendency towards methodological individualism with the focus on a charismatic individual or persuasive policy leader. While this focus is important for highlighting agency, it is important to recognize the limits of agency centered explanation: "Just as entrepreneurs cannot be blamed or credited for all changes that occur in the business realm, we should not assume that policy change is always and everywhere driven by policy entrepreneurship" (Mintrom and Norman, 2009: 650). Studies that take the motivations of an individual policy entrepreneur as the dominant forces guiding policy can overstate the coherence and unity of purpose that policy entrepreneurs may give to an organisation. The reality is more complicated when delving into the organisational 'black box'. One occupant of an official position may use his/her position to promote new policy agendas, but other occupants may be more conservative in approach (Blavoukos and Bourantonis, 2012) simply enacting their roles. This makes MS approach of agenda-setting useful for it embeds the policy entrepreneur phenomenon in broader policy and political dynamics (Jones, *et al.*, 2016). The policy entrepreneur idea could also be complemented with institutional theory (Bakir, 2009) policy network concepts (Huitema and Meijerink, 2010), organization theory (Desa, 2012; Henriksen and Seabrooke, 2016) and political economy (Mukhtarov and Gerlak, 2013) – but this would be the task of another paper.

### *Transnational Multiple Streams*

The Multiple Streams model of the policy process emerges from the 'garbage can model' in organization theory (Cohen, March and Olsen, 1972). Instead of a large organization in which people make decisions on the basis of solutions chasing problems, Kingdon portrayed the American political system as an organization writ large. Decision making consists of the coordination and confluence of three relatively independent "streams": problems, politics and policies. The individual streams each possess a unique dynamic but are not completely independent from each other. When these streams couple, a 'policy window' opens which may facilitate policy change. A significant amount of work has been done to tailor and adapt the framework to the European Union context (Akrill and Kay, 2011; and especially Herweg, 2015). This paper takes a further step to consider policy entrepreneurs in *transnational* streams of policy, politics and problems.

First, the *problem stream* is composed of evidence of the nature of a problem that results from crises, focusing events, institutional feedback and indicators that bring to attention public problems. Indicators can illuminate the scope and severity of a problem via monitoring of natural (or social) processes, activities and events over time. For example, the Keeling Curve – the decades-long study since the 1950s monitoring of atmospheric carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) levels – is one indicator that came to political attention in the 1990s (Pralle, 2009). By contrast, dramatic focusing events

grab the attention of both the public and policymakers. They are relatively rare sudden events (such as natural disasters) that cause great damage, or international conflicts and civil wars that foretell of greater future damage. Generally, such events are concentrated to a particular geographical area or community of interest. Finally, policymakers can become aware of problems through feedback on existing policy. Often this is negative feedback generated by evaluation studies or advocacy groups as well as by bureaucrats or policymakers themselves, who report on what is not working or on the unintended consequences of policies (Pralle, 2009: 784-85). Usually understood within a national or local context, without doubt many problem streams (emerging from pollution, pandemics and civil conflict) are now of a cross border character (see also Arieli and Cohen, 2013; Faling et al, 2018).

Second, the *policy stream* represents various attempts to provide solutions to one or more public problems. That is, proposals for new policies or amendments of existing policies as well as deliberative processes for eliminating policies that are normatively and pragmatically unviable and often subject to elite pressures of a narrow policy community. Specialized participants – official actors such as civil servants and diplomats but also ‘insiders’ such as selected think tankers, academics and interest group officials – champion specific policy proposals that may be applied to a variety of public problems. “They try out their ideas on each other by going to lunch, circulating papers, publishing articles, holding hearings, presenting testimony, and drafting and pushing legislative proposals” in this policy “primeval soup” (Kingdon, 1995: 122-23). Solutions chase problems in the sense that policy entrepreneurs push their ‘pet proposals’. For example, seeking to overturn the current policy hegemony of drug control and criminalization, ‘harm reduction’ is the solution promoted by the privately initiated Global Drug Commission (Alimi 2015).

In global and regional governance, policy streams intersect not only government agencies but also international organizations, global commissions, treaty structures as well as numerous global public-private partnerships. The venues are geographically dispersed between the conferences, international organization headquarters (Paris, Geneva, Tokyo, Washington DC., etc) and other locales pertinent to a policy concern. Transnational policy streams are often diverse and dynamic with a constant turnover of representatives from government agencies and international organizations as well as expert actors from think tanks, universities, consultancy firms and scientific bodies. For instance, campaigns like the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (Wexler, 2003), transnational campaigning against the trade in toxic waste (Smith, 1999) as well as social movement activism such as in women’s rights (Jutta, 2003). In transnational environments, the primeval ‘soup’ is in a much larger tureen, or ecology, of policy actors than at the national level.

Third, the *politics stream* flows and ebbs on ideological and institutional characteristics of governance. The ‘politics’ stream accounts for changes in ‘the national mood’ or ‘global opinion’, the influence of public campaigns of interest groups, ‘administrative or legislative turnovers’ and changes of allegiances of politicians within parliaments. Changes can enable or disable the advance of proposals to the political agenda. Elections bring new participants into the policy process and provide deadlines for policy choices. Adapting this idea to transnational domains (where electoral dynamics are not apparent, and global government entirely absent), the politics stream is manifest in international summitry, such as G20 meetings and UN conferences. International agendas concerning the Millennium (now Sustainable) Development Goals (MDGs) or ‘global public goods’ (GPGs) delivery also establish the boundaries of international policy communities.

‘Policy windows’ may open temporarily when the streams overlap or ‘couple’ and facilitate the adoption of a particular proposal to the agenda (Kingdon, 1995, 87). Windows are particular moments in time (for instance an election or disaster but also windows kept open for longer periods by on-going war and conflict) that offer the moment for policy entrepreneurs to launch and gain support for new policy proposals. The temporal character of windows must be recognized and exploited so that entrepreneurs can promote their ideas and form a new policy consensus around their evidence (Shwed and Bearman, 2010). The combination and coupling of the different streams cannot be predicted in advance; it is highly dependent on the context. The number of decisions, the

routes of access to decision venues, the overall organizational load of problems or the degree of energy and attention across these venues form part of this context and influence the likelihood of the coupling of the streams. Entrepreneurship is conditioned by the institutional frameworks in which actors try to promote their pet ideas. Policy ideas are only likely to be selected from the 'primeval soup' if they are also 'technically feasible' and have 'value acceptability', referred to elsewhere as non-contestability of a scientific consensus (Schwed and Bearman, 2010).

Technical feasibility consists of administrative, financial, legal and technological factors that impinge on viability of a proposal. In the policy stream, advocates of proposals gradually eliminate inconsistencies, develop policy instruments and practical blueprints to enhance the technical feasibility of their proposals. 'Value acceptability' refers to proposals being concordant with political culture, the 'national mood', and prevailing ideological positions about the size of government, equity or efficiency (Zhu, 2008: 317). Whilst 'national mood' is a difficult concept to pin down, the idea of 'global opinion' is even more so but is nevertheless something that emerges from time to time following the campaigns of social movements and/or initiatives of international organizations and NGOs (see for example, Wong, 2012). As discussed later, Crisis Group takes pride in its organizational capacity for international consciousness-raising (interview 2).

In sum, a national political system or transnational policy domain has a tendency to create new policy or initiate significant reform when these independent streams flow together. This convergence requires a concurrence of random events or the emergence of a policy entrepreneur (itself a random event) who work to couple the streams. Policy entrepreneurs operate in these 'organized anarchies'; a term that very much approximates the realities of transnational policy making with its maze of global and regional organizations and initiatives.

#### *Policy Entrepreneurs*

In the original MS formulation, "there is both a functional and physical separation of policy entrepreneurs and decision-makers" (Akrill and Kay 2011: 74). Much work since has modified this strict separation recognising that entrepreneurs may not only supply and sell ideas to decision-makers, but can be involved directly in the formulation of policy. Likewise, members of parliament or congress in the politics stream, may act as policy entrepreneurs on certain issues (Carter and Scott, 2009).

The policy entrepreneur concept is similar to the new notions of both 'issue professional' (Henriksen and Seabrooke, 2016) and 'policy flexian' (Stubbs, 2013; Kostić, 2014). Both focus on the capacities and self-interested motivations of *individuals*. The former stresses the expert and professional commitment to an issue or problem of an actor rather than to an organisation or professional body. The latter connects to theories of an international power elite where political operators move among prominent roles in government, business, think tanks, and media. Examples are said to include the financier and philanthropist George Soros or Larry Summers, former US Treasury Secretary and ex-President of Harvard University. With both concepts, individuals "are promiscuous as they seek to maximize issue control within their professional and organizational networks" (Henriksen and Seabrooke, 2016: 723).

Although in general, they do not occupy formal political office, policy entrepreneurs often retain significant resources. Such resources can be a mix of epistemic authority (such as that held by economists), former government service or policy experience in the field.

"The first resource is claim to a hearing, which means that an actor has an ability to speak for others, hold a decision making position or possesses expertise. The second resource regards political connections or negotiating skills, implying a combination of technical expertise and political know-how. The third, and by Kingdon labelled the most important resource, is sheer persistence. This means that actors promote their ideas in all ways and in several fora, and are willing to invest large resources in order to promote their solutions" (Gulbrandsson and Fossum, 2009: 435).

The entrepreneur is someone proactively engaged in ‘coupling’ the streams consistently over time, and often in the face of opposition or disinterest. They “do more than push for their proposal – they lie in wait” (Kingdon, 1995: 181). While the opening of a ‘window of opportunity’ may be sudden or unexpected, nevertheless, the policy entrepreneur has been formulating and refining their policy proposal for many years (also Arieli and Cohen, 2013: 241-43).

Policy entrepreneurs spend much time convincing other actors involved in the policy-making process of their ideas and by persuading opponents to rethink their position. “It is the embedded-ness of involved actors into the structure of a policy network that supports policy entrepreneurs in reaching these goals” (Braun 2009). ‘Embedded-ness’ is intangible but results from an individual’s acceptance into policy communities where participants build and establish their personal reputation and credibility, contribute to the construction of consensual policy knowledge, build alliances, and share discourses to shape the terms of debate. The policy entrepreneur is a participant in these (international) policy communities (Rosen and Olsen, 2015; Stone 2013).

Policy entrepreneurship takes many diverse forms. It rests on a strategic blend of ‘softening-up’ actors in the political and policy stream through use of personal contacts, networking, media strategies and the creation of powerful policy narratives that simplify complex issues into manageable items of public policy. It is the management and communication of expert discourse rather than the data, evidence or research findings *per se* that empowers the entrepreneur in agenda setting. Although important, scientific credibility and intellectual authority is not the only consideration. Political sophistication is also essential. Consequently, in reality, entrepreneurship can be quixotic, intangible and reflective of adaptive and sometimes unorthodox practices of ‘bricolage’ (Desa, 2012).

The individual policy entrepreneur can be from any number of professions and backgrounds. She or he can be an expert with epistemic resources at hand; they can be highly experienced practitioners with a gift for communication in pitching proposals in a manner that is not only congruent with reigning values but that is also technically feasible. In the existing literature, policy entrepreneurs include a ‘celebrated surgeon’ Professor Sir Ara Darzi who influenced the London Health Review (Oborn, Barrett and Exworthy, 2011); the Australian economist Professor Ross Garnaut who heralded a significant policy shift in Australia’s economic relations and trade in the Asia-Pacific (Beeson and Stone, 2013); and a World Bank economist returning to Turkey, Kemal Dervis’ who played a pivotal role in that country’s central bank reform (Bakir, 2009: 588).

Rather than a single person, *teams* of entrepreneurs have also been identified such as a group of individual water managers in transition contexts (Huitema and Meijerink, 2010); a mixed group of private sector, third sector and public administration entrepreneurs in the post conflict scenario of Israel and Jordan (Arieli and Cohen, 2013) and a group of Chinese local government officials in housing modernization (Zhu, 2013). Despite these qualities of connectedness, personal appeal and dogged determination, individual policy entrepreneurs, or teams of them, may prove ineffective without organizational support to advance their solutions into the international ‘political arena’. Without this support from the rest of the organisational iceberg, ‘sheer persistence’ may lead to burn-out for individuals and/or limited agenda-setting impact. Accordingly, this paper highlights the organisational dimensions behind policy entrepreneurialism needed to connect to transnational political streams.

International Crisis Group is noted for its ‘sheer persistence’ on conflict issues. It has achieved remarkable success as an international NGO. Some call it a think tank (Grigat, 2014 and Kostić, 2014), a label rejected by a former ICG President, (Evans, 2017: 215; interviews 2 and 3). Already, ICG’s reputation has merited a special edition in July 2014 of the journal *Third World Quarterly* where ICG was cast as the “paramount example of a highly visible, vocal, hard-to-ignore conflict expert” (Bliesemann de Guevara, 2014a: 546). World leaders have lined up to support the Group; former UN Secretary General Kofi Anan referred to the Group as “a global voice of conscience” (quoted in Duffield, 2007: 8). Crisis Group acts as a policy entrepreneur with its

“conflict analysis”, “expert field research” and “practical, imaginative policy prescriptions” (ICG, 2015). The source of Crisis Group’s power rests not simply on NGO independence combined with field experience and expertise. ICG power and influence is also built on close connections to multiple centers of political power and financing alongside sophisticated communication strategies.

#### *A Short History of Crisis Group*

The crisis in Bosnia was the catalyst for the formation of International Crisis Group. In 1993, Morton Abramowitz (then President of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and former US Ambassador to Turkey and Thailand), and Mark Malloch Brown (former head of the United Nations Development Programme – UNDP, the UN Deputy Secretary-General and UK Minister) discussed the initial idea of the ICG on a plane, from the war in Sarajevo (ICG, 2010: 28). An organization like Crisis Group was needed, in their view, because the international community was not responding effectively to international crises. Morton Abramowitz states that in the beginning he was uncertain of the future of ICG and he worried the organization would not receive the funds required. However, the billionaire philanthropist George Soros helped launch the ICG with a large grant. A former US Congressman, Stephen Solarz, gathered funds from Finland through the Nobel prize winner diplomat and politician Martti Ahtisaari and from Australia through the Foreign Minister Gareth Evans (ICG 2010: 7-13; Evans, 2017: 206-07). In rough figures, around 40% of the budget continues to come from mostly western governments, and another 40% from philanthropic foundations (see Oberg 2005).

In its first advocacy effort, in 1996 the ICG alerted the UN Security Council on the crisis in Burundi (ICG 2010, 28). In addition, Crisis Group organized experts report on *Why the Bosnia Elections Must be Postponed* which was picked up extensively by the international media writing on Western government inaction towards Bosnia (ICG 2010, 18). Thereafter, ICG development was rapid. In only a few years, the organization went from 3 staff to 25 (ICG 2010, 9). In 1997 the ICG started its research and advocacy in Central Africa, Kosovo, Macedonia and Albania, and the following two years in Cambodia and Algeria. 1998 saw the *Kosovo Spring* report published which was widely cited and raised awareness of the looming crisis.

ICG also came into some difficult circumstances in the late 1990s when a number of key founding figures departed or died. Funding plateaued at around \$2-3 million per annum. However, the year 2000 was seen as a “new era” when Gareth Evans (former Australian Foreign Minister) stepped up as Ppresident, and from Finland, Martti Ahtisaari became chairman (ICG 2010, 23). A second grant from Soros, of US\$2.5 million, allowed the organization to grow and open offices in New York and Paris. Operations were established in West Africa, Southern Africa, Central Asia, South East Asia and the Andes (ICG 2010, 23). By 2012, with an annual budget of US\$20.5 million, ICG employed over 130 permanent staff (many of them journalists), it published over 90 reports and briefing papers annually as well as monthly *CrisisWatch* bulletins. ICG work is grounded in field research across conflict countries, and then feeds this information back to political decision makers,.

The founding actors in ICG – Abromowitz, Ahtisari, Evans, Malloch-Brown and Solarz – are seen as policy entrepreneurs within ICG (interviews 1 and 2). Elsewhere, Soros has been described (and decried) as a transnational policy entrepreneur. On the stage of world affairs, however, an organization was needed as a vehicle to connect these individuals into a stronger web of activity. The way the organization developed, its so-called ‘methodology’, saw the Group become an organizational policy entrepreneur.

#### *Entrepreneurial Strategies*

If policy entrepreneurs (help) shape policy agendas, then many organisations have a vested interest in cultivating them. Applied work on policy entrepreneurship has been led by RAPID (Research and Policy in Development), a unit based inside one of Britain’s oldest and largest think

tanks, the Overseas Development Institute. The RAPID team identified four different types of policy entrepreneur:

1. The story teller
2. The engineer
3. The networker
4. The fixer

RAPID's work emerged from the frustrations of ODI staff that their policy recommendations were being ignored in the policy process (Stone 2013). The thinking behind the RAPID typology was that it was a faulty assumption that experts have the epistemic authority to 'Speak Truth to Power'. Instead, the power to set agendas is a 'battlefield of ideas'.

The first style is that of the 'story teller' who exhibits discursive power. This is someone who has the 'gift of the gab' and is able to translate complex ideas or complicated data into powerful narratives to inform policy communities. The (post) 'Washington Consensus' or 'debt-relief' as poverty-reduction solutions are powerful 'short-hand' stories which help the research community to explain to policy-makers what the problem is and what the solution might be. Likewise, the acronym 'R2P' has become a recognisable signifier in transnational policy communities within which ICG circulates regarding 'responsibility to protect' (Thakur and Weiss, 2009). Stories are particularly important for creating 'value acceptability' and in this regard Crisis Group's journalists 'in the field' have excelled in attracting media coverage.

The second style reflects the power of personal and political connections. The 'networker' is someone who not only knows relevant players, and who has informal or official entrée into the offices of power-holders but is also someone who knows how to mobilize such networks. At an organizational level, Boards are crucial in this policy entrepreneurship role, and Crisis group is no exception (interview 1). Morton Abramowitz notes that the "ICG has been blessed with its Board and its chairmen ... who gave the organization a credibility it had not yet earned" (ICG 2010, 7). Crisis Group has invested heavily in 'anticipatory relationships' with both political elites and 'outsiders' in order to embed the organization in what they call 'framework diplomacy' (2016: 43-45).

The third style is a capacity for political strategizing and scheming. The 'fixer' is a Machiavellian figure in the RAPID typology. A more positive image is to recognize the "social acuity" of entrepreneurs (Mintrom and Norman, 2009). Such individuals are well versed the informal dynamics of policy, knowing personalities, political intrigues and how to best pitch their cause in circumstances of political chaos or policy uncertainty. Former politicians (such as those in the 'star studded' membership of the ICG Board) are often well versed in such skills and the arts of persuasion where "influence was often behind the scenes" (interview 1).

The fourth style arises from the technical prowess or weight of professional experience of the 'engineer'. This is another metaphorical figure who engages with policy on the ground and with 'street level bureaucrats'. Where the previous styles emphasize links to power, and especially agenda setting capacities at the earlier stages of policy making, this last category connects more substantially to developing templates for the technical feasibility of proposals or imaginative solutions and procedures of implementation. This is a different species of policy entrepreneur from the ICG Board Member but ICG field offices are a key component of ICG methodology with "considerable autonomy" to be "creative" (interview 1) and in generating practical policy recommendations (Bliesemann de Guevara, 2014b).

RAPID was directly concerned with up-scaling think tank organizational capacities by creating a policy entrepreneur 'tool-kit'. The Institute and ODI's funders desired heightened impact within policy making venues nationally and internationally. Yet, mainstreaming the toolkit into ODI's operations brought some cautionary tales revealing the limitations of policy entrepreneurship. These lessons were called 'communication paradoxes'. They are counter-factual points that highlight

the difficulties for any international body seeking to build value acceptability in global or regional affairs:

1. The *complexity paradox* says that the simple stories needed for communication can obscure complexity in the real world. Interestingly, ICG web-site keeps its messages simple whereas the historical and political complexities of the causes of specific wars and conflicts are documented in the more technical reports.
2. The *altruism paradox* suggests that compassion may be most at risk just when it is most needed. For instance, people lose sight of inter-generational justice, the plight of refugees or commitment to R2P when confronted by immediate costs and public sector cuts at national level that have immediate bearing on their daily existence.
3. The *attachment paradox* says that public support for peace and/or development depends on existing links and relationships, but these may cause mis-direction of resources. A good example is ‘aid for trade’ where development assistance is expended in low-middle income developing countries that are trade partners with the donor country, rather than with poor countries or fragile states elsewhere.
4. The *pooling paradox* says that multilateral action and donor pooling of resources may be efficient, but that the public likes to see a flag attached to their development assistance or humanitarian intervention, and also to see direct results in return for their tax spend. ICG is globalist in orientation which can make it appear elite and distant to populist publics.
5. The *paradox of ambition* says that unachievable targets may be necessary to fire up public enthusiasm. This has been said of the MDGs but applies equally to the Kyoto Protocol timetable and targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. ICG mission of “preventing and resolving deadly conflict” falls into this paradox (Oberge, 2005).

To these constraining factors, another two on technical feasibility and epistemic credibility can be added alongside another on the public interest:

6. The *paradox of wicked problems* suggests that “the public is also less likely to worry about problems when they feel there is nothing to be done about them” (Pralle, 2009: 786). For example, for climate change or slow burning conflict zones to stay high on political agendas, the public and policymakers must be certain not only that something must be done, but that it can be done.
7. The *paradox of scientific consensus* is that while scientific communities can comprehend the nuance of uncertainty, the public are less likely to be concerned about an issue when consensus is lacking, or data is highly contested (Pralle, 2009: 787). The cause of, and solution to, conflict are highly contested.
8. The *paradox of public action* is that organisational imperatives for growth or (financial) sustainability are first priority. A criticism of peace advocacy projects is that they promote ‘solutions’ that do not address underlying causes of conflict but sustain conditions for the continued existence of the advocacy organisation (Sending, 2019).

These paradoxes (which differ in potency according to specific issues) indicate that the policy entrepreneur is bound inextricably by socio-economic and political constraints and conditioned by the institutional frameworks in which actors try to promote their pet ideas. One person alone cannot contain all these paradoxes all the time. For issues to remain on the agenda, rather than wax and wane, these paradoxes need to be confronted strategically and carefully manipulated over the longer term through organizations and their networks.

In of case studies of individuals there is a tendency to over-state the role of agency and push analysis too far in the direction of methodological individualism; “attention is drawn to the official policy entrepreneur such as chief executives, or other prominent politicians... (when) in reality there may be several people working together in the policy process” (Oborn, Barrett and Exworthy, 2011:

328). The key explanatory factor may not be the role of individual agents but may be found elsewhere in “a temporal conjunction of separate sub-policy processes: ‘agenda setting, alternative–specification, and decision making’” (Akrill and Kay, 2011: 72). This turns agent centred explanation around by suggesting that the entrepreneur not only happens to be ‘in the right place, at the right time’ to take advantage of a confluence of streams but is also reliant on the reputation and resources of their organization and the strength of their professional or political networks.

The work on policy entrepreneurship by ODI, and the practice of many bodies like Crisis Group, is strongly indicative that ‘entrepreneurship’ is not simply the attribute of individuals but also characteristic of certain organizations (see also Mukhtarov and Gerlak, 2013). Think tanks are regarded as policy entrepreneur *sine qua non* (Stone, 2013). The European Union, the Commission or specific Directorates General, have been cast in this role (Braun, 2009; Herweg, 2015; Krause, 2003). Likewise, the ILO leadership team has been portrayed as a policy entrepreneur with its agenda on ‘decent work’ (Di Ruggiero *et al*, 2015), or UNAIDS as a ‘policy transfer entrepreneur’ (Nay, 2012). Similarly, global environmental consultancy firms are identified as entrepreneurs for their agenda setting capacity in identifying environmental problems (Bouteligier, 2011).

We can draw an analytical distinction between the individuals who are policy entrepreneurs and *the process of policy entrepreneurship* where policy entrepreneurs are generated by their professional and/or policy communities. It is necessary to ‘endogenize’ the policy entrepreneurs to a historical and institutional context (Bakir, 2009: 573) rather than representing them as standing above the policy fray. While certain individuals may have superior skills (such as that of the story-teller), they are also inducted into such a role by their current professional or organisational context. This perspective on the policy entrepreneur argues that the organizational authors of policy ideas matter as much if not more than who happens to be the lead articulator. The organisation employing individual policy entrepreneurs is the force that *broadcasts* policy content while the wider organisational network generates or sustains the persistence of policy ideas or solutions.

### ICG Entrepreneurship

ICG’s success as an international policy entrepreneur has rested on three attributes: i) epistemic – a mix of individual expert authority and organizational skills as a think tank; ii) communication and connections – brokering ‘on the ground knowledge’ to international policy elites via the four RAPID styles identified earlier and iii) independence – its resource base and legal status as an autonomous expert advisory organization that nevertheless allows it to be accepted within international conflict resolution policy communities. For one critic these attributes point to a “problematic double nature as a producer of scientific knowledge and political actor” (Grigat, 2014: 566). But for ICG, these mixed attributes provide the basic resources with which to navigate the turbulent streams of world politics and policy making, and then to take advantage of ‘windows of opportunity’ for the advancement of ICG research, analysis and recommendations – that is, to attach their ‘solutions’ to conflict problems.

A particular challenge for ICG to couple with the politics stream is the multi-level governance venues across which it operates, the transnational policy communities it interacts with, and the frequent cross border nature of conflict. Accordingly, temporal considerations – the moment in time when a conflict sparks – do represent a ‘policy window’ for a body like ICG. Yet other ‘windows’ are situated in the “multiple venues (such as political and administrative venues on different levels of government, scientific venues, or the media)” which provide prospects for “venue shopping”, or the scope to “manipulate the composition of venues so as to have their own coalition members represented, and to bypass those who resist change” (Huitema and Meijerink, 2010: 26). Accessing these multiple venues – which amplify the prospects for communication of information – provide some recourse to dampen the communication paradoxes outlined earlier. Yet, it also requires different types of policy entrepreneurship in conflict zones as opposed to policy entrepreneurship and long-term advocacy in UN and other multilateral negotiations.

Extending the MS framework to the international domain has merited relatively little consideration (but see Alimi, 2015 and di Ruggeiro *et al*, 2015; Faling *et al*, 2018). Nevertheless, the framework can be conceptually stretched. In this scenario, ICG is part of an international policy community generating policy proposals from the policy stream. The politics stream is composed of international organisations and various governments connected to specific conflicts. More so than is the case at national level of politics, the politics and policy streams overlap since many actors in international organisations are often involved in developing policy proposals. In the absence of global government, the ‘politics stream’ is far less populated with authoritative political institutions. Even so, the United Nations, the European Commission, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and various regional bodies represent important institutional nodes in the politics stream.

#### *ICG transnational policy entrepreneurship*

Crisis Group has already been described as a “knowledge entrepreneur in the market of conflict/violence-related knowledge” (Bliesemann de Guevara, 2014a: 550). This image is cultivated not only through knowledge production but also knowledge brokerage. ICG tackles the communication paradoxes on multiple levels: Firstly, it reveals and broadcasts risks of conflict through monitoring and maintaining a long-term field presence in conflict areas. Secondly, ICG conducts field-based analysis and makes recommendations for policy relating to conflicts. Thirdly, the ICG offers, or claims to offer, objective analysis and details on conflicts. It is certainly an ‘intelligence gathering’ organization (Gentry 2016). Fourthly, it provides “new strategic thinking on some of the world's most intractable conflicts” such as Sudan/South Sudan and Arab-Israeli conflict. And lastly, it resurfaces attention on forgotten crises (which might also be thought of as ‘closed windows’) such as in Sri Lanka and Nagorno-Karabakh (ICG 2013). In its publication on advocacy – *Seizing the Moment* (2016) – Crisis Group argues all of these tactics are necessary to take advantage of windows of opportunity and avert or mitigate looming conflicts and ease existing wars.

ICG organizational ‘methodology’ is policy entrepreneurship. The genesis of the ICG is distinguished by the abundance of professional staff with high level influence and their connections with experts in their field, in government and in international organizations. The Group’s “analysts are drawn mostly from experienced former diplomats, journalists, academics and NGO staff” (ICG 2012, 4). These individuals can be cast as ‘story tellers’ – especially the journalists – championing different armed conflicts with reports and bulletins and placing op-eds in *Foreign Policy*, the *Washington Post*, the *New York Times* for “consumption by a specific policy elite rather than by the broader public” (Simons, 2014: 593). ICG’s 60-plus field operatives and analysts act as “the world’s eyes and ears for impending conflicts” at ground level and help engineer the ICGs policy prescriptions. Nevertheless, implementing measures to resolve or contain conflict are regarded strictly by ICG (interviews 1 and 2) as the preserve of local and national governments, and occasionally, peace keeping forces.

While it may be a self-aggrandizing assertion, ICG web-site declares: “Much of Crisis Group’s most successful advocacy is done behind closed doors, requiring access to policymakers in major international centres” (Oberg, 2005). Alongside the field bases, the offices in Brussels, Washington and New York are necessary “to ensure Crisis Group has the access and influence at the highest levels of the U.S. and European governments, as well as with the UN, EU and NATO” (ICG, 2015). Accordingly, key networking roles in the Group are dominated by the ‘fixers’ and “played by senior staff highly experienced in government and by an active Board of Trustee comprising two former prime ministers, two former presidents, eight former foreign ministers, one former European Commissioner, one Nobel Peace Prize winner and many other leaders from the fields of politics, diplomacy, business and the media” (ICG 2013).

It is not simply the status of members of the Board that matters, but also that many of these individuals transcended their national identities – the ‘flexian’ in policy flexian. As noted elsewhere, “institutional and policy innovation is more likely to occur when policy entrepreneurs with joint

membership in domestic and international policy communities mediate various ideas and discourse within and among these communities” (Bakir, 2009: 593). This is evident in the composition of ICG leadership and their cross-cutting responsibilities in either other non-state actors or in official venues. For instance, Gareth Evans was co-Chair the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty that developed the R2P concept and at the time the concept dovetailed with ICG during his tenure, but not afterwards (interview 3 & Evans, 2017).

In some respects, ICG organisational methodology is the ‘pet solution’ for crisis monitoring and prevention. The integrated chain of “knowledge production for peace” from field research through media communication, policy advocacy and political networking allows ICG staff to “perform overlapping roles that serve their own goals (as well as) of those with whom they associate” (Kostić, 2014: 637). Policy entrepreneurship becomes a recursive process interpolating individual, organisations and transnational networks.

Recognised as a non-state actor that can act in a professional, non-confrontational style to mobilize political and policy actors, ICG has been adopted – or co-opted – as an ‘information tool’ for international institutions and governments to “extensively collect, analyze, and disseminate information pointedly aimed at globally important political targets – especially decision-makers of the states they want to perform or fund the actions they desire” (Gentry, 2016). Unlike the majority of advocacy NGOs throughout the world, Crisis Group has “mastered consumer-producer relations” of connecting analytic work through its networking with decision makers and connections to world publics through media contacts. This organizational methodology has allowed it to conquer some of the paradoxes – of complexity, altruism, ambition and wicked problems – outlined earlier. But not always – the limits of ICG policy entrepreneurship were met, for example, over the 2003 Iraq War – when a report “passionately arguing military action was misconceived” was pulled (Evans, 2017: 203). More generally, ICG evidence and expertise can be ignored; communication can be cacophonous and networking competitive while independence from government precludes decision-making power.

In terms of professional legitimacy, Crisis Group conforms to accepted practices (such as appropriate governance structures) and produces credible “knowledge production for peace”. Accuracy in its analysis and media reporting is crucial (reported *and repeated* in all interviews). That is, “being absolutely obsessive about the quality of research, writing and presentation” (Evans, 2017: 216). A policy entrepreneur organization acquires further agency when recognized as innovative and knowledgeable (Bouteligier, 2011). Participants in policy networks mutually enhance each other’s agency by fostering reputations. Indeed, ICG authority may be enhanced by fact that the title of ‘entrepreneur’ or ‘diplomat’ is bestowed on them. The importance of recognition – such as official accreditation with OECD-DAC and the support from leading political figures – cannot be underestimated: a non-state actor like ICG, may have substantial knowledge and resources, but unless knowledge consumers in government and international organizations acknowledge this and make use of it, Crisis Group would be quite limited in its ability to shape agendas.

## Conclusion

Bringing the Policy Studies concept of policy entrepreneur as an ‘insider’ or ‘near-governmental’ actor within international policy communities distinguishes this type of actor from ‘transnational alternative policy groups (Carroll 2015) and the ‘outsider’ strategies of norm advocacy by transnational networks (Keck and Sikkink, 1998). The paper has also sought to extend the MS framework so that Policy Studies might better grapple with global agenda dynamics. First it has drawn out the transnational dimensions of policy entrepreneurship taking it beyond the predominantly nation-state applications; this has been a limitation of the Multiple Streams approach.

Second, the paper has highlighted the organizational basis for policy entrepreneurship. Organizations not only house, or serve as a platform for policy entrepreneurs, but also become

entrepreneurs. Organisational resources – finances, communications departments, employees – are essential to maintain momentum behind policy pressures for change over the longue durée when individual policy entrepreneurs retire or depart for other positions. This overcomes the rampant methodological individualism of the approach.

Third, rather than treating policy entrepreneurship as an inborn ‘talent’, the paper has disaggregated some entrepreneur styles that both individuals and organizations can learn and deploy. These ‘styles’, (developed originally by another ‘near-governmental’ organization – ODI), represent different strategies to make not only ‘evidence and analysis’ more influential in the ‘battle of ideas’ but also the organisations that articulate them. Nevertheless, Crisis Group’s ‘organizational methodology’ and transnational policy entrepreneurship to cultivate influence is limited by the eight communication paradoxes.

This three-way re-articulation of the policy entrepreneur concept has relevance for understanding the agenda-setting strategies of non-state transnational actors inside international policy communities. Crisis Group is an excellent example of a well-connected transnational policy entrepreneur that is more ‘near-governmental’ than ‘non-governmental’. While the organizational dimension of policy entrepreneurs has been emphasized here, the role of individuals does remain important, particularly the “social acuity” (Mintrom and Norman, 2009) of ICG’s high level Board members who are often former politicians and diplomats.

The ICG case also illuminates how the policy and policy streams overlap in international policy communities to a greater degree than was envisaged in the original MS formulation. This expert body, and others like it, navigate an ‘organised anarchy’; one where there is no world government to target advice and policy solutions but rather streams of policy, politics and problems running across multi-levels of governance.

In generalising the approach developed here, numerous other bodies could be identified playing similar roles: For example, the idea of GPGs has been championed inside the UN system, the EU, World Bank and a number of international taskforces. While these actors have done much to advance the ‘value acceptability’ of the GPG framework, the ‘technical feasibility’ issues of pooled financing, shared delivery of and supra-national authority over these goods remains highly indeterminate in a world order where state sovereignty prevails. The GPG paradigm of problem definition and policy change is also plagued by ‘communication paradoxes’ – given the arcane economic theory it is founded upon. After having structured much policy discourse on international development during the first decade of the millennium, GPGs have sunk back into the primeval soup. By contrast, the tangible and targeted objectives of bodies like the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (Wexler, 2003) and the Global Commission on Drugs (Alimi, 2015) are issue specific, have clear organizational goals and are better able to navigate the transnational problem and policy streams and orchestrate their confluence with the streams of national and international politics.

## Interviews

Interview 1. Director of Communications, October 12, 2016, Avenue Louise, Brussels.

Interview 2, Director of Research, October 12, 2016, Avenue Louise, Brussels.

Interview 3. Former President, International Crisis Group, June 21<sup>st</sup> 2017, ANU, Canberra.

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