

Policy Entrepreneurship in Global Institutions: How, Why, and With What Consequences

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Abstract

In recent years, global institutions – like the European Central Bank or the International Renewable Energy Agency – moved into the spotlight of political debates. Faced with numerous crises, such as the financial or climate crisis, uncertainty in the international system increased, and actors were pushed to take action for policy change. The scholarship on policy entrepreneurship and the resulting quest for explanatory approaches to policy change offers a promising avenue of research. Policy entrepreneurship is defined as the undertaking of actors that strategically promote a particular policy idea, seeking to shape the political agenda and influence policy outcomes. Extensive research and analysis have shed light on the different types and characteristics of policy entrepreneurs, entrepreneurial strategies, as well as the (un)successful impact. These contributions have enriched our theoretical understanding that policy entrepreneurs play a crucial role in driving policy change. However, further research is needed to refine our analytical approaches and deepen our knowledge of policy entrepreneurship. For example, uncovering the contextual factors behind the simple drive for policy change that encourage actors to appear as policy entrepreneurs. Additionally, tracing the consequences of policy entrepreneurship in light of democratic accountability mechanisms. Moreover, overcoming micro strategies that are vulnerable to changing circumstances by introducing new overarching strategies. Therefore, this dissertation contributes to the concept of policy entrepreneurship by deploying principal-agent theory, two-level game theory as well as a multifaceted concept of accountability to this research area. New empirical insights from the study of the Euro crisis and the creation process of the International Renewable Energy Agency illuminate why policy entrepreneurs drive policy change, what consequences arise from their actions, and how these actors operate.

Overview Publications

This publication-based dissertation consists of three separate journal articles. Each article passed successfully through an international independent peer review process to evaluate the quality and suitability of the papers for publication in an international journal. The author of this dissertation is a co-author of the first two papers. The third article was single-authored.

The first journal article was presented on May 6, 2017, at the 15th European Union Studies Association in Miami and on July 20, 2017, at the Colloquium of the Chair of European and Global Governance at the Technical University of Munich. Followed by the submission to the peer-reviewed *Journal of European Integration* on July 22, 2018, where it was accepted for publication on January 19, 2020. Both authors contributed equally to this work and are therefore listed alphabetically.

- 1. Heldt, Eugénia C. & Mueller, Tony (2021): The (Self-)Empowerment of the European Central Bank During the Sovereign Debt Crisis, *Journal of European Integration*, 43(1): 83-98, DOI: 10.1080/07036337.2020.1729145.**

The second journal article was presented on March 29, 2018, at the 25th Council for European Studies in Chicago, on June 15, 2018, at the ECPR Standing Group on the European Union in Paris, on April 10, 2019, at the ECPR Joint Sessions in Mons, and on May 10, 2019, at the 16th European Union Studies Association in Denver, followed by the submission to the peer-reviewed *Journal of European Integration* on August 14, 2020, where it was accepted for publication on October 28, 2021. Both authors contributed equally to this work and are therefore listed in alphabetical order.

- 2. Heldt, Eugénia C. & Mueller, Tony (2022): Bringing Independence and Accountability Together: Mission Impossible for the European Central Bank?, *Journal of European Integration*, 44(6): 837-853, DOI: 10.1080/07036337.2021.2005590.**

The third journal article was presented to an international audience on November 11, 2022, at the Colloquium of the Chair of European and Global Governance at the Technical University of Munich. Followed by the submission to the peer-reviewed journal *Global Policy* on November 24, 2022, where it was accepted for publication on May 16, 2023.

- 3. Mueller, T. (2023) When policy entrepreneurs drift between levels: The creation of the International Renewable Energy Agency. *Global Policy*, 14(4): 588–599, DOI: 10.1111/1758-5899.13232.**

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I. Introduction

Over time, the role of policy entrepreneurs – such as individuals, groups, or even intergovernmental organizations – in international politics received significant public attention. Recent crises, like the complex crisis of the European Monetary Union or the challenges of a coherent international climate policy, have amplified the perception that these actors strategically promote and advocate for a particular policy idea, seeking to shape the political agenda and influence policy outcomes. One example is the European Central Bank's (ECB) crisis management. Until the beginning of the Euro crisis in 2009, the central bank was doing business as usual, and discussions about its monetary policies were only of interest to experts in the field. However, with the emergence of the sovereign debt crisis in the Eurozone and its historical threat to the European integration project, the ECB transformed itself into a policy entrepreneur by defending the currency union with all its powers. The central bank not only implemented quantitative easing and ultra-low-rate monetary policies to lower the borrowing costs of member states to finance more public spending to stimulate economic growth, but it also pursued economic policy by requiring member states to reform their economic and social systems. In return, this new role of the ECB led to some controversial and conflicting situations with its member states (for example Heldt and Mueller 2021).

Another example illustrates the political efforts for more international cooperation in the efforts to address climate change. When it comes to tackling the issue of climate change, there is constant criticism voiced by civil society of the slow progress being made at the international level. The two-decade process of establishing an International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) shows how difficult it can be to create new international organizations. In the 1980s, member states of the United Nations (UN) had differing preferences on such an initiative under the aegis of the UN. Years later, when Germany declared that it would launch the creation process of such an organization, existing international institutions in the domain of global energy, such as the International Energy Agency (IEA), were proactively attempting to prevent it and the United States dismissed it as political posturing. At the same time, this example impressively demonstrates the impact of policy entrepreneurship in pushing for policy change on the international level (for instance Mueller 2023).

I define policy entrepreneurs as actors who identify problems, attach them to solutions and serve as catalysator for change (e.g. Mintrom 1997: 739). Broadly speaking, policy change can be seen as replacing, modifying, or repealing a policy (Theodoulou and Kofinis 2004: 201-202). In addition, policy change unfolds its dynamics through a cycle of problem identification, agenda-setting, formulation, adoption, implementation, and evaluation (Theodoulou and

Kofinis 2004: 201-202). The concept of policy entrepreneurship offers an attractive way of explaining this change. Against this backdrop, this dissertation contributes new theoretical and empirical insights to this growing area of research. Although the different journal articles contribute to the broader research topic of policy entrepreneurship in global institutions, they differ in terms of the research questions, theory, and empirics. However, they seek to fill research gaps by exploring the following three questions: First, *why* do policy entrepreneurs drive policy change? Second, *what* are the consequences of policy entrepreneurship? Third, *how* do policy entrepreneurs act?

The first article explores what motivated the ECB to facilitate its influence and widen its competencies during the Euro crisis. In order to explain this proactive role of the central bank, the publication introduces the rational choice approach of principal-agent theory into the concept of policy entrepreneurship. This results in the conceptualization of self-empowerment as a combination of factors including high discretion and technical expertise, along with disunity among member states. The second article analyses the consequences of the ECB's policy entrepreneurship during the sovereign debt crisis, especially the rising demands for more transparency. By doing so, the paper revisits the independence-accountability nexus to provide a more robust understanding of a delegation relation that favors competence over controllability. From this follows a systematic unfolding of the concept of accountability and how this applies to central bank independence in theory and practice. The third article investigates the creation process of IRENA. By coupling the two-level game theory with existing approaches from policy entrepreneurship, the framework of interlevel mobility is introduced. This new concept shows how subnational, national, international, and transnational levels interrelate as well as how policy entrepreneurs are able to drift between them. These new theoretical and empirical findings advance the concept of policy entrepreneurship.

The remainder of this dissertation is organized as follows. The next chapter begins by laying out the theoretical dimensions of the research and explores the pioneering work on policy entrepreneurship as well as contributions to the further development of this concept. The third chapter is concerned with the embeddedness of the separated journal articles and how they advance the theoretical framework. This is followed by the three publications. The final section discusses the results and provides further avenues of research.

II. Theoretical Background

The phenomenon that individual actors are able to influence policy outcomes on the international level by shaping the political agenda drew the attention of scholars already decades ago. For instance, Keohane and Nye (1977: 214) argue in their groundbreaking book *Power and Interdependence* that these actors “are particularly effective in penetrating states without regard to borders and using domestic constituencies for agenda setting”. This observation was later echoed by the development of different frameworks to explain policy change.

Preliminary work was undertaken by Kingdon (1984/2014) and when he highlighted the concept of policy entrepreneurship in his publication “Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies”. The author describes policy entrepreneurs as people who are “willing to invest their resources in return for future policies they favor [and] they might be elected officials, career civil servants, lobbyists, academics, or journalists” (Kingdon 1984/2014: 204). Furthermore, these actors take a proactive role in shaping policy debates, identifying opportunities for change, and mobilizing support for their ideas. Inspired by the work of Cohen et al. (1972) and the so-called “garbage-can model”, Kingdon argues that these actors focus on the potential for policy change. They take advantage of the multiple stream framework – consisting of problem, solution, and politics stream – that enables them to couple “solutions to problems, problems to political forces, and political forces to proposals (Kingdon 1984/2014: 205)”. An essential skill of policy entrepreneurs is to identify and exploit “windows of opportunity” where they can push their interests for policy change on the national or international level. Hence, policy entrepreneurship can be defined as the undertaking of individuals or groups of actors that strategically promote and advocate for a particular policy idea, seeking to shape the political agenda and influence policy outcomes (Mintrom 2020: 2-3).

The *advocacy coalition framework*, developed by Sabatier (1988), adds a different perspective to our understanding of policy change over a long period of time. Sabatier argues that advocacy coalitions – consisting of “people from a variety of positions (elected and agency officials, interest group leaders, researchers) who share a particular belief system - i.e. a set of basic values, causal assumptions, and problem perceptions – and who show a non-trivial degree of coordinated activity over time” (Sabatier 1988: 139) – want to translate their beliefs into public policies. The concept thus addresses the matter of where the motivation of different actors arises but does not speak to the processes of how policy change is materialized (see also Mintrom and Vergari 1996).

Baumgartner and Jones (1993) developed the so-called *punctuated equilibrium theory* agenda-setting framework. Their focus was not on the potential for policy change but rather offers an explanation of the dynamics of policy change. The concept suggests that policy change is marked by long periods of stability (equilibrium) – meaning that policies stay unchanged even if the political environment slightly changes. However, these stable periods are interrupted (punctuated) by short and intense moments of change – such as shifts in public opinion or political power.

The original literature on policy change (for example Baumgartner and Jones 1993; Kingdon 1984/2014) underlines the significance of policy entrepreneurs as agents of change. Over time, the different concepts inspired a rich literature on the subject to test and refine them. The first wave of literature sparked a debate among scholars on their applicability. For example, Young (1991) highlights the role of heads of state in international relations. The author differentiates between structural, intellectual, and entrepreneurial leadership that enables those individuals to shape the formation of international regimes. Pollack (1997) expands the concept of policy entrepreneurship to supranational institutions within the European Community to investigate formal and informal agenda-setting powers. He labels these supranational institutions as “supranational entrepreneurs” with agenda-setting powers, as they can influence policy outcomes by framing issues, proposing new policies, and shaping member states' preferences. In addition, Pollack shows that these institutions matter because they have the ability to influence through informal means, such as networking and issue framing. Both arguments were criticized by Moravcsik (1999). In the case of Young (1991), Moravcsik points out that even if political leaders have personal preferences, they are still bound by the two-level game (see also Putnam 1988), which limits personal aspirations. In response to Pollack (1997), Moravcsik challenges his view by emphasizing that supranational entrepreneurs only have a limited impact on shaping international cooperation. He concludes that state actors – in his case, the European Union member states – and the international system's power dynamics remain the central determinants of international cooperation.

Yet, scholars provide more evidence of how policy entrepreneurs shape policy outcomes. For example, Hermann (2003) compares political leaders' personalities and how this translates to a particular leadership style. This, in turn, allows to draw conclusions about the motivation of these individuals to shape the policy agenda. As a result, Skodvin and Andresen (2006) revisit the different leadership concepts by Young (1991). They followed Moravcsik's conclusion by showing that structural and intellectual leadership are embedded within the state's power structure. However, their findings also suggest that “personal leadership capabilities and skill constitute crucial determinants of success” (Skodvin and

Andresen 2006: 25). This triggered the question of how these preferences of policy entrepreneurs are shaped. Ringe (2005) offers a framework for understanding preference formation in the legislative process of the European Parliament. The author identifies the interplay between structures, actors, and focal points as crucial to influencing the policy outcome. A further study by Nowak (2010) examines how rulings of the European Court of Justice influence policy-making in the EU, both directly and indirectly. By making verdicts that frame issues in a new light or push for harmonized laws, the court is able to influence the preferences of the member states. Carter and Jacobs (2014) argue that the window of opportunity has a significant impact on how policy change occurs. By combining the multiple stream framework and the punctuated equilibrium, they conclude that domestic party competition creates a “competitive consensus” (Carter and Jacobs 2014: 126) and therefore determines the duration of an open window for policy change. Other scholars provide empirical evidence for policy entrepreneurship as a driver of policy change by linking it to institutional change. For instance, Bakir (2009) extends the concept as one of the first to a developing country by facilitating institutional change within the context of central banking reform. He stresses the interactions between agency and structure and concludes that policy change is more likely to occur when policy entrepreneurs have a dual association in national and transnational communities. In a similar vein, a study by Heldt et al. (2022b) explores the pivotal role of entrepreneurial agents within the United Nations Joint Inspection Unit and how these actors helped the institution to prevail. By drawing on delegation and historical approaches, their findings suggest that innovative internal strategies like layering processes contributed to institutional resilience despite significant external and internal challenges.

The analysis of strategies that policy entrepreneurs employ – such as problem framing activities (Roberts and King 1991), coalition building (Sabatier 1988), networking (Mintrom 1997), venue shopping (Baumgartner and Jones 1993), or layering (Heldt et al. 2022b) – constitutes a large part of the literature. To overcome this multiplicity of strategies, Brouwer and Huitema (2015: 4-5) present a typology of entrepreneurial strategies with four different categories. The first category “attention- and support-seeking strategies” refers to strategies that demonstrate the problem as well as the solution. Next, “linking strategies” underline the ability to connect with other actors or issues. The third category “relational management strategies” aim at using the advantage of networks. Lastly, “arena strategies” combine approaches that underpin the importance of place and time.

Another strand of literature dives into the different types of actors that emerge as policy entrepreneurs. The definition of policy entrepreneurs by Kingdon (1984/2014) can turn any actor into a policy entrepreneur. In addition, Baumgartner and Jones (1991) point out that there

are different “venues of policy action” (Baumgartner and Jones 1991: 1044) where policy entrepreneurs can turn to advocate for their ideas. To date, this switch between different policy arenas is known as “venue shopping” in the agenda-setting literature. As a result, this resulted in a change of perspective regarding the level of analysis. For example, Schneider and Teske (1992) move from the international to the domestic level. By focusing on how policy entrepreneurs influence the work of local governments, they aim to understand the motivation of these actors and the conditions for their appearance. Through an economic approach, their findings suggest that policy entrepreneurs are attracted by “slack public sector resources” and “problems of collective action”. Hall and Woods (2018) turn to the individual level by investigating executive heads of international organizations and the impact of their leadership on the organization’s work. They conclude that even if leaders are bound by legal-political, resource, and bureaucratic constraints, there is room for them to maneuver to push for policy change. Furthermore, other scholars departed from the conventional applications of policy entrepreneurship within governmental agenda-setting by exploring entrepreneurs outside of government. Partzsch (2017) applies the concept of policy entrepreneurship to individuals, like celebrities, philanthropists, and social entrepreneurs. Her argument of “individual agency” is centered around the impact of different forms of power that individuals can possess to exert significant influence on policy-making processes and outcomes. Mintrom (2019) even provides a roadmap for individuals aspiring to become policy entrepreneurs. By outlining essential skills – refining policy ideas, team building, networking, approaching decision-makers, and framing problems and solutions – and strategies, the author shows what it takes to influence policy change effectively.

More recent studies have looked at what are the (unintended) consequences of policy change driven by policy entrepreneurs. For instance, the push for innovative policy ideas on the domestic or international level could be seen as bypassing the accountability mechanisms of democratic institutions. Although the framework of policy entrepreneurship was developed in and for liberal democratic systems, the question comes up whether policy entrepreneurship can be seen as an elitist or technocratic approach since it leaves the impression that a small group's existing expertise and resources are a prerequisite for certain policy changes. This in turn prompts the issue of whether policy entrepreneurs should be held responsible for their actions and decisions. For example, Zeilinger (2021) sheds light on the role of the European Commission in the negotiations on the European semester. He concludes that the Commission acted as a policy entrepreneur who was able to facilitate structural reforms in areas beyond its given competencies and shaped national economic reform agendas. However, the debate continues about the mean for the larger democratic questions as scholars draw different conclusions. For instance, some findings suggest that the actions of policy entrepreneurship

could be seen as an instrument of destabilizing a political system. De Vries and Hobolt (2020) investigate the rise of challenger parties – like the Spanish Podemos, the French National Rally, the German Alternative for Germany, or the British Brexit Party – in Europe. The authors refer to these actors as “disruptive entrepreneurs” who carry out a strategy of “issue entrepreneurship” by offering innovative (extreme) policies on new or ignored issues – such as immigration policy and European integration – as well as anti-establishment rhetoric to challenge established political parties. On the contrary, Brouwer and Huitema (2015) conclude from their research that policy entrepreneurs are indeed “powerful actors” but they are still accountable to their counterparts in the politics stream. They argue that entrepreneurial agents “should not be seen as a threat to the accountability of public sector organizations, but first and foremost as an opportunity” (Brouwer and Huitema 2015: 17).

Another avenue of research explores the performance and effectiveness of policy entrepreneurship (for example Brouwer and Huitema 2015). The work by Arnold (2021) points out that studies that apply the concept of policy entrepreneurship operationalize policy change and successful implementation differently. While some consider changing the preferences of other actors as policy change, others require the adaptation of specific policy measures (Arnold 2021: 971). Although the author’s findings suggest that policy entrepreneurs do have a positive impact on policy change, he also concludes that “they are no silver bullet, and many struggle to accomplish their aims” (Arnold 2021: 984).

This section has illustrated that policy entrepreneurship is a compelling concept to explain policy change. Much of the early work by Kingdon (1984/2014) triggered scholars to assess and expand the approach. In this way, the framework was applied to different policy areas – reaching from the subnational to the domestic to the international level – but also to the different actors – like individuals or a group of actors – to identify the drivers of policy change. Nevertheless, there are still open questions that need further investigation. For example, what exogenous factors could contribute to the motivation of an individual or group of actors and why do they become policy entrepreneurs? In addition, how do policy entrepreneurs choose their strategies to navigate complex political environments and are they able to adapt to changing circumstances? Another important fact in all the work discussed in this area is the potential impact of successful policy change by policy entrepreneurs on power, accountability, and democratic legitimacy and what consequences result from this. Therefore, the next section aims to fill some of these research gaps.

III. Theoretical Contributions

The contribution of this dissertation – elaborated in the three different publications – is embedded in the concept of policy entrepreneurship. This study aims to provide fruitful theoretical value to some of the outlined strings of literature above. The first article adds to our knowledge of *why* policy entrepreneurs drive policy change. The role of the ECB during the Euro crisis serves as an empirical case study. The second publication explores *what* are the consequences of policy entrepreneurship. This builds on the case study of journal article 1 and looks at the reactions caused by the crisis management of the ECB. The last paper provides new insights into *how* policy entrepreneurs act. This is illustrated by outlining the creation process of IRENA.

Why do policy entrepreneurs drive policy change?

The article “*The (Self-)Empowerment of the European Central Bank During the Sovereign Debt Crisis*” (Heldt and Mueller 2021) contributes to the literature string on policy entrepreneurship that aims to explain the motivation of policy entrepreneurs. By investigating the role of the ECB during the Euro crisis, we argue that the central bank empowered itself to drive policy change. The motivation was rooted in the defense of the common currency against all odds and thus to uphold the institution's *raison d'être*. First, we begin with a literature overview to show that scholars of political science came to the conclusion that the ECB had a crucial role during the crisis and emerged as a more powerful supranational institution from it. For example, De Rynck (2014: 19) refers to the central bank as a “guardian of sustainability” and Schimmelfennig (2018: 971) characterizes the ECB as “a powerful supranational organization”. From this observation, the following research question was raised “how [did] the ECB become empowered following the outbreak of the sovereign debt crisis” (Heldt and Mueller 2021: 84).

The empirical issues relevant to this study are as follows: Created in 1998 and located in Frankfurt am Main, the ECB represents the cornerstone for a united monetary policy in the Eurozone to maintain price stability. Designed along the lines of the Deutsche Bundesbank, the institution is considered one of the most independent central banks in the world (Elgie 2002: 7). Until the beginning of the Euro crisis, the ECB was doing business as usual, and discussions about its monetary policies were only of interest for experts in the field. However, in 2009 some European countries faced a situation where they had to accept high-rising debts by implementing economic stimulus and bank-bailout programs to fight the collapse of their financial system. For instance, interest rates on Greek government bonds rose to astronomical

highs, seriously impairing the country's access to capital markets. This resulted in an emerging fear of an involuntary break-up of the Eurozone that could lead to a historical threat to the European integration project. As a consequence, member states of the Eurozone agreed to a bailout program – consisting of financial aid and reform packages – for the country. On behalf of the Eurogroup, the European Commission, the ECB, and the International Monetary Fund - known as the *troika* - negotiated the details of these bailout programs. In addition, the *troika* was responsible for regularly reviewing the progress and conditions. In this role, the ECB extended its scope from monetary policy to economic policy by requiring countries to reform their economic and social systems. For instance, the president of the ECB sent letters to crisis-hit countries urging them to implement economic reforms otherwise, further financial assistance would be at risk. A further example is the Europeanization of banking supervision. The Euro crisis was also a banking crisis as some European banks faced liquidity squeezes. This was especially the case in Spain, where the government was in favor of for more European integration on banking supervision in order to get access to recapitalization funds by linking banking supervision to using funds from the ESM (Howarth and Quaglia 2016: 103). Once again, pressure from financial markets and the fear of a collapse of national banking systems drew the conclusion that member states would need to improve their supervision institutional framework towards a European banking union that included a single supervision agency. In the meantime, the ECB was actively putting the issue on the agenda by listing the necessary criteria for new supervision and presented itself as the only institution, which would be able to carry out an effective European banking supervision (Agence Europe 2013). In November 2014, the member states created the first pillar of a European banking union by adopting the *Single Supervisory Mechanism (SSM)*, which delegated the ECB's competencies to supervise banks directly and indirectly in the Eurozone. As a result, the central bank extended its scope of monetary policy to banking supervision.

A study by De Rynck (2014) deploys Kingdon's model of policy entrepreneurship and argues that the ECB not only acted as an agent of change but also actively contributed to creating the window of opportunity to Europeanize banking supervision. We add to this literature by coupling delegation, governor's dilemma, and epistemic community approaches to investigate the motivation of the ECB to act as a policy entrepreneur. As a result, we introduce the concept of self-empowerment to explain the interference of the ECB in the internal affairs of Eurozone member states by linking financial aid to austerity measures, as well as the creation of a single supervisory mechanism centered around the ECB. We define self-empowerment as "the ability of a supranational institution to broaden the scope of its decision-making authority (including tasks and issues), to expand its material capabilities, and to exert influence on institutional design decisions for new organizations" (Heldt and Mueller

2021: 86). Furthermore, we emphasize that self-empowerment is an outcome of a combination of “a fiduciary relationship, a strong specialization, and limited cohesiveness among euro member states. A fiduciary relationship is characterized by a mutual understanding where the principal (member states) entrusts authority to the trustee (ECB) with the expectation that the trustee will act in the best interests of the beneficiary (European citizens). In this fiduciary relationship, the principal's control over the trustee is minimal in order to allow the trustee to apply its expertise effectively. Strong specialization refers to the significant expertise a trustee holds which enables him to exert substantial influence, particularly in complex or urgent situations. The degree of cohesiveness among principals describes their (dis)unity on a policy position. Disunity can lead to opportunistic behavior of the trustee. In summary, we base the following hypothesis on our theoretical framework: “A fiduciary relationship, combined with a strong specialization and limited cohesiveness within the collective principal in a context of changed external conditions is more likely to enable the empowerment of the ECB” (Heldt and Mueller 2021: 91).

In the next step, we test our hypothesis on the specific cases of self-empowerment in practice: Trichet's letters to the Euro area government, as well as the single supervisory mechanism and the banking union. The first case illustrates how the ECB leveraged its expertise and monetary authority (fiduciary relationship) to position itself as the ultimate manager of financial stability. For instance, the ECB became a member of the troika as some member states of the eurozone trusted the central bank's expertise to supervise the implementation of the financial aid packages – which was provided by some member states (strong specialization). The division among member states of the Eurozone (limited cohesiveness within the collective principal) – on the one side a group of northern countries that had low debt and high creditworthiness called for austerity measures; and on the other side a group of southern countries that had high debt and low creditworthiness called for lax austerity policy – allowed ECB president Trichet to demand stringent austerity measures in exchange for financial aid, thus extending the central bank's mandate. The second case provides evidence of how the central bank pushed for banking supervision under its aegis by taking advantage of Spain's financial crisis. Once again, the ECB presented itself as the only institution that could effectively perform banking supervision for all European banks (strong specialization) in order to prevent national fragmentation. This view was supported by a group of member states (e.g., France, Netherlands, Italy), while another group met the proposal with opposition (e.g., Germany, Austria, Belgium), questioning the ECB's capability to supervise numerous banks (limited cohesiveness within the collective principal). ECB president Mario Draghi emphasized the need for unified supervision as the ability of national banks to withhold crucial information are among the reasons that led to the crisis. Despite these disagreements,

the vague mandate of Art. 127(6) TFEU (fiduciary relationship) enabled the ECB to expand its tasks on banking supervision as member states reached a compromise. Resulting in the central bank now directly supervising the biggest banks, with the ability to intervene with any of the 6.000 Euro area banks.

In summary, this study shows how the ECB facilitated its influence and widened its competencies (self-empowerment) by a combination of factors including high discretion and technical expertise, along with disunity among member states. By bringing the rational choice approach of principal-agent theory into the concept of policy entrepreneurship, this study adds to our knowledge of what actually drives policy entrepreneurs. The introduced concept of self-empowerment can be seen as an explanatory factor for an actor's motivation. The defense of the common currency against all odds and thus upholding the institution's *raison d'être* led the ECB *"to do whatever it takes to preserve the euro"* (Draghi 2012).

What are the consequences of policy entrepreneurship?

The journal article "*Bringing Independence and Accountability Together: Mission Impossible for the European Central Bank?*" enlarges our knowledge of what are the consequences of policy change driven by policy entrepreneurs. The majority of policy entrepreneurs are not elected politicians as they operate outside the political arena. This, in turn, leads critics to say that the actions of these actors may give the impression of an elitist or technocratic approach. Policy entrepreneurs are therefore confronted with the challenge of generating legitimacy for the implementation of their targeted policy change. For example, Olausson and Wihlborg (2018) argue that an important requirement for successful policy entrepreneurship is, among other things, formal and informal legitimacy. Centering this debate around legitimacy, however, raises additional questions. For instance, can legitimacy be equated with accountability? This publication contributes to this research area by offering a systematic analysis that unfolds the different dimensions of accountability. By building on the empirical observations and theoretical findings of the first journal article, this paper investigates "how and why the ECB reacted to demands for more accountability" (Heldt and Mueller 2022: 838) during and following the sovereign debt crisis in the Eurozone.

From as early as the founding of the ECB, some critics noted that the institution lacked political legitimacy due to a "lack of openness and accountability" (Buiter 1999: 182). This was based on the fact that the Governing Council, for example, keeps the minutes of its meetings private, which significantly restricts the traceability of decisions. This debate reached another peak with the crisis management role of the ECB during the sovereign debt crisis, as outlined in the first publication of this dissertation. For instance, some scholars argued that the central bank provided the necessary leadership (Verdun 2017) by becoming a member of the troika to contribute with its expertise to negotiate and review financial assistance programs. Others believed that the institution turned into a "tragic hero" (Brunnermeier et al. 2016) by putting its independence and reputation at risk when the central bank was interfering in the internal affairs of member states to defend the common currency. This public criticism resulted in a demand for more transparency and accountability at the ECB.

The theoretical contribution of this journal article is threefold: First, we engage with the literature on central bank independence from a principal-agent perspective to explain the limited control mechanisms of the ECB. We show that the ECB and other (western) central banks have a different delegation relation than other international organizations. For example, in classical delegation relations, member states (principals) establish control mechanisms to minimize the risk of losing control of the organization (agent). This loss of control is also known

as agency slack which describes situations when an agent engages in its own preferred behavior rather than pursuing the desired objects of the principal (see more Heldt 2017; Conceição-Heldt 2013; Heldt et al. 2022a). Agency slack can further be divided into shirking (minimizing the effort it exerts on behalf of the principal) and slippage (actively pursuing its own interests, which differ from or even conflict with the principal's). When it comes to central banks, principals sometimes opt for a different delegation relation that involves only a few ex-ante control mechanisms that prioritize competence over controllability. This fiduciary relationship results from the fact that the founding member states expected a more beneficial and effective monetary policy if they transferred power to an independent central bank. Hence, the control mechanisms available to the principals are limited in order to protect the independence of the ECB which is crucial for the central bank to carry out its mission, such as maintaining price stability. The rationale behind the high degree of independence and the delegation goal of price stability is the assumption by some economists that “inflation and actual central bank independence are negatively related” (Cukierman, 2008, p. 727) and therefore lead to price stability. For example, the delegation contract – the protocol on the statute of the European system of central banks and of the ECB – states that only the Court of Justice of the European Union is able to review or interpret the acts or omissions of the central bank, and “disputes between the ECB [...] and [...] any other person [...] shall be decided by the competent national courts, save where jurisdiction has been conferred upon the Court of Justice” (Article 35). Thus, independence, meaning the protection of the central bank from interference from member states is a central element of the delegation design.

Second, we contribute to the accountability literature by zooming into the independence-accountability nexus in regard to central bank independence. The literature on accountability is rather disconnected as there is no common definition of accountability. For instance, Bovens (2010: 946) points out that “[a]nyone studying accountability will soon discover that it can mean many different things to many different people [...] and ‘[a]ccountability’ is used as a synonym for many loosely defined political desiderata, such as good governance, transparency, equity, democracy, efficiency, responsiveness, responsibility, and integrity”. We add to this research gap by positioning our concept of accountability as a normative concept that understands accountability as a set of rules – in contrast to accountability as a social mechanism. We conceptualize accountability as “a relationship between supranational institutions and accountability holders, which involves mechanisms to inform, pass judgment, and eventually the ability of accountability holders to impose consequences – if accountability givers fail to respect (or to fulfill) their mandates” (Heldt and Mueller 2022: 838). In addition to this definition, we operationalize accountability by drawing on the work by Koppell (2010). Koppell was among the first to open the black box of

accountability by introducing five different dimensions of accountability: transparency, controllability, liability, responsibility, and responsiveness. In the next step, we engage in systematic empirical research by applying each of Koppell's conceptions of accountability to the context of the ECB. For example, the ECB must provide transparent information to the public about its actions and publish reports on a regular basis. While the delegation design favors competence over controllability, the actions of the central bank can still be reviewed by the European Court of Justice and the European Court of Auditors can examine its efficiency. Liability could be enforced on the individual level. For instance, the ECB has imposed a code of ethics on its staff, and the Court of Justice has the authority to remove executive members from office if misconduct occurs. The central bank is responsible for the monetary policy within the Eurozone and once again, only the Court of Justice is empowered to review the ECB. Responsiveness commits the central bank to engage with the European Parliament in a regular monetary dialogue but also to hold press conferences and speeches. Although the ECB was established as an independent supranational institution, our findings suggest that the central bank is in no way an unaccountable rogue organization. While the outlined *de jure* accountability of the ECB underlines the trade-off between independence and accountability, the various dimensions of accountability provide a more nuanced picture.

Third, by showing how the different dimensions of accountability work in practice, we contribute to the growing literature on the consequences of policy entrepreneurship. As part of the troika, the ECB negotiated and reviewed financial aid packages for crisis-affected countries like Greece. In regard to transparency, the ECB did not publish its own reports and only co-signed mission statements. This resulted in harsh criticism by the European Parliament but was ignored by the central bank with reference to its independence. The actions of the troika were controlled by the governments of the Eurozone, especially through the Eurogroup. In addition, the ECB announced the launch of the Outright Monetary Transactions program to shield crisis-hit countries from financial markets. Although the program was never used, the European Court of Justice examined its legality and had nothing to criticize. On the liability side, the troika involvement shows that the ECB as trustee may be sheltered from the member states as principals, but the European public as beneficiary can lose trust in the central bank and make it "subject to public scrutiny" (Heldt and Mueller 2022: 848). The empirical findings suggest that the ECB took not full responsibility for its troika actions as the institution repeatedly referred to its "in liaison" role with the European Commission and refused to share internal information with the Commission. However, the ECB was responsive to national parliaments by meeting with parliamentarians as well as giving public speeches about its unconventional monetary measures. Analyzing the ECB in action underlines the fact that some accountability dimensions are more developed than others. Furthermore, the ECB made the strategic choice

to go even beyond some accountability requirements when it answered national parliaments. The central bank also reacted selectively to criticism from its beneficiary, the European public, by introducing new formats like the youth dialogue initiative or the ECB listen portal to increase its transparency and responsiveness.

All in all, this journal article is a first step toward a better understanding of accountable policy entrepreneurship. First, we contribute to the accountability literature by applying the concept of accountability with five different dimensions to the domain of central bank independence. Second, we revisit the independence-accountability nexus to provide a more robust understanding of a delegation relation that favors competence over controllability. Third, we collect empirical findings from the ECB in action to show that some dimensions of accountability are more developed than others. Furthermore, we draw conclusions about what consequences result from policy entrepreneurship and that accountability is an important mechanism to create legitimacy for the actions of unelected actors.

How do policy entrepreneurs act?

The publication “When Policy Entrepreneurs Drift Between Levels: The Creation of the International Renewable Energy Agency” offers new insights into the literature investigating *how* policy entrepreneurs drive public policy change. Revisiting the definition of policy entrepreneurs by Kingdon (1984/2014) shows us that various actors in international relations may appear as policy entrepreneurs on different levels of analysis. This is echoed by existing studies that focus not only on a wide range of different topics –from public transport reform in the United States (Dudley 2013) to relaunching the European Union's economic reform agenda (Copeland and Scott 2014) – but also on different kinds of policy entrepreneurs that operate on the subnational, national, transnational, and international levels. For example, De Rynck (2014) identifies the ECB as a supranational organization as a policy entrepreneur in centralizing European banking supervision. In contrast, Mintrom and Luetjens (2019) investigate the role of individuals by identifying the former mayor of London, Ken Livingstone, and the former British Foreign Secretary, William Hague, as policy entrepreneurs and their personal commitment to the C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group and the Preventing Sexual Violence Initiative, respectively. These different policy entrepreneurs have diverse strategies available to drive policy change. However, our theoretical knowledge about these strategies, especially how agents of change connect different levels, is still limited. Therefore, by placing the focus on the individual level, the goal of this research article is to identify strategies to explain “[h]ow are subnational actors able to initiate policy change at the international level” (Mueller 2023: 588-589)?

This paper contributes to the literature in three ways. First, by bringing the two-level game theory (Putnam 1988) into the study of policy entrepreneurship (Kingdon 1984/2014), the concept of interlevel mobility is introduced. The framework draws on Putnam’s findings that the international and national dimensions are interconnected and that successful negotiation outcome is related to the ability of politicians to manage the two levels effectively. This is then coupled with the work by Kingdon on the multiple-stream framework (problem-solution-politics streams) and his definition of policy entrepreneurs as “people who are willing to invest their resources in pushing their pet proposals or problems [and] coupling solutions to problems and for coupling both problems and solutions to politics (Kingdon 1984/2014: 20). By expanding the two-level game to a multilevel game, interlevel mobility can be defined as “the ability of subnational actors to (1) move freely between the subnational, national, international, and transnational levels; (2) exert influence over other actors at other levels; and (3) use their embeddedness to promote their own agenda” (Mueller 2023: 589). When conceptualizing interlevel mobility, this study suggests that moving between different levels not only refers to venue shopping but also can be seen as an overarching strategy or as a meta-strategy. This

drift between different levels is captured by four separate phases. The first phase explores the motivation of the subnational actor. In this context, the work of Mintrom and Luetjens (2019) is applied to gain a more robust understanding of how subnational actors connect a problem to a solution. They attribute different characteristics to policy entrepreneurs, such as ambition (underlying motive), social acuity (social context), credibility (expertise), sociability (responsiveness), and tenacity (willingness). The second phase then investigates how these actors try to push their problem-solution stream into the politics stream by identifying influential allies on the national or international levels. If their agenda-setting was successful, then the third phase investigates the politics stream and how policy entrepreneurs engage in monitoring the decision-making process. The final phase observes whether policy entrepreneurs try to go beyond their initial problem-solution stream to fulfill personal aspirations.

Second, the publication discusses a specific empirical case where a policy entrepreneur drives policy change at different levels. The creation process of IRENA as an analytic narrative underpins the interlevel mobility framework. The international intergovernmental organization is headquartered in Abu Dhabi and is responsible for collecting data on all forms of renewable energy and supporting countries in their energy transition (IRENA 2022). Based on a German initiative, IRENA was founded in 2009. However, the German politician Hermann Scheer, who is also known as “Sonnenkönig”, is closely linked to this creation process that lasted more than twenty years. For example, Van de Graaf (2012) calls IRENA the “brainchild” of Scheer. The social democrat, born in 1944, was a member of the German Bundestag from 1980 to 2010, and from 1993 to 2009 member of the SPD federal executive board. He advocated renewable energies for decades in various positions and was honored with numerous awards and recognized as “Hero for the Green Century” (SZ 2010) by the American Time Magazine.

Applying the first phases of the interlevel mobility framework shows that the subnational actor Scheer was a strong advocate for renewable energies. In light of climate change and energy crises, he pointed out that the production and dependence on fossil fuels and the use of nuclear energy are a great danger. In order to reduce these risks, Scheer suggested in 1990 the creation of an International Solar Energy Agency (ISEA) as a sub-organization of the United Nations (UN) to promote these energies more strongly among states. By publishing a memorandum and calling on the member states of the UN for action, he reinforced its position for public policy change on the international level and was able to couple a problem to a specific solution. Phase two captures how the policy entrepreneur successfully managed to gain support for his vision. For example, the UN Secretary-General or the Austrian foreign minister strongly supported his idea. However, the policy entrepreneurs' problem-solution stream failed

in the politics stream as a majority of UN member states rejected the proposal to establish another UN organization. For example, Japan opposed the creation to protect its own renewable energy industry. This setback prompted the policy entrepreneur to turn away from the international to the national level – and returning to phase one. As a result, he was forced to adjust his problem-solution stream. In 2001, he called on the German government to commit itself to the establishment of IRENA as an independent international organization. In phase two, Scheer expected more support from allies on the national level as he was a member of the German parliament. This political embeddedness on the national level allowed him to place his problem-solution stream into the federal election program of his party as well as into the coalition agreement of the government. But due to a lack of political support from important national actors, such as the German chancellor and the minister of the environment, the policy entrepreneur's aimed policy change was repeatedly delayed or even called into question. Only the election of a new government in 2005 and the shift of political priorities toward promoting renewable energies on the international level created the crucial window of opportunity for the policy entrepreneur to finally transition to phase three, the monitoring of the international negotiation process. In 2007, the German government adopted Scheer's IRENA proposal and invited other states to become founding members. Furthermore, the policy entrepreneur was able to monitor the negotiations as he became part of the German delegation due to his expertise. Overall, the initial problem-solution stream made it not only through the national but also through the international politics stream, and the policy entrepreneurs' two-decade-tenacity resulted in the creation of IRENA in 2009. However, phase four also shows that Scheer was trying to move beyond his proposed policy change by trying to become the first IRENA director and locating the headquarters in Germany. Both efforts, though, were unsuccessful. This empirical case underlines the importance of interlevel mobility to capture the drift of policy entrepreneurs between different levels.

Third, by showing how interlevel mobility adds to a more robust understanding of how policy entrepreneurs drive policy change, the contribution of this article also speaks to these actors themselves. In general, the study reveals some prerequisites that are required for implementing policy change. For example, policy entrepreneurs need to identify supporters in different venues and should also be aware of veto players that can emerge at any time on different levels. Furthermore, while Mintrom and Luetjens (2019) outline attributes and specific strategies for policy entrepreneurs, the concept of interlevel mobility can be seen as a more overarching strategy. For example, by coordinating various strategies and activities, the meta-strategy bundles specific strategies – like framing problems and redefining policy solutions or using and extending networks – and creates flexibility for policy entrepreneurs. This, in turn, allows these actors to adapt by reacting to changing circumstances and requirements as

shown in the case study when Herrmann Scheer moved from the international to the national level. This coherence of keeping the problem-solution stream protects the policy entrepreneur's long-term goals from disruption by providing space for reflection and learning. These advantages make interlevel mobility a valuable tool for policy entrepreneurs. But most important is the realization that even if it seems hopeless, persistence can pay off in the end as policy change often takes decades.

In conclusion, this publication provides new insights into how the subnational, national, international, and transnational levels interrelate and advances existing approaches toward entrepreneurial strategies. By bringing two-level game theory into the concept of policy entrepreneurship, the framework of interlevel mobility offers a fruitful tool to capture the drift of subnational actors between different levels. Moreover, derived from the analysis of the creation process of IRENA, the new concept identifies important policy implications for actors seeking to foster change. The application as a meta-strategy could guide the actions and decision-making of future policy entrepreneurs. The next chapter consists of the three publications.

IV. Publications

Journal Article 1: Heldt, E. C., and Mueller, T. (2021): "The (Self-)Empowerment of the European Central Bank during the Sovereign Debt Crisis", Journal of European Integration, 43(1): 83-98.

Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/07036337.2020.1729145>

Journal Article 2: Heldt, E. C., and Mueller, T. (2022): "Bringing Independence and Accountability Together: Mission Impossible for the European Central Bank?", Journal of European Integration, 44(6): 837-853.

Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/07036337.2021.2005590>

Journal Article 3: Mueller, T. (2023) When Policy Entrepreneurs Drift between Levels: The Creation of the International Renewable Energy Agency, Global Policy, 14(4): 588–599.

Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1111/1758-5899.13232>

V. Discussion and Conclusion

In recent years, global institutions – like the European Central Bank or the International Renewable Energy Agency – moved into the spotlight of political debates. Faced with numerous crises, such as the financial or climate crisis, uncertainty in the international system increased and actors were pushed to take action for policy change. The scholarship on policy entrepreneurship offers a fruitful approach to analyzing and explaining policy change. Numerous studies investigating policy change in almost every sphere of politics have been carried out by applying and extending Kingdon's (1984/2014) concept of policy entrepreneurs. The individual journal articles of this dissertation contribute to this research area. Their new theoretical insights were discussed in the previous sections and placed in the respective context of the literature along with three guiding key questions. First, *why* do policy entrepreneurs drive policy change? Second, *what* are the consequences of policy entrepreneurship? And third, *how* do policy entrepreneurs act? This section discusses the broader implications as well as limitations, combined with an outlook on the further research agenda, for the study of policy entrepreneurship.

First, with regard to why policy entrepreneurs drive policy change, the paper "*The (Self-)Empowerment of the European Central Bank During the Sovereign Debt Crisis*" (Heldt and Mueller 2021) brings new findings into the analysis of what motivates actors to engage in policy entrepreneurship. The emergence of the sovereign debt crisis in the Eurozone in 2009 and its historic threat to the European integration project prompted the ECB to undertake not only unconventional monetary measures but also to interfere in the economic and social systems of member states. The article shows that the ECB's self-empowerment was driven by defending the currency union with all its powers. As we bring the principal-agent theory into the concept of policy entrepreneurship, we argue that the "*to do whatever it takes to preserve the euro*" (Draghi 2012) approach was a result of a combination of low internal cohesiveness of member states, a trustee-beneficiary relationship, and strong specialization.

The findings of this study have to be seen in light of some limitations. For example, the delegation design of central banks, characterized by their high degree of independence, constitutes a certain uniqueness among international institutions. Therefore, the scope of applying the concept of self-empowerment to other policy entrepreneurs could be challenging. In addition, while this case study provides an in-depth analysis of the ECB's action during the Euro crisis, it might prove difficult to draw generalizable conclusions. That said, there is a need for further research on investigating the emergence of policy entrepreneurs. This could include a typology of different policy entrepreneurs and whether their origin has an influence on their motivation.

Second, by addressing what are the consequences of policy entrepreneurship, particularly in terms of accountability, the article *“Bringing Independence and Accountability Together: Mission Impossible for the European Central Bank?”* (Heldt and Mueller 2022) sheds greater light on this puzzle. The ECB’s political role during and the after the sovereign debt crisis led to the politicization of the organization resulting in calls for more accountability of the central bank. The article adds to the literature as we revisit the independence-accountability nexus to provide a more robust understanding of a delegation relation that favors competence over controllability. Next, we unpacked different dimensions of accountability and applied them to the institutional design of the ECB. To identify the consequences of the ECB’s involvement in the troika, the multifaceted concept of accountability maps the ECB in action. The findings suggest that the central bank aimed to increase its public acceptance by improving selected aspects of accountability such as responsiveness. Furthermore, the study shows that accountability is an important mechanism to create legitimacy for the actions of policy entrepreneurs.

Although this research provides significant insights into the consequences of policy entrepreneurship, it is important to acknowledge that linking efforts of policy entrepreneurs to specific policy changes may turn out to be difficult due to the complex nature of policy-making processes. And thus, it is hard to determine who should be held accountable. An entry point for future studies could investigate the relationship between accountability and innovation. In many cases, innovative approaches – like the ECB’s self-empowerment – are used by policy entrepreneurs to drive public policy change and therefore the question arises of how can accountability be maintained without preventing innovation.

Third, the publication *“When Policy Entrepreneurs Drift Between Levels: The Creation of the International Renewable Energy Agency”* (Mueller 2023) provides a more sophisticated understanding in terms of the strategies available to policy entrepreneurs. Introducing the Interlevel mobility framework, which draws on two-level game theory and policy entrepreneurship, provides an analytical tool to capture the drift of subnational actors between the national, international, and transnational levels as highlighted in the creation process of IRENA. Furthermore, the concept can also be understood as an overreaching strategy or meta-strategy, and secondary strategies like issue linking and coalition building can be used on different levels. This in turn provides useful policy implications for actors who are eager to foster change.

When interpreting these conclusions, a number of caveats must be considered. For instance, the article relies on only one case study which may restrict the generalizability of the findings and could lead to limited overreaching understanding. Also, it would be necessary to adapt and expand the framework to other international institutions that operate in domains of hard politics, such as defense and economic policy, to investigate whether this has an influence on the behavior or interests of countries. Additional research should explore how new technologies impact the strategies of policy entrepreneurs. For example, these actors can use digital platforms to promote their policy advocacy or build stronger coalitions to support their drive for change. It would be enriching to systematically investigate the influence of digital platforms on attention- and support-seeking strategies, linking strategies, and relational management strategies.

In conclusion, the concept of policy entrepreneurship and the resulting quest for explanatory approaches to policy change provides an interesting and promising area for further research. As outlined above, this publication-based dissertation contributes to the literature on policy entrepreneurship by illuminating why policy entrepreneurs drive policy change, what consequences arise from their actions, and how these actors operate.

VI. References

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