How Policy Entrepreneurs Reduce Corruption in Israel

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This article suggests a new perspective for analyzing anticorruption policies by emphasizing the important role of policy entrepreneurs. We maintain that these entrepreneurs combat corruption in three ways: (1) by initiating attempts to reduce corrupt practices, whether through legislation or judicial decisions; (2) by being recognized as honest brokers for informants and insiders; and (3) by providing reliable information from these sources to promote scandals. Even when they are unsuccessful in getting legislation passed, anticorruption entrepreneurs reduce corruption because they raise the level of scrutiny into corrupt practices. In addition, they foment uncertainty, deterring those considering abusing their power. We test our theoretical framework on several anticorruption entrepreneurs in Israel, demonstrating that their existence increases the potential cost of corruption. By creating networks, sharing information with others, and building reputations of honesty and courage, they encourage those involved in or considering illegal activities to refrain from such actions.

Introduction

What is the role of policy entrepreneurs in promoting anticorruption policies? During the 1990s, many scholars pointed to agencies and organizations in the global and local arenas as promoters of policies whose declared aims were to curb public corruption (Andersson and Heywood 2009; de Sousa, Hindess, and Larmour 2009). In parallel with the ongoing developments in the anticorruption literature, the concept of policy entrepreneurs has emerged as a solid framework for explaining various policies (Kingdon 1995). Surprisingly, despite the increasing research into these areas, the link between policy entrepreneurs and anticorruption activities and policies has not yet been established.

There is consensus in the literature that a commitment to integrity among the political leadership is the basis for effective anticorruption policies (Recanatini 2011). Nevertheless, there is also increased awareness that such political will is usually absent because powerful players usually

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benefit from corruption and play a role in its perpetuation (Della Porta and Vannucci 2012a; Fritzen 2005; Johnston 2005; Johnston and Kpundeh 2004). It is not surprising, then, that anticorruption activities often do not achieve their goals. Moreover, anticorruption efforts are sometimes the vehicle for further abuses of power for private gain (Persson, Rothstein, and Teorell 2013). Under such difficult structural conditions, how can effective reforms against corruption in the public sector succeed?

We argue that focusing on policy entrepreneurs enhances our understanding of anticorruption policies, especially those that are successful. Most policy scholars view entrepreneurs as central figures in the drama. Why should the situation be different in the context of anticorruption policies? Given that anticorruption activities and policies are not self-executed, and the lack of research on the implementation of anticorruption activities and policies (Heeks and Mathisen 2012), the concept of entrepreneurship may serve as a theoretical framework for a better understanding of how and even why anticorruption activities and policies take place.

Hence, we suggest a new perspective for a better understanding of anticorruption policies by exploring the role of policy entrepreneurs vis-à-vis other players in this field. We argue that anticorruption entrepreneurs reduce corruption not only by activities that reduce corrupt practices but also by changing the structure that promotes illegal dealings. Thus, anticorruption entrepreneurs reduce corruption because they raise the level of scrutiny, foment uncertainty, and deter those considering abusing their power. Their existence increases the potential cost of corruption. By creating networks, sharing information with others, and building reputations of honesty and courage, they encourage those involved in or considering illegal activities to refrain from such actions.

Anticorruption entrepreneurs reduce corruption in three major ways. First, they lead and participate in direct attempts to reduce corrupt practices, whether through legislation or judicial decisions. Second, they are an address for informants and insiders, who provide them with information about corruption. Third, they foment public scandals by providing reliable information. By doing so, they make those who might consider engaging in corrupt behavior reluctant to abuse their power. Therefore, as we will show, identifying the activities of entrepreneurs, their motives, strategies, and interactions with other players in the arena may make a significant contribution to our understanding of why anticorruption activities and policies succeed or fail.

What makes anticorruption entrepreneurs unique and important? As players who are not satisfied with merely promoting their goals within institutions that others have established, they attempt to change reality, including institutions and habits. Part of that reality is the acceptance of established practices that promote and nurture corruption. Given their nonconformist nature and their need to compensate for a lack of resources, anticorruption entrepreneurs adopt unusual strategies. Moreover, because of their relative lack of power compared with traditional players, they are
more dependent on others for success. Thus, anticorruption entrepreneurs foment unpredictability and uncertainty in the political system. Such uncertainty may deter others from abusing their power and thus reduce corruption even when the anticorruption entrepreneurs are unsuccessful in making institutional changes.

The Israeli experience is a good context for analyzing anticorruption policies in democracies. As one of the youngest democracies in the world, Israel has a strong interest in curbing corruption and enhancing the ethics of public life. Therefore, its attempts to deal with corruption provide a laboratory in which to test our theoretical insights. In this article, we will analyze the activities of two of the major anticorruption entrepreneurs in Israel: Eliad Shraga and Micha Lindenstrauss. Their prominence is reflected not only in the extensive coverage they receive in the media but also in the role they play in raising the public consciousness about and level of scrutiny into corrupt activities and fomenting uncertainty among those considering abusing their power. Indeed, most of our interviewees suggested them as the most influential players in this arena, thereby attesting to their significant role in combating corruption in Israel.

Our empirical analysis includes all of the relevant state comptroller’s reports and committee meeting minutes, all relevant decisions from the attorney general, court verdicts, print and online press sources, as well as 17 in-depth, structured interviews with Israeli politicians, bureaucrats, and other individuals active in the field of anticorruption. The interviewees were chosen using convenience sampling. We used the snowball sampling method for some of the interviews (Cohen and Arieli 2011). Interviewees were selected based on their experience and activities in the area of anticorruption. Despite the sensitivity of the subject, none of the interviewees asked to remain anonymous.

Policy Entrepreneurs and Anticorruption Policies—The Missing Link

Political corruption is most commonly defined as the misuse of public power for private gain (Della Porta and Vannucci 2012b; Johnston 2005; Lambsdorff 2007). It is undisputable that the term “corruption” has attracted much more attention in the last two decades, whether or not there are more instances of corruption (Heidenheimer and Johnston 2002; Krastev 2004). During this period, anticorruption activities and policies have gained a prominent place on the global agenda and in national politics (Andersson and Heywood 2009; de Sousa, Hindess, and Larmour 2009; Spector 2012). Some scholars have described these developments as the corruption eruption (Nai’m 1995), alluding to the possibility that there is more heat than light in the way we study political corruption and attempts to reduce it.

In the last decade, there has been an increased awareness in the literature that anticorruption activities and policies are a political phenomenon with characteristics that are related to the unique nature of political
corruption (Heeks and Mathisen 2012; Johnston 2005). In order to better understand anticorruption activities and policies, one has to consider power relations and pay attention to institutions and individuals (Fritzen 2005; Johnston 2005; Mungiu-Pippidi 2006). However, while the literature suggests a rich set of theoretical tools for analyzing the behavior of institutions and other macro variables such as culture and historical contingencies in the context of anticorruption policies, there is much less theoretical and empirical writing about the role of individuals.

There are several types of individuals who participate in anticorruption activities. First, there are politicians and senior public officials who may attempt to curb corruption as part of their role and duty to serve the public interest. Second, there are senior public officials such as the attorney general, part of whose legal duty is to curb corruption. Third, there are activists who take part in the ongoing struggle against political corruption. This group includes individuals who participate in the struggle against corruption as part of their job in civil societies or international organizations such as the World Bank. This category also includes investigative journalists and other individuals such as ex-public officials who deal with corruption on a daily basis. Fourth, there are citizens who take part in demonstrations and protests against corruption, usually on an irregular basis. The literature considers these groups or subtypes of individuals as part of the anticorruption movement (Krastev 2004) or the anticorruption industry (Mungiu-Pippidi 2006).

Nevertheless, we suggest that such a classification is not exhaustive. Rather, we maintain that anticorruption policy entrepreneurs play a crucial role in the effective struggle against corruption. Policy entrepreneurs are individuals who exploit opportunities to influence policy outcomes to maximize their self-interests—without having the necessary resources required for achieving this goal alone. They are not satisfied with merely promoting their self-interests within institutions that others have established. Rather, they try to influence reality in order to open up new horizons of opportunity (Arieli and Cohen 2013; Cohen and Naor 2013). Given this definition of policy entrepreneurs, we can identify three main characteristics that entrepreneurs share (Cohen 2012): (1) the desire to maximize their personal benefit as a result of activities whose purpose is to influence policy outcomes, (2) a total absence of the resources needed to influence policy outcomes, and (3) the existence of an opportunity to influence policy outcomes. Hence, policy entrepreneurs may come from the private, public, and third sectors.

The literature suggests that policy entrepreneurship must be studied in a manner that pays attention simultaneously to contextual factors, to individual actions within those contexts, and to how context shapes such actions (Mintrom 2000; Mintrom and Vergari 1996, 1998). A systematic review of the literature reveals that the link between policy entrepreneurs and anticorruption activities and policies has not been established. However, some rare efforts have been made to link the concept of
entrepreneurship and anticorruption activities and policies. Adut (2004) analyzed the use of scandal by low-level legal officials as a “norm entrepreneurship strategy.” Fowler (2000) applied the concept of “social entrepreneurship” to an analysis of nongovernment organization that combat corruption, and Della Porta and Vannucci (2012a, 255) used the notion of “entrepreneurial politics” to characterize what they called an “anti-corruption realm.” Hence, while the literature points to “anti-corruption agencies” (de Sousa 2010; Maor 2004), no attempt has been made to use the notion of policy entrepreneurs in order to explain anticorruption activities and policies.

Based on the above, we suggest conceptualizing anticorruption entrepreneurs in a similar way as individuals who exploit the anticorruption discourse to maximize their self-interests. They are not satisfied with merely promoting their self-interests within existing institutions but rather they try to reduce certain practices or change the institutional setting in the name of the struggle against corruption in public life. Anti-corruption policy entrepreneurs contribute to the prevention, detection, and punishment of corruption. According to this definition, anticorruption entrepreneurs are potentially important players in the anticorruption field. They attempt not only to curb political corruption but also to convince others which practices should be classified as corrupt, why it is important to curb them, and how to do it. To a certain extent, the success of anticorruption entrepreneurs depends on their ability to convince others that their aim is to reduce political corruption. If they succeed, they make a difference, sometimes more than any other single player, even the most powerful ones in the political system.

Thus, we need to examine more closely how anticorruption entrepreneurs work: their goals, strategies, and the net effect they have on anticorruption policies compared to other players in this context. For example, what kinds of coalitions against corruption do they seek to achieve, given the fact that powerful agents are sometimes the major beneficiaries of political corruption and are, in fact, against anticorruption activities and policies (Heeks and Mathisen 2012, 538–539)?

Policy Entrepreneurs in the Anticorruption Context: Features of Their Activities

Mintrom and Norman (2009) suggest four elements of policy entrepreneurship that are useful in the context of anticorruption activities and policies: displaying social acuity, defining problems, building teams, and leading by example. Displaying social acuity means that the entrepreneurs are well versed in the sociopolitical context in which they function. Thus, the entrepreneurs can identify “windows of opportunity” for introducing innovative policies within the existing social order. In the context of anticorruption, there are two levels of social acuity: the macro and the micro levels. On the macro level, the entrepreneurs can identify the
general perceptions of the public regarding corruption. On the micro level, the entrepreneurs can identify either a sense of crisis or a specific scandal (Adut 2004; Wilson 1980, 371) as an opportunity for action. Given that scandals are not self-evident but are socially constructed, the entrepreneurs may also be active players in constructing an event as a scandal (Markovits and Silverstein 1988, 3–4) and, thus, also be the creators of the opportunity.

Defining problems refers to the act of describing an issue as a problem that can be solved (Dery 1984). Defining issues as problems affects how people regard these issues in terms of their own interests and may have a far-reaching effect on anticorruption activities and policies. In the context of anticorruption activities and policies, defining problems may be part of defining terms. Defining terms refers to determining the exact meaning of political corruption (Philp 1997), the applicability of the concept to concrete cases, and defining values and norms through codes of conduct (Mulgan, and Wanna 2011, 422).

Building teams underscores the fact that policy entrepreneurs are dependent on teams and on their ability to create them (Schneider and Teske 1992, 742). Policy entrepreneurs may work through ad hoc corporations or policy networks. Every partner on these teams trades his or her specific resources with other members of the teams in the hopes of receiving access to other resources. Leading by example means that the policy entrepreneur often takes actions intended to exhibit a strong commitment and determination to fostering anticorruption measures (Della Porta and Vannucci 2012b, 256) or to promoting high ethical standards by a “demonstration effect” (Mulgan and Wanna 2011, 417). For example, entrepreneurs may reduce their own official spending or voluntarily reveal their financial assets. When entrepreneurs take an idea and turn it into action themselves, they signal both the workability of their initiative and their commitment to improved social outcomes.

Anticorruption Entrepreneurs: Challenges

Anticorruption policy entrepreneurship is based on a cost–benefit analysis that takes into account the perceived benefits of the entrepreneur’s involvement. What are the potential risks and costs of such political involvement? Is the specific anticorruption policy beneficial? In the context of corruption, the cost of such activities is significant and is measured not only in time, energy, or money, but also in increased political opponents and becoming the target of criticism and even persecution. Unlike other agents, anticorruption entrepreneurs are not only invested in the anticorruption industry but are also dependent on their ability to innovate, appear honest, and succeed. Given that they are so heavily invested in the battle against corruption, they have the potential to make dramatic changes.
One of the challenges to anticorruption entrepreneurs is that most of their costs are associated with countering the work of a small number of powerful, corrupt agents, but the average person may see few benefits from these expenditures. As a result, there may often be significant resistance to anticorruption activities and policies, and support for these efforts may be weak (Della Porta and Vannucci 2012b, 254–255; Lambsdorff 2007, 28). As Wilson stated, when the benefits are distributed and the costs are concentrated, entrepreneurial politics is required (Wilson 1980, 370).

Another major challenge that entrepreneurs face in their attempt to promote anticorruption activities and policies is related to the illegal nature of political corruption. Given the importance of the rule of law in public life, illegality is an important issue. First and foremost, efforts to curb political corruption may endanger the future of corrupt individuals, some of whom are extremely powerful (Della Porta and Vannucci 2012b, 255). It is only natural that these corrupt agents attempt to discredit the policy entrepreneurs by claiming that they are not acting with integrity (Larmour 2012, 161). Worst yet, they may even use illegal measures to make such claims. Furthermore, in an uncooperative, secretive, and hostile environment, entrepreneurs have to overcome a serious lack of information (von Maravic 2012). Entrepreneurs may be unfamiliar with the interests and incentives of agents who are involved in corruption. They may not be aware of the relationship between political institutions and political behavior, and why corrupt behavior is sometimes the preferred or even the dominant strategy of the agents who are involved in corruption. Even the interests of those who do not benefit from corruption, the potential partners of the promotion of good governance or national integrity, are not necessarily transparent. Therefore, entrepreneurs must study the political configurations, administrative arrangements, and other governmental and political details before they can tailor a reform that would be accepted and effective.

Other challenges to fighting corruption are related to what can be called cultural factors. In societies with a culture of particularism, political corruption tends to become endemic (Mungiu-Pippidi 2006). The anti-Western sentiment that is prevalent in many developing countries with endemic corruption can also hinder entrepreneurship (Krastev 2004). On the other hand, in liberal societies, anticorruption activities and policies may be regarded as a questionable endeavor that implies a puritanical approach to government and borders on fanaticism. Thus, those who attempt to promote “good governance” or a “culture of integrity” may find themselves facing a great deal of mistrust (Mulgan and Wanna 2011). Suspicion toward anticorruption activities and policies can also stem from the fact that such efforts may hinder efficacy and be harmful to the functioning of government (Anechiarico and Jacobs 1996). The fact that anticorruption activities and policies necessitate formal procedures that may slow down government activity also contributes to these suspicions.
Another important aspect in analyzing the challenges facing anticorruption policy entrepreneurs is the potential tension between the particular and political aspects of such activities and policies and the desire to improve government and enhance its integrity (Heeks and Mathisen 2012, 539). Entrepreneurs who oppose specific practices such as patronage or nepotism have to pay attention to cultural and political factors when they design a policy and/or attempt to implement it (Lambsdorff 2007, 28–36). Nevertheless, these entrepreneurs also seek to address problems from a universal perspective, promote values such as freedom and equality, and use scientific methods to achieve their goals, which implies the use of technical solutions. Therefore, suggesting a reform that can be understood by other agents and be progressive at the same time is no mean feat. The ability to design a policy and develop the willingness among other agents to participate in a change is crucial in transforming the equilibrium of corruption into the equilibrium of trust.

All of these challenges make policy entrepreneurship in the anticorruption context more costly than entrepreneurship in legal and legitimate contexts, such as promoting a new energy policy. Furthermore, the cost of this type of entrepreneurship may be especially high in terms of the time that needs to be invested in developing a reputation of integrity and networks of informants, support, and cooperation. Therefore, policy entrepreneurs in the context of anticorruption activities and policies are those few individuals who perceive opportunities in times of crisis or the desire for change despite all of the enormous challenges and costs that are involved in attempting to reduce the abuse of power. Given these challenges, it is essential that we take a closer look at the goals and strategies of entrepreneurs.

Policy Entrepreneurs in the Anticorruption Context: Goals and Strategies

The motivations and goals of policy entrepreneurs are varied and can be difficult to identify, especially because they speak and act in the name of reducing political corruption for the benefit of all. We can identify three main goals that seem most important for entrepreneurs: ad hominem, institutional, and radical goals. Ad hominem goals are those goals designed to remove specific politicians or bureaucrats. Institutional goals seek to create, change, or eliminate an institution, thereby reducing the risk of corruption. For example, anticorruption entrepreneurs may change, or attempt to change, how personnel are recruited for public service. If they succeed, they may reduce not only patronage and political appointments, but also further corruption in the entire public service (Heywood and Meyer-Sahling 2008). Similarly, businesspeople may engage in anticorruption activities to reduce the solicitation of bribes and ensure that their subordinates will no longer be induced to betray them (Lambsdorff 2007). Finally, policy entrepreneurs may promote radical goals seeking to change
the political system entirely, or to make a very drastic change in the political culture or in the configurations of power. An example of this kind of goal is the attempt of Indian activist Anna Hazare to eradicate corruption in the Indian government through the Jan Lokpal Bill.

Regardless of their affiliation, policy entrepreneurs share a unique basic strategy of forming coalitions to promote anticorruption activities and policies. On the formal level, entrepreneurs seek support from decision makers. However, the quest for authorization and support can extend even to authorities and policymakers who are not elected officials or legislators. This authorization and support is critical to their operation in a hostile environment or under complex circumstances. On the informal level, which is no less important, they need insiders to provide them with information (Rayner 2012). To achieve this goal, entrepreneurs must build a reputation of being honest, courageous, and reliable agents. Otherwise, insiders will not cooperate with them. If entrepreneurs achieve this reputation, they become not only the place to which people go to provide information, but also the source to which others turn or rely upon in order to obtain reliable information. For example, journalists or police officers may use entrepreneurs as middlemen, or the entrepreneurs can suggest themselves as facilitators between insiders and law enforcement officials. Furthermore, entrepreneurs are an important component in many scandals. They may be the providers of the information that is at the heart of the scandal and/or among the agents who have an interest in enflaming the scandal. They may do so in order to change reality or simply to remain relevant to the political game. Scandals are disruptive and uncontrollable, and their unsettling nature foments uncertainty (Rayner 2012, 127).

Therefore, the existence of anticorruption policy entrepreneurs increases deterrence and changes the calculations of other actors about the efficacy of engaging in corrupt practices. Potentially corrupt agents know that the risk that their actions will be revealed is higher when others have someone to whom they can come as whistleblowers and expose them. These agents also realize that if their actions became public, there would be an agent other than the press—the entrepreneur—with an interest in ensuring that their illegitimate behavior became a scandal. Thus, the existence of policy entrepreneurs changes the calculations of other actors about the efficacy of engaging in corrupt practices. Their existence makes it easier for the partners of corrupt officials to defect, and it makes the revelation of misbehavior potentially much more costly, regardless of whether such revelations end in a trial and a conviction. More generally, the unpredictability and uncertainty that entrepreneurs create affect the internal dynamics of corruption. They hamper or challenge the creation of organizational texture, undermining the governance structure that provides the internal stability and order needed for illegal dealings and increasing uncertainty. Thus, they change the calculations of other actors and thwart the development of a “path dependent evolution” of corruption (Della Porta and Vannucci 2012a, 158).
Political Corruption in Israel

Israel is a heterogeneous society, so one might assume that there is little consensus about the boundaries between the public and private spheres, and about the definition of political corruption. However, there is widespread agreement among the public that political corruption is the abuse of power for private gain. Furthermore, the exact meaning of this notion is consistent with the so-called conventional conception of political corruption (Beeri and Navot 2012). Put differently, what makes the issue of political corruption hard to detect is not its elusive definition, but rather its hidden nature.

Johnston (2005) classifies Israel under the category of elite cartel corruption, that is, a capitalist democracy with weak institutions. He suggests that while the country is becoming more competitive, elites misuse power to shore up their positions. However, political corruption has developed along with the development of the Israeli political system (Navot 2012; Werner 1983), so the power of elites is not to be taken for granted. Moreover, since the protests in the summer of 2011 in Israel, there have been attempts to reduce the power of the economic elite, the leading families who until recently have controlled most of the country’s economic power (Bronner 2011). As one of Israel’s most important journalists described the influence of the protests two years after they took place, “The gap between the powerful, connected people living off the fat of the land at the expense of everyone else, and everyone else, has widened. Yet I dare claim that the 2011 protest will go down in memory as one of the most important in Israeli society” (Rolnik 2013). In the Corruption Perceptions Index of Transparency International that was published in December 2012, Israel ranked 39 out of 178 countries (rank 1 is the least corrupt) with a score of 60 (100 is the best). Thus, it is generally agreed that while Israel is not free of corruption, and Israelis like to complain about corruption, Israel is not a corrupt state (Sagi, interview; Shain 2010; Sharkansky 2010).

Two events kicked off what can be termed “the era of corruption” in Israel: the “Dirty Trick”—a political scandal that erupted in 1990—and “the Deri Affair,” which began immediately afterward (Navot 2012). There are a few indications that the use of patronage and the bribery of high officials and politicians were already growing at the beginning of the first decade of the twenty-first century and that the growth stopped in 2005 (Navot 2012). Nevertheless, the Israeli government has not done much to curb corruption. In addition, Israel is among the countries that have shown no enforcement of the laws forbidding companies from paying bribes to win or influence foreign contracts (Shauli 2012). Therefore, anticorruption activities in Israel are initiated almost entirely by policy entrepreneurs. In some case, these initiatives were motivated by a desire to gain prestige or power. However, as we will see, in other cases more complicated motivations drove entrepreneurs to participate in anticorruption activities and policies.
Anticorruption Entrepreneurs: The Israeli Experience

The Israeli experience serves as a good demonstration of the theoretical insights developed above. In this section, we will analyze the activities of two of the most dominant anticorruption entrepreneurs in Israel: Eliad Shraga and Micha Lindenstrauss. Shraga is the head partner of a law firm as well as the volunteer chairman of the board of The Academy for Quality Government in Israel (MQG) and may be considered according to Arieli and Cohen’s (2013) typology as a third-sector policy entrepreneur. In contrast, Lindenstrauss served until recently as the state comptroller, so we can consider him a public sector policy entrepreneur.

However, as we will show next, they shared similar strategies for overcoming the barriers they faced and established their public reputations as determined corruption fighters. In addition, they had to pay a price for their part in anticorruption activities, making themselves many enemies. They were the target of almost daily criticism by various journalists and other public figures, and numerous libel suits were filed against them. Despite the enormous challenges and costs involved in attempting to reduce abuses of power, Shraga and Lindenstrauss were willing to invest their resources—time, energy, reputations, and sometimes money—in the hope of a future return. Their actions indeed demonstrate the main elements that are central to policy entrepreneurship. Hence, they both displayed social acuity by identifying “windows of opportunity” for introducing innovative anticorruption activities and policies. They defined problems by defining values and norms through codes of conduct, determining the exact meaning of political corruption and the applicability of the concept to concrete cases. They built teams by forming coalitions to promote anticorruption activities and policies, and traded resources both formally and informally with other players in this arena. Finally, they also took actions intended to exhibit a strong commitment and determination to fostering anticorruption measures and led the field by example.

Eliad Shraga as an Anticorruption Entrepreneur

Probably the single most important Israeli anticorruption entrepreneur (Gilboa, interview; Shain 2010), Shraga was a law student who was completing his internship at the time when corruption in Israel became an issue. He became intimately acquainted with Israeli politics by virtue of his position as assistant to the Minister of Justice and part of a ministerial committee investigating how Israel could be governed differently (Shraga, interview). Shraga saw the political developments of March–June 1990, called “the dirty trick,” as a window of opportunity for rooting out political corruption. These events consisted of an attempt by Shimon Peres to form a narrow government made up of left-wing groups and the
ultra-Orthodox parties. The attempt failed when Peres signed a secret agreement with Aryeh Deri of the ultra-Orthodox party Shas to support the dissolution of the government. Shraga set up a protest tent in front of the Israeli President’s residence where he stayed night and day for two months. During part of this time, he also demonstrated his commitment to anticorruption activities and policies by starting a hunger strike. One of his other efforts was building a brainstorming group on corruption (Shraga, interview).

Shraga determined that petitioning the Supreme Court might be a useful tactic in combating corruption and an ideal forum for promoting the struggle against corruption. By May 1990, before he became a lawyer, and prior to the rise of the new government, he and a group of people had already submitted a petition demanding that the various parties publish the political agreements they drafted within this period. Indeed, the petition had a positive outcome and led to a precedent decision requiring the publication of coalition agreements (HCJ 1601/90 Shalit v. Peres PD 44(3), 353).

Building teams underscores the fact that policy entrepreneurs are dependent on teams and on their ability to create them. Nevertheless, as part of the cost–benefit calculation, the entrepreneur must be very selective in forming such a team. In 1990, Shraga established the MQG association, a civil organization whose declared mission is to promote good government for the people of Israel. One of his reasons for establishing an autonomous organization was his decision to avoid institutionalized collaborations that might be problematic and handpick partners who would not eclipse his dominance. For example, when Aryeh Avneri, a journalist who had published several books on corruption in Israeli politics and had formed an association in 1989 called Amiti, suggested that he and Shraga collaborate, the latter refused, preferring to proceed independently (Avneri, interview; Shraga, interview).

Shraga’s leadership proved very effective. As a successful policy entrepreneur he led by example and took actions intended to exhibit a strong commitment and determination to fostering anticorruption measures. Under Shraga’s leadership, MQG set a great many legal precedents that have altered the face of politics in Israel significantly (Shain 2010). For example, MQG petitioned the Supreme Court to issue an order that Prime Minister Rabin dismiss Minister of the Interior Aryeh Deri, the head of the ultra-Orthodox religious political party (Shas), which traditionally was very important to Israeli Prime Ministers for forming coalitions, when the Attorney General of Israel announced his intention to indict Deri. The Supreme Court accepted the petition (HCJ 3094/93 MQG v. the Government of Israel 47(5) P.D., 404). Needless to say, Deri’s dismissal had far-reaching repercussions for Rabin’s coalition. As a result, Shas left the government. The decision also had far-reaching consequences because from that day on, politicians have acted “in the shadow” of potential judicial intervention (Barak-Erez...
2009, 131). Hence, as we claimed earlier, the actions of a specific policy entrepreneur may have far-reaching consequences for the entire political arena. Indeed, in December 2012 Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman resigned from his position, following the Attorney General’s decision to indict him on charges of fraud and breach of trust (Ravid and Lis 2012).

Another illustration of the significant role of MQG is the issue of political appointments. This example also shows how the definition of a problem and the transformation of a questionable practice into a public scandal are important for successful policy entrepreneurship. MQG campaigned for changes in the qualifications required for partisan members to be appointed as directors of government firms (HCJ 932/99 MQG v the Chair of the Appointments Committee 53(3) P.D., 769), arguing continuously that such changes would solve political and social problems. MQG also contributed to the conviction of Tzachi Hanegbi, an Israeli Minister of the Environment, for perjury because of illegal political appointments he made when he held that post in 2001–2002. Hanegbi made these appointments in order to improve his chances of being elected to higher office in intra-party elections (CC 4063/06 Israel v. Hanegbi). It was MQG that complained to the Central Elections Committee that Hanegbi had violated the Elections Law (Kalev, interview). Moreover, it was MQG that interpreted Hanegbi’s behavior as scandalous. In the wake of MQG’s activity, the Israeli State Comptroller, Eliezer Goldberg, published a scathing report in August 2004 (State Comptroller 2004). The Attorney General, Menachem Mazuz, saw in the report an opportunity for promoting an anticorruption policy regarding political appointments (Mazuz, interview). He initiated the establishment of an interoffice team that included members from the civil service commission. Following the team’s recommendations (The Attorney General and the Public Service Commission 2005), the guidelines and directives regarding appointments to the civil service were changed dramatically (Navot 2012).

Like all policy entrepreneurs, Shraga’s activities were based on a cost–benefit analysis that weighed the perceived benefits of the entrepreneur’s involvement. While Shraga became the adversary of the most powerful people in Israel’s political, economic, and military arena, he had to deal with his fair share of mudslinging and paid a considerable price for his activities. Recently, the newspaper Maariv published a series of articles that portrayed Shraga in a mostly negative light. He himself tends to be under almost daily scrutiny and is the victim of both implied and explicit threats (Shraga, interview). However, his activity proved very effective in promoting the collective interests. Hence, when policy entrepreneurs are pushed to take risks, they have the potential to make a dramatic change in the battle against corruption. If this calculation prompts entrepreneurs to conclude that their involvement is worthwhile, they can lead society in a desirable direction.
Micha Lindenstrauss as an Anticorruption Activist and Policy Entrepreneur

During the early months of 2005, Lindenstrauss realized that the Knesset was about to elect him to the position of State Comptroller. During this period, many scandals were being published in the media, so it appeared that a window of opportunity was about to open. Lindenstrauss believed that this was a chance to promote anticorruption endeavors in a new way (Lindenstrauss, interview) by defining new problems for the public. In particular, he intended to exploit the fact that the state comptroller had the legal authority to examine “moral integrity.” He was determined to make this vague clause the cornerstone of his activity (Lindenstrauss, interview). Lindenstrauss also recognized the importance of coalition building. He shared his assessments about his future with Maj. Gen. (Res.) Yaakov Borovsky and told him he intended to make anticorruption endeavors his first priority if elected. He asked for and received Borovsky’s help (Lindenstrauss, interview).

Indeed, in June 2005, the Knesset elected him to the position of State Comptroller. In his opening speech in the Knesset, he announced his intention to “fight against corruption with an iron fist” (Knesset 2005). The next stage of Lindenstrauss’ team building was to create a new position—Advisor to the State Comptroller in Matters of Corruption. Unsurprisingly, he appointed Borovsky to the position. He also established a new unit in the State Comptroller’s office called the Special Tasks Division, which was professionally subordinate to Borovsky (Borovsky, interview; Lindenstrauss, interview). Another important institutional change was the creation of a new office: an official spokesman for the State Comptroller. The creation of this office arose from Lindenstrauss’ belief that the connection between the press and the public was crucial for his success in curbing corruption. On one hand, the office needs the public’s trust in order to obtain information and garner support for its activities. On the other hand, the connection with the press has a deterring effect on those considering engaging in corrupt activities (Lindenstrauss, interview).

Lindenstrauss and Borovsky created two networks through which they promoted anticorruption activities and policies. In fact, many of these networks’ activities were informal. It started with a small network that consisted of independent journalists Yoav Yitzchak and Arie Avneri. It was within this network that Borovsky received and shared a great deal of material largely connected to the suspicions regarding then Prime Minister Ehud Olmert. In addition, Yitzchak used to publish information he received from the State Comptroller’s office on his website. For his part, Avneri was in the habit of requesting that the government authorities address the suspicions, whether the source of these suspicions was Yitzchak’s site, Borovsky, or anyone else. Sometimes Yitzchak or Avneri would contact Lindenstrauss himself directly, thereby providing Borovsky
with a “tail wind” to promote initiatives in the office that others refused to endorse or simply dragged their feet over (Aharonovich 2006; Avneri, interview; Yitzchak, interview).

The second network consisted of attorney Nadav Asahael, and journalists Gidi Weitz and Motti Gilat. This network’s success was largely attributable to the fact that Asahael joined Borovsky’s team on Gilat and Weitz’s recommendation, thereby creating a collaborative venture with two of Israel’s top investigative journalists. Lindenstrauss and Borovsky assumed that Asahael would leak material to these journalists if required, even without having to tell him to do so. For their part, Gilat and Weitz put pressure on law enforcement agencies when they tended to drag their feet. If the need arose, they could also pressure officials in the State Comptroller’s office who opposed Borovsky’s initiatives. In light of the complex, bureaucratic nature of the tasks overseen by the State Comptroller’s office, setting up an alternative team in which Asahael was a member was essential to ensuring the success of their anticorruption activities. While the State Comptroller’s office was supposed to be a model for proper bureaucratic functioning, this sort of endeavor does not allow for a dynamic fight against corruption. Moreover, the senior staff of the State Comptroller’s office did not believe that its role was to investigate specific individuals (Gilboa, interview). Accordingly, in order to generate change, Lindenstrauss and Borovsky had to overcome the internal opposition. It was precisely to this end that the Special Tasks Division was established, along with a special team at Borovsky’s side, of which Nadav Asahael was a member (Borovsky, interview; Gilboa, interview; Levi, interview).

Lindenstrauss and Borovsky paid a considerable price for the key role they played in the fight against corruption. During Borovsky’s tenure at the State Comptroller’s office, a news item was published claiming that he had promised Likud party activists that the indictments would be toned down should they support his candidacy for Police Inspector General. He was questioned under warning by the police, but several months later, the file against him was closed due to a lack of evidence. As for Lindenstrauss, he was the target of almost daily criticism leveled at him by various journalists, publicists, academics, and other public figures (Binyamini 2007). Other officials who played a lesser role in the struggle against corruption also reported the personal price they had to pay, especially in terms of their promotion in the public service (Gilboa, interview; Golan interview; Zarbiv, interview).

The Shula Zaken diaries were another important exposé that resulted from Lindenstrauss’ networks. The diaries, written by Shula Zaken when she served as the office manager for the then Minister of Trade, Industry, and Labor Ehud Olmert, were the basis for most of the investigations into Olmert’s alleged bribery schemes. The case was still open when Olmert was Prime Minister. In fact, these diaries were the basis for a comprehensive investigative report that Weitz published in Haaretz regarding Olmert’s conduct (Weitz and Blau 2006) just a few months before the State
Comptroller’s office published a comprehensive report on the subject (State Comptroller 2007). Moreover, when Lindenstrauss and Borovsky determined that the police were not maximizing these diaries’ potential, Borovsky made sure to mention this concern to Asahael, hoping that he would convey the information to Weitz and Gilat (Borovsky, interview). Gilat also published a newspaper article claiming that the police were not making the most of investigating the contents of the diaries (Persiko 2008; Weitz, interview). Weitz actually asked the police directly why they were not handling the matter (Weitz, interview). The police quickly decided to investigate one of the main characters in the diaries—Moshe Talansky—and the State Attorney’s office called for his testimony. Even though the Deputy State Prosecutor claimed that the law enforcement forces would have handled the Talansky case without Gilat and Weitz’s added pressure (Kamin, interview; Lemberger, interview), the fact remains that the investigations into Olmert were conducted after Gilat and Weitz interfered. In the wake of Talansky’s testimony, Olmert’s standing deteriorated substantially. A few months later, Olmert announced that he would not be running in the upcoming primaries for his party and that he would resign as soon as a new chairman was elected. On October 14, 2007, the Attorney General announced that he had decided to open an investigation against Olmert. In his announcement, he mentioned the important role of the findings that were published by the State Comptroller, Gidi Weitz, and another two journalists, Raviv Druker and Uri Blau, in his decision (Attorney General 2007).

In addition to helping convict a prominent corrupt politician, Lindenstrauss also made changes designed to deter corruption. Potentially corrupt agents knew that other players trusted Lindenstrauss. They also knew about his connections with the press and his ability to embarrass them by promoting scandals. During his tenure in office, political players who considered abusing their power knew that the risk was higher than it had been. Thus, it is reasonable to assume that at least some of them did not fall prey to the temptations of power.

Summary and Discussion

This article suggests a new perspective for analyzing anticorruption policies by emphasizing the important role of policy entrepreneurs. We maintain that these entrepreneurs combat corruption in three ways: (1) by initiating attempts to reduce corrupt practices, whether through legislation or judicial decisions; (2) by being recognized as honest brokers for informants and insiders; and (3) by providing reliable information from these sources to promote scandals. Even when they are unsuccessful in getting legislation passed, anticorruption entrepreneurs reduce corruption by raising public consciousness and increasing the level of scrutiny into corrupt practices. In addition, they foment uncertainty, deterring those considering abusing their power. To fight corruption, they build
formal and informal networks that provide them with the contacts they need to accomplish their goals. Even when they are not successful in getting legislation passed, anticorruption entrepreneurs reduce corruption because they increase the potential cost of corruption.

In recent decades, supporters of anticorruption activities and policies inside and outside of Israel have tried to recruit influential players to reduce political corruption. They have been especially keen to attract people identified with an ideology that supports values such as transparency, integrity, responsibility, and accountability. Nevertheless, ideology and goodwill are not sufficient to fight corruption, especially given the high costs associated with such efforts. In order to establish an environment of value-based public policy, it may be necessary to combine it with an understanding of the needs and motivations of potential anticorruption entrepreneurs.

However, why do we not see policy entrepreneurship aimed at reducing corruption in some areas, while in other areas such efforts are successful? This seeming paradox can be resolved by the realization that political intervention is conditioned by cost–benefit calculations. Thus, when entrepreneurs decide to take action, they must believe that it has a good chance of success and that the benefits outweigh the risks and costs. If this calculation leads entrepreneurs to believe that their involvement is worthwhile, they can lead society in a desirable direction.

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