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The Dependent Variable Problem in the Study of Policy Change: Understanding Policy Change as a Methodological Problem

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ABSTRACT *The new orthodoxy in studies of policy dynamics is that policy change occurs through a homeostatic process. “Perturbations” occurring outside of an institutionalized policy subsystem, often characterized as some type of societal or political upheaval or learning, are critical for explaining the development of profound and durable policy changes which are otherwise limited by “endogenous” institutional stability. These homeostatic assumptions, while useful for assessing many cases of policy change, do not adequately capture the historical patterns of policy development found in many sectors. The roots of this problem are traced back to the origins of the new orthodoxy in comparative policy research whereby different levels (orders) of policy making have been incorrectly juxtaposed, providing a parsimonious, but sometimes empirically incorrect, view of policy change. Revising existing taxonomies of policy levels provides a superior identification of the processes of change, and uncovers more than one mechanism through which significant policy change can occur. Three of these alternative mechanisms – a “neo-homeostatic” one in which paradigmatic changes occur through endogenous shifts in goals; a “quasi-homeostatic” in*

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which exogenous factors influence changes in objectives and settings; and a “thermostatic” one in which durable policy objectives require that settings adapt to exogenous changes – are discussed.

1. The Contemporary Study of Policy Dynamics: Moves Towards the Development of a New Orthodoxy in the 1990s

The contemporary study of policy dynamics owes a broad debt to two studies which appeared 30 years apart: Charles Lindblom’s 1959 work on incrementalism and Peter Hall’s 1989 study of policy paradigms. Both authors worked in a synoptic fashion, utilizing the insights of other scholars into aspects of politico-administrative behaviour – in Lindblom’s case Herbert Simon’s (1957) insights into organizational behaviour and in Hall’s case Thomas Kuhn’s (1962) ideas about the history of scientific advance – to propose and refine the notion that general patterns of policy development can not only be identified but predicted.

Hall’s work served to break a long-term “old” orthodoxy in studies of policy change dominated by Lindblom-inspired incrementalism, one which argued that a single type of policy dynamics – marginal increments from the status quo – characterized almost all instances of public policy change (Hayes 1992, Howlett and Ramesh 2003). Since Hall’s identification of a second pattern of change – the broad “paradigm” shift – scholars studying public policy dynamics have been involved in a 20 year process of attempting to reconcile the two patterns and their inter-relationships. This period has now witnessed the emergence of a new “post-incremental” orthodoxy as policy scholars have come to generally accept the idea – borrowed from paleo-biology (Eldredge and Gould 1972), and first put forward in the context of policy dynamics by Baumgartner and Jones in 1991 – that periods of marginal adaptation and revolutionary transformation are typically linked in a “punctuated equilibrium” pattern of policy change.

Research undertaken during this period has involved scholars in three related projects designed to understand better how incremental and paradigmatic patterns of policy change are related to each other. First, they have been interested in understanding exactly how longstanding policies which have tended to develop incrementally can become “punctuated” and shift toward a new “equilibrium” (Baumgartner and Jones 1991, 1993, 2002), after which policy making, though of a different content, settles back into a familiar incremental pattern. Second, they have been involved in investigating the manner in which enduring institutions structure policy dynamics, creating the “musts, mayes, and must nots” of policy development (Steinmo *et al.* 1992, Clemens and Cook 1999). Thirdly, and relatedly, they have focused on understanding how changes in policy subsystems (Sabatier 1988, Hall 1993) interact with institutional characteristics and serve to, respectively, constrain and facilitate overall patterns of policy development.

The results of such efforts have been fruitful. The discipline now has a much stronger understanding about factors such as legislative “attention spans”, “policy windows”, and alterations in subsystem beliefs and membership that can result in certain issues coming to the fore on policy agendas, precipitating change by shaping what subsystem members deem to be appropriate types and modes of policy making (Hall 1989, Baumgartner and Jones 1993, 2002, Kingdon 1995, Leach and Sabatier 2005). It also has a much better understanding of the role played by macro, meso and

micro institutions, formalization of issue discourses, and routinization of political and administrative affairs in shaping the mobilization of actors and restraining change in policy agendas and processes (Weaver and Rockman 1993, Thelen 2003, 2004, Deeg 2005). The well documented self-reinforcing, “path-dependent” effects of institutionalization on policy making (Pierson 1993, 2000, Mahoney 2000, Hacker 2004, Howlett and Rayner 2006, Kay 2006) have promoted the idea that paradigmatic policy change, given the role played by policy subsystems in this process, requires institutional destabilization through some kind of exogenous “shock”.

While alluring as a synthetic construction, and certainly with the potential for great explanatory power in many empirical instances, most elements of the new orthodox punctuated equilibrium model have not been fully tested or proven (John and Margetts 2003). In what must be worrisome for followers of the new orthodoxy, some recent longitudinal studies have not found evidence of the exogenously driven change processes typically associated with it (Coleman *et al.* 1996, Cashore and Howlett 2007).¹ In these cases, researchers have found, dramatic policy change took place in the *absence* of institutional change and involved a more complex pattern of linkages and change among the levels or orders of policy identified by Hall (1993). Cashore and Howlett (2007), for example, found paradigmatic change in US Pacific Northwest forest policy making to have occurred in a process in which existing institutions prompted paradigmatic changes in logging practices, “thermostatically”, in order to protect endangered species (Cashore and Howlett 2006, 2007). Similarly, Coleman *et al.*’s studies of agricultural policy changes in the EU, Canada and Australia over a two decade period revealed a pattern in which cumulative incremental changes in policy settings and instruments led, gradually, to paradigmatic change (Coleman *et al.* 1996, Skogstad 1998). Cashore *et al.* (2001) also found that massive fluctuation in the critically important policy of timber pricing in British Columbia (which resulted in multi-million dollar shifts in government revenue from one year to the next), was indeed the result of a highly durable institutionalized system for allocation of resource rents that embedded within it a historical compromise among business interests, unions and government revenues. This suggests either that some elements of the model have been misstated and/or that more than one overall model or process of policy dynamics exists and is at work in different policy-making circumstances (a possibility suggested by Mortensen 2005). These types of seemingly anomalous findings prompt the need for a reassessment of the foundations of the new orthodox view of policy dynamics.

2. Revisiting the Foundations of the New Orthodoxy

In re-examining the present orthodoxy it is important to note the four important methodological, epistemological, and causal elements of this model which have emerged from research over the last two decades:

- First, there is widespread acceptance that any analysis of policy development must be historical in nature and cover periods of years or even decades or more (Sabatier 1993).²
- Second, it has generally been agreed that political institutions and their embedded policy subsystems act as the primary mechanisms of policy reproduction (Clemens and Cook 1999, Botcheva and Martin 2001, Howlett and Ramesh 2003).

- Third, “paradigmatic” change, a process in which there is a fundamental realignment of most aspects of policy development, is generally understood to occur only when the policy institutions themselves are transformed. In the absence of such processes any policy changes are hypothesized to follow “incremental” patterns (Genschel 1997, Deeg 2001).
- Fourth, many scholars studying policy dynamics agree that paradigmatic transformations or “punctuations” usually result from the effects of “external perturbations” that cause widespread disruptions in existing policy ideas, beliefs, actors, institutions and practices (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith 1993, Smith 2000, Thelen 2003, 2004).

Taken together, these elements provide the basis for the current “orthodox” view of policy dynamics: that is, (1) an expectation of a typical set of stability processes (path dependent institutionalization) in ongoing policy deliberations; (2) the expectation of a typical pattern of policy change (“punctuated equilibrium”) resulting from the breakdown of an institutionalized “policy monopoly”; and (3) a typical explanation for why this occurs (alteration in subsystem beliefs and membership usually owing to some type of societal “perturbation”).

The first and second elements raise several methodological concerns for scholars interested in policy dynamics; especially answering the question of whether or not a lengthy period of time must elapse before the direction of policy change can be discerned,³ and also determining the exact mechanisms through which institutions affect policy outcomes (and vice versa). These are interesting questions, but more problematic are the third and fourth postulates, drawn from quite selective case and comparative studies on budgetary and economic policy making which have been the feature of punctuated equilibria studies, as they have difficulty explaining other sectors and cases. To address these challenges, we must revisit existing efforts designed to classify policy and characterize its change processes.

Hall's Formulation: The Basis of the Current Orthodoxy and Its Problems

Peter Hall's (1993) effort is undoubtedly the clearest single statement of the current orthodox position on policy dynamics and is the model and classification of policy change most often cited in the literature and applied in empirical studies.⁴ Hall's work appropriately challenged the dominant view in existing scholarship that tended to conflate all the elements of a “policy” into a single dependent variable (Heclo 1976, Rose 1976) and to argue that all change was incremental in nature. Drawing on divergent cases of economic policy development in Great Britain and France, Hall argued that distinguishing between the means and ends of policymaking and between abstract and concrete policy decisions was necessary to gain new insights into processes of policy stability and development.

Such an approach, for Hall, revealed three principal elements or components of a policy which, he argued, could change at different rates (small-scale, typical, incremental and larger-scale, rarer, paradigmatic form) with different consequences for overall policy dynamics. “*First order*” changes occurred when the calibrations of policy instruments, such as increasing the passenger safety or automobile emissions requirements manufacturers must follow, changed within existing institutional and instrument confines. “*Second order*” changes involved alterations to dominant types

of policy instruments utilized within an existing policy regime, such as switching from an administered emission standard to an emissions tax. “Third order” changes involved shifts in overall abstract policy goals such as, in the pollution example, the 1990s shift in many countries from a focus upon *ex post* end-of-pipe regulation to *ex ante* preventative production process design. More significantly, Hall linked each change process to a different specific cause agent and to a specific overall pattern of “punctuated equilibrium” policy dynamics. In his view first and second order changes were typically incremental and usually the result of activities endogenous to a policy subsystem while third order changes were “paradigmatic” and occurred as anomalies arose between expected and actual results of policy implementation. The events triggering anomalies and the response to them on the part of policy makers (such as contestation within a policy community on the best course of action to pursue, or the development of new ideas about policy problems and/or solutions) were linked to exogenous events, especially societal policy learning.

This model of change, which captures the current punctuated equilibrium orthodoxy, is a variant of what cybernetic theorists refer to as a “homeostatic” one; that is, one in which positive and negative feedback mechanisms allow a new equilibrium to be reached after stable system parameters have been altered by outside forces (Steinbruner 1974). This change process involves a system which, like a spinning top, is constantly undergoing some kinds of (incremental) changes as it spins, but remains in one place (equilibrium) until an outside force (a foot, for example, in the case of the spinning top analogy) moves it to a new location where, after this “punctuation”, a new equilibrium is established (Steinbruner 1974, Mertha and Lowry 2006). Without exogenous shocks, in Hall’s model, it would be expected that existing policy elements would tend to arrange themselves in a self-perpetuating or equilibrating order, allowing (unspecified but incremental) changes in settings and instruments to occur but without altering policy goals.

The recent analyses of long-term policy change in areas such as agricultural and natural resource policy making cited above, however, question the universality of this pattern and hence challenge the last two arguments in the now prevailing orthodoxy on the nature of policy dynamics. Revisiting the existing literature on policy change reveals two problems that require the reformulation of two of the basic building blocks upon which the current orthodoxy is constructed. First, existing taxonomies designed to measure policy conflate very different forms or elements of policy. Second, and related, classifications of the types of changes different policies can, and do, undergo has been both underdeveloped and limited. Failure to address these problems results in several erroneous conclusions being drawn by Hall and others about the factors underlying policy dynamics and their appropriate modelling.

Measuring the Dependent Variable: The Need to Precisely Disaggregate Different Elements of Policy in Order to Construct Accurate Models of Policy Dynamics

The first problem with the current orthodoxy which must be rectified concerns the widely accepted model of policy composition used to describe historical patterns of policy development. This is the “dependent variable problem” uncovered by research into social and welfare policy change (Knill 2001, Green-Pedersen 2004, Kuhner 2007). As Green-Pedersen (2004) put it in his work on social welfare policy change:

It is clear that the dependent variable problem is crucial for the entire debate, and that disagreement about the dependent variable is a major obstacle for cumulative knowledge about welfare state retrenchment ... To put it bluntly, the debate about explanations of variations in retrenchment cannot move beyond the stage of hypotheses before the dependent variable problem has been addressed, and the same goes for the debate about welfare state persistence or change. Addressing the dependent variable problem should have high priority within the retrenchment literature (p. 4).

Similarly, Paul Pierson (2001) has argued that “it is difficult to exaggerate” the obstacle the dissensus over the definition, operationalization and measurement of policy change creates for comparative research and theory construction into policy dynamics.

To date, the operationalization and measurement of the dependent variable in studies of policy dynamics – “policy change” – based mainly on Hall’s “three order” model, has led many scholars to inadvertently conflate several distinct change processes present in specific elements of policy. Uncovering these “hidden” and more complex patterns of policy development challenges the rather blunt binary “paradigmatic” or “incremental” characterizations that permeate much of the literature (Howlett and Ramesh 2002, Lindner 2003, Lindner and Rittberger 2003).

An improved model of policy composition. Hall’s work was path breaking in its linking of different overall policy development processes to changes in the order or level of policy in flux. Still, this initial conceptual effort at classification requires recalibration in light of its own logic, as well as in light of the empirical evidence gathered in many cases of policy change analyzed since Hall’s work was first published.

That is, according to Hall’s own emphasis on distinguishing abstract or theoretical/conceptual goals from specific programme content or objectives, and operational settings or calibrations, along with his distinction between the aims or “ends” of policy and its actual policy requirements (“means”), it is possible to discern six, rather than three, policy elements that can undergo change (see Figure 1).

The implication of this taxonomy is that every “policy” is in fact a more complex regime of ends and means related goals (more abstract), objectives (less abstract), and settings (least abstract) than was suggested by the use of Hall’s original decomposition and definition of the elements of policy into three “orders”. Paying attention to these regime differences, and how each element changes or remains stable over long periods of time, results in a much more complex picture of policy dynamics emerging than is usually found in the existing literature derived from Hall’s work (Lieberink 2006).⁵

Reconceptualizing the number and type of policy elements found in Hall’s model, however, has serious consequences for his (and the current orthodoxy’s) linking of policy elements to specific drivers of policy change and for the consideration of the number and type of possible overall patterns of policy regime change. In particular, two implications result. First, the links between policy components and endogenous and exogenous sources of policy change are seen to be more complex than Hall suggested (Bannink and Hoogenboom 2007). Second, existing classifications of

Figure 1. A modified taxonomy of policy components following Hall (cells contain examples of each measure) (1993). Modified from Cashore and Howlett (2007)

			Policy Content	
		<i>High Level Abstraction</i>	<i>Programme Level Operationalization</i>	<i>Specific On-the-Ground Measures</i>
	<i>Policy Ends or Aims</i>	GOALS What General Types of Ideas Govern Policy Development? (e.g. environmental protection, economic development)	OBJECTIVES What Does Policy Formally Aim to Address? (e.g. saving wilderness or species habitat, increasing harvesting levels to create processing jobs)	SETTINGS What are the Specific On-the-ground Requirements of Policy? (e.g. considerations about the optimal size of designated stream-bed riparian zones, or sustainable levels of harvesting)
Policy Focus				
	<i>Policy Means or Tools</i>	INSTRUMENT LOGIC What General Norms Guide Implementation Preferences? (e.g. preferences for the use of coercive instruments, or moral suasion)	MECHANISMS What Specific Types of Instruments are Utilized? (e.g. the use of different tools such as tax incentives, or public enterprises)	CALIBRATIONS What are the Specific Ways in Which the Instrument is used? (e.g. designations of higher levels of subsidies, the use of mandatory vs voluntary regulatory guidelines or standards)

“paradigmatic” and “incremental” policy development must be revisited so that we can better capture the complex interplay of change processes among the six different policy components. That is, in addition to distinguishing six different levels of policy which can be used to generate more nuanced descriptions of historical patterns of policy development, it is equally necessary that the proper classification tools be available to assess the degree and overall type of policy change found in any such description (Kuhner 2007).

Characterizing Change Patterns the Dependent Variable Undergoes: Distinguishing Possible Patterns of Policy Development Based on More Accurate Models of Policy Decomposition

The effort to better distinguish possible patterns of policy development sensitive to a model with six regime elements rather than three requires revisiting widely accepted assumptions within policy studies that originated in Simon's (1957) and Lindblom's (1959) early works on the subject of satisficing and incremental policy change. The general idea that emerged from these articles, which have influenced generations of scholars, including Hall, is that incremental change is associated with marginal changes in policy means and ends, and is treated as being synonymous with a pattern of relatively long-lasting policy stability (Hayes 1992, Bendor 1995). Paradigmatic change, on the other hand, has been treated as an abnormal, atypical, relatively unstable, and usually short-lived process associated with changes in policy ends (Lustick 1980, Sabatier 1988, Baumgartner and Jones 1991, 2002). The development of "punctuated equilibrium" models underlined the importance of understanding not just incremental or paradigmatic policy processes per se, but also the manner in which these two types of change are linked together and the propensity different sectors, issue areas, or policy subsystems have to undergo these processes at different points in time (Baumgartner and Jones 2002).

Applying such an appreciation of policy dynamics, however, requires both a clear definition of what constitutes "incremental change" so that it can be distinguished from "paradigmatic", and proof that these two modes of change are the only ones possible in any given policy area. But, as has been pointed out for some time, neither a clear definition nor an exhaustive taxonomy of change types currently exists, resulting in both incremental and paradigmatic change remaining under-specified entities (Kuhn 1974, Bailey and O'Connor 1975, Berry 1990, Capano 2003).

An example of the problems encountered to date with respect to defining and classifying modes of change can be found in Durant and Diehl's (1989) work which followed paleo-biological practice in arguing that policy change types could be distinguished according to their *mode* (incremental versus paradigmatic) and speed or *tempo* (rapid versus slow) (see also Hayes 1992). This generated four distinct types of change (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. A basic taxonomy of policy change by mode and speed (cells contain typical "modes" of change). Adapted from Durant and Diehl (1989)

	Tempo or Speed of Change	
Mode of Change	Fast	Slow
Paradigmatic	Classic Paradigmatic (one large step)	Gradual Paradigmatic (one large step but a slow moving one)
Incremental	Rapid Incremental (many small but fast steps)	Classic Incremental (many small and slow moving steps)

Such formulations are useful but this specific method of classifying types of change is problematic in that (1) it includes the same concept (mode of change) as both a dependent and an independent variable; and (2) in doing so it ignores or conflates a significant dimension of change – its “*directionality*” – while overemphasizing a concern for the size of the moves away from the status quo. That is, what is most important is not simply the number of moves away from the status quo which occur over time, but whether these changes are *cumulative*, i.e., leading away from an existing equilibrium toward another, or whether they represent a fluctuation consistent with an existing policy equilibrium (on directionality see Nisbet 1972). Reconceptualizing modes of policy change as the result of the interplay of tempo and cumulative directionality provides a superior model of policy dynamics to that found in earlier work focusing on mode and tempo.

Transcending the Current Orthodoxy: Thermostatic, Neo- and Quasi-Homeostatic versus Homeostatic Models of Policy Change

Advancing the study of policy dynamics beyond the current orthodoxy requires a new taxonomy of policy change processes which takes both the additional number of policy elements and the criteria of directionality seriously in re-aggregating shifts in those elements. The homeostatic model, as suggested above, is only one possible overall model or pattern of policy change (Mortensen 2005). Other arrangements of system elements and change drivers exist and should not be ruled out *a priori* as inappropriate templates for the forms of policy dynamics found in specific sectors or issue areas. For example, one obvious such alternative would be a Hall-type regime, but where changes in goals are driven endogenously, rather than exogenously, in a process of gradual paradigmatic change. Empirical evidence for this “*neo-homeostatic*” model can be found in Coleman *et al.*’s (1996) work on agricultural policy change cited above, and also in Capano’s (2003) study of Italian administrative reform. In both cases small-scale changes in policy settings – in the agriculture case through the alteration of the level of subsidies, and in the Italian administrative case through variations in hiring and personnel policies – built up over the years until the original goals of the overall policy were unrecognizable.

This variant on the homeostatic model does not in any way exhaust the number of possible overall patterns of change. Others would include a “*quasi-homeostatic*” pattern in which goals are stable but where exogenously driven changes in end or means related objectives can cause paradigmatic shifts to occur. This was what appeared to happen, for example, in welfare reform driven by international organizations or influenced by “*lesson drawing*” (Rose 1991, Ramesh and Howlett 2006, Lee and Strang 2006) in which efforts to re-order welfare programmes to make them more efficient and market oriented resulted in changes in policy goals (from “*welfare*” to “*workfare*”). Finally, as pointed out above and has been observed in the case of US Pacific Northwest forest policy cited earlier, a “*thermostatic*” model (Buckley 1968, Gell-Mann 1992) also exists in which goals are set broadly enough to allow, or simply do not figure in, paradigmatic change driven endogenously by major alterations in end-related objectives and settings (Wlezien 1995, Cashore and Howlett 2007).⁶ In the Pacific Northwest forestry case durable objectives created an

institutionalized “logic of appropriateness” (March and Olson 2004) in which policy settings are likely to follow a classic incremental pattern of development until such time as a built-in thermostatic mechanism is “tripped”, resulting in classic paradigmatic change through changes in policy settings and objectives.⁷

3. Conclusion

Three findings and recommendations for current and future studies of policy change emerge from this analysis. The first is that scholars must be aware of the “dependent variable” problem in studies of policy dynamics and must develop taxonomies that disentangle the policies they are measuring and describing (Mortensen 1995, Robinson and Caver 2006, Robinson *et al.* 2007). Failing to distinguish between different levels of policy can improperly juxtapose several distinct types of policy development and present a misleading picture of the actual pattern of change present in an empirical case.

Second, and relatedly, assessments of policy dynamics must take the “direction” of change into account. That is, rather than focus on the “mode” of change in assessing possible change types, they should distinguish policy developments that move in slightly different directions over time but never deviate much from the status quo (policies in equilibrium), from those that move in the same (new) direction over time (cumulative change) (Goldstone 1998, Pierson 2000, Deeg 2001).

Third, broad-based theories of institutional and policy change need to be careful in attributing exogenous or endogenous sources of policy development. Path-breaking work by Hall on homeostatic models linking exogenous change in goals to changes in end and means related objectives and settings may need to be modified to take into account both the possible endogeneity of change processes and the different institutional structures that can permit change to occur in other ways: for example, through neo- or quasi-homeostatic means or in a thermostatic or progressive incremental fashion (Daugbjerg 1997, 2003, Braun and Benninghoff 2003).

In summary, the reconceptualization of the “dependent variable” in studies of policy dynamics undertaken above, and the subsequent identification of six levels of policy, has helped to uncover additional overall patterns of policy development often elided by the current punctuated equilibrium orthodoxy on policy change. While more research is required in order to determine if other patterns exist, and which patterns prevail in different circumstances and why, this is an essential reconceptualization if studies of policy dynamics are going to continue to progress.

Notes

1. In a related critique, Hacker (2004) found that studies finding significant changes in policy stasis failed to assess the changing impacts of institutional stability when the problem the policies were seeking to address were undergoing significant changes.
2. This observation is explicitly raised in every project by Baumgartner and Jones on punctuated equilibrium and in Paul Sabatier and Hank Jenkins-Smith’s work on “advocacy coalitions”, as well as being implicit in the broad field of historical institutionalism (Sabatier 1988, 1993, Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith 1993, Mahoney 2000, Lindner and Rittberger 2003).

3. Those that wish to apply the insights of explanatory scholarship towards real world environmental and social challenges will also be frustrated by the notion that a decade must pass before meaningful conclusions can be drawn.
4. Baumgartner and Jones' many works on the subject provided the empirical backing required to support the idea that incremental policy making was in fact routinely punctuated by dramatic change. Their focus on budgetary policy was not matched by the development of generalizable taxonomy for measuring policy dynamics in other spheres (Baumgartner and Jones 1993, 2002, Mortensen 2005, John 2003).
5. For similar models based on a similar critique of Hall, see Daugbjerg (1997) and Smith (2000). These six categories are inspired from much of the work on applied policy analysis that teaches students to break policy down into their "goals", "operationalized" objectives, and specific criteria and who likewise take pains to distinguish policy instruments from "on-the-ground" policy requirements (Weimer and Vining 1999). Such a distinction is also consistent with the work of Howlett (2000) who has hypothesized and empirically demonstrated the important and independent causal impacts of process (means) based policy instruments. Similarly, Sabatier's ACF distinguishes different causal influences on different measures of policy, theorizing that "core values" or ideas behind policy can rarely change in the absence of societal transformation, but that "secondary belief systems" can lead to changes in what we are defining as "means-oriented" policy objectives and policy settings, as advocacy coalitions undergo "learning" about causal mechanisms within the policy process (Sabatier 1988).
6. In the Pacific Northwest forest policy case, formalized policy objectives were very durable and survived changing or fluctuating policy goals. This type of change process involves a system in which policy objectives obtain "institutional status" and prevent or control the amount of change possible in policy settings. Whether such institutionalized objectives will prevent or require changes in policy settings depends on their internal logics. (Cashore and Howlett 2006, 2007).
7. Clemens and Cook's (1999) work shows that "institutions" can be seen as involving formal and informal rules, policies and standard operating procedures that bind and guide behavior. The "binding" aspect is important because not all institutions, even those emanating from constitutional sources, are enduring. They can be, rather "soft" institutions (Pollock *et al.* 1993, Giuliani 1999, Abbott and Snidal 2000) that quickly adapt to outside pressure and allow significant changes to occur in policy outcomes.

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