

**The Politics of Policy Anomalies:
Bricolage and the Hermeneutics of Paradigms**

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Abstract

This paper addresses three issues troubling predominant models of paradigmatic policy change and proposes an alternative perspective on the subject. The first issue pertains to the conflation of very specific, but difficult to operationalize, types of policy change in Peter Hall's standard three-order typology for understanding policy development. The second has to do with the view that exogenous phenomena, namely shifts in the locus of decision-making authority, are necessary for 'paradigmatic' change to occur. The third issue stems from Hall's strict adaptation of Thomas Kuhn's ideas concerning the (in)commensurability of succeeding paradigms. All three problems are shown to be derivative of the fact that policy change is more complex than often assumed in existing paradigmatic models. Instead of conceiving of policy change in definite or 'ordered' terms, it is argued that analytical focus should be directed toward the hermeneutic contest that unfolds as agents patch together ideas in the attempt to identify and explain the sources of policy problems. This largely discursive conflict takes place as agents vie to influence the authoritative definitions of problem-solutions in a process of 'policy bricolage'. The paper advances a revised and more actor-centered formula for understanding types of paradigmatic and intra-paradigmatic policy change by developing a more precise understanding of different types or 'orders' of policy anomalies and the role anomaly definition plays in the construction of new paradigms.

Introduction

Accounting for the role of ideas in processes of policy change has been a challenge for policy scientists since Hecló's epoch-defining work in the mid-1970s (Hecló 1974; 1979). Recognizing that policy-making may be just as much about learning and ideas as it is about interests and institutions gave rise to numerous empirical and conceptual puzzles that continue to be subjects of investigation for policy scientists (North 1990; Goldstein 1993; Blyth 1997; Bradford 1998). While efforts to explain the influence ideas have on policy-making have ranged all the way from the 'macro' to the 'micro' level of analysis (Blyth 2003; Jacobs 2009; Schmidt 2010), the concept of 'paradigmatic' policy-making introduced in the early 1990s by figures such as Jane Jenson (1989), Peter Hall (1993) and John Campbell (1998) continues to be the most well-known method for reconciling ideas with interests and institutions. Hall's (1990; 1993) concept of policy paradigms, in particular, remains the most influential and widely-used means of theoretically integrating ideational influence with other well-known determinants of policy

behavior (see Baker 2013; Orenstein 2013; Albrekt Larsen & Goul Andersen 2009; Hodson & Mabbett 2009; Skogstad 1998).

Basing his model on Kuhn's earlier work in the sociology of science (Kuhn 1962), Hall (1990; 1993) rendered the concept of paradigms operable in a policy-making setting by focusing on three specific policy components —settings, instruments, and goals— and differentiated between the types of change resulting from alterations to one or more of these elements. Despite the utility and intuitive appeal of Hall's framework, it has not been without its conceptual detractors, with some arguing that the model is curiously apolitical (Campbell 2002) while others challenge specific aspects such as the three-part disaggregation of public policy that lies at its base (Howlett & Cashore 2007). Surprisingly, empirical tests of the paradigm model have been few and far between despite applications of Hall's framework revealing discrepancies in the model's ability to conform to the historical reality of policy development in key case studies (Howlett 1994; Coleman, Atkinson & Schmidt 1996; Capano 2003; Kay 2007). For example, in what have been the only direct replicative tests of Hall's premises and findings, Hay (2001) and Oliver and Pemberton (2004) both re-examined the case of 20th century British monetary policy using the same case study materials as Hall (1990; 1993), but arrived at considerably different conclusions concerning the nature and process of policy change found in the case. These conclusions about the apparent inability of the paradigm framework to fully capture the complexity of the empirical policy dynamics upon which it was founded have led to more interest now being paid to Hall's theoretical premises (see Capano 2009; Howlett & Cashore 2009; Berman 2013; Blyth 2013; Baumgartner 2013).

Building on this recent research, the purpose of this paper is to explore three main theoretical issues raised primarily by Oliver and Pemberton (2004) and to propose a new method

for explaining how ideational paradigms develop and impact the policy-making process. Following Carstensen (2011a; 2011b), this method considers policy-makers less as strategic thinkers and technical problem-solvers, but rather more as ‘institutional bricoleurs’ engaged in a set of hermeneutic and discursive practices of ideational and knowledge construction as they attempt to reconcile policy means and ends in the pursuit of their goals (Campbell et al 1997; Carstensen 2011a; 2011b; Lejano and Leong 2012; cf. Levi-Strauss 1966; Johnson 2012). Specifically, the method introduced in this paper focuses attention on the hermeneutics of policy anomalies or the interpretive struggle which surrounds policy-makers as they both identify and react to discrepancies between policy expectations and outcomes.

Three Problems in the Use of Paradigm Change Models in the Policy Sciences

The first problem identified in the use of existing paradigmatic models of policy change is ontological, and has to do with the conflation of what are actually distinct policy phenomena in the three-component understanding of public policy that underlies models such as Hall’s.¹ The three-part notion of policy has been criticized for limiting the possible types of policy change and for consequently failing to provide a thorough account of possible changes to all elements of a policy (Cashore and Howlett 2007). Overcoming this issue is a critical step in improving the operationalization of policy change, but is an enterprise taken seriously by only a limited number of policy scholars (Rueschemeyer 2006). As Skogstad and Schmidt (2011) point out, many policy scholars are content simply to make reference to paradigms for purely heuristic purposes or as otherwise under-operationalized determinants of policy outcomes without much regard for their empirical or conceptual origins and veracity.

The second problem involves Hall’s view that a change in the locus of decision-making authority following exogenous shocks is a necessary precondition for paradigmatic change to

occur (Hall 1990: 61; 1993: 280). This theme is consistent with much of the literature on policy dynamics in general (Sabatier 1988; Baumgartner & Jones 2002), but is an assumption that has been frequently challenged by accounts of endogenously-propagated paradigm change (Coleman, Skogstad & Atkinson 1996; Howlett & Cashore 2009; Albrekt Larsen & Goul Andersen 2009; cf. Rose 1993; Dolowitz & Marsh 1996). While Hall (1990; 1993) suggests that ideas must be championed by influential politicians for meaningful change to occur, this view has also been challenged by subsequent studies that highlight the role played by administrative actors in fomenting change (e.g. Baker 2013). Discrepancies such as these stem partly from the misspecification of relevant actors in Hall's model as well as from the fact that very few scholars have explored, in an operative sense, the cognitive processes that yield policy change (cf. Schmidt 2010).

The third issue uncovered by Oliver and Pemberton, though one whose theoretical significance does not receive discussion by them, has to do with their suggestion that paradigms may overlap, indicating a tacit abandonment of the Kuhnian incommensurability thesis that was characteristic of Hall's work (see Phillips 1975). Oliver and Pemberton (2004: 419) stress that *partial* acceptance and rejection of new policy goals was a common outcome of political and administrative "battles" to institutionalize new paradigmatic frameworks in the UK case. While this view is consistent with the recent literature emphasizing policy layering, conversion, and drift (Béland 2007; Thelen 2004; Hacker 2005; Kern & Howlett 2009), it is anathema to the idea put forward by Hall that paradigmatic policy shifts are tantamount to policy "gestalt-switches" (Hall 1990: 59; 1993: 279). Related to this implicit abandonment of the incommensurability thesis, paradigm change is not considered by Oliver and Pemberton to be absolute as it was for Kuhn and Hall. While Hall viewed second and third order change as constitutive of changes to

all lower-order elements of policy, Oliver and Pemberton's logic of iterative intra-paradigmatic cycling suggests that change to paradigmatic goals may occur independently of changes to instruments and their settings (cf. Hay 2001; Baker 2013; Howlett 2009).

The Source of Hall's Problems in Its Kuhnian Foundations

The sources of these three issues can be traced to Hall's adoption of many aspects of Kuhn's (1962) socio-historical theory on the development of scientific paradigms. Kuhn's *Structure of Scientific Revolutions* provided the theoretical means for addressing many of the questions about policy dynamics in which Hall and other policy scientists were interested. It did this by demonstrating that processes of ostensibly value-free puzzling in policy domains, as in scientific ones, are significantly mediated by sociological factors such as power, career and reputational considerations, rendering the validity of empirical observation contingent upon the outcome of struggles over the construction of meta-theories of scientific, or policy, causation (Kuhn 1962: 92-94; Latour & Woolgar 1986; Stone 1989). Hall (1990) seized upon these Kuhnian parallels, situating his discussion of policy paradigms in the terms of Heclo's earlier questions about the relative importance of "puzzling" versus "powering" in policy development (Hall 1993; Heclo 1974: 305-306; cf. Krasner 1984; Evans, Rueschemeyer, & Skocpol 1985). For Hall, the reason that episodes of large-scale "social learning", such as those identified by Heclo, rarely occur was explained by Kuhn's idea that such episodes appear only in transitions between operative paradigms, when a tightly-crystallized coalition is not able to dominate the discourse articulating policy goals and the appropriate means of achieving them (see Sabatier 1988).

Though Kuhn's early epistemological relativism was blunted in his subsequent work that elevated the role of empirical observation in driving processes of scientific change (Kuhn 1982;

Nickles 2002), his initial 1962 conceptualization of paradigms was the one maintained by Hall in his translation of paradigms into terms compatible with the policy sciences. Hall's formulation of the paradigm concept is predicated on the early Kuhnian assumption that:

policymakers customarily work within a framework of ideas and standards that specifies not only the goals of policy and the instruments that can be used to attain them, but also the very nature of the problems they are meant to be addressing. Like a *Gestalt*, this framework is embedded in the very terminology through which policymakers communicate about their work, and it is influential precisely because so much of it is taken for granted and unamenable to scrutiny as a whole (Hall 1993: 279).²

It is evident in the above passage that, for Hall, policy means and ends are connected according to the epistemology of a given paradigm. Policy problems, and therefore problem-solutions, are viewed through perceptual frames that are paradigm-contingent and paradigm-exclusive so that major policy change requires a change in frame or paradigm. This insight is linked to policy dynamics, or patterns of stability and change, in that it suggests that as long as the definition of a given problem and its solution remains constant, policies will be stable. Changes to existing solutions (changes to policy instruments and instrument settings in Hall's terms) are thus described as constitutive of incremental policy-making, a style of policy-making which characterizes intra-paradigmatic dynamics (Hall 1993: 277; cf. Lindblom 1959; Howlett and Migone 2010), while changes that involve the articulation of new policy problems and the formulation of new accompanying solutions are understood to be paradigmatic in nature.

Continuing in the Kuhnian tradition, Hall (1993: 280) further theorized that, while incremental first and second order change (change within a paradigm) routinely occurred endogenously, wholesale paradigm change would almost invariably be prompted by exogenous events that destabilized the existing consensus. The first type of exogenous event identified by Hall involved what Kuhn termed '*anomalies*' or discrepancies occurring between expected and

actual outcomes of scientific or policy experimentation. The second type of exogenous event, already described above, is one in which the community of decision-makers itself changes (Merton 1979). This second type of exogenous event was linked by Kuhn to the first in so far as anomalies were seen to discredit and delegitimize scientific elites and provide room for adherents of new ideas to attain positions of influence. It is Hall's adoption of this Kuhnian notion of anomalies, their origins and their role in policy dynamics, that has proven problematic in studies of paradigmatic change undertaken since Hall's development of the concept in the early 1990s. This is partly because discrediting a policy paradigm is a much more contested process than is scientific refutation (Kuhn 1962: 164; Surel 2000; Jobert 1989).

Oliver and Pemberton's Alternative Model: Specification and Problems

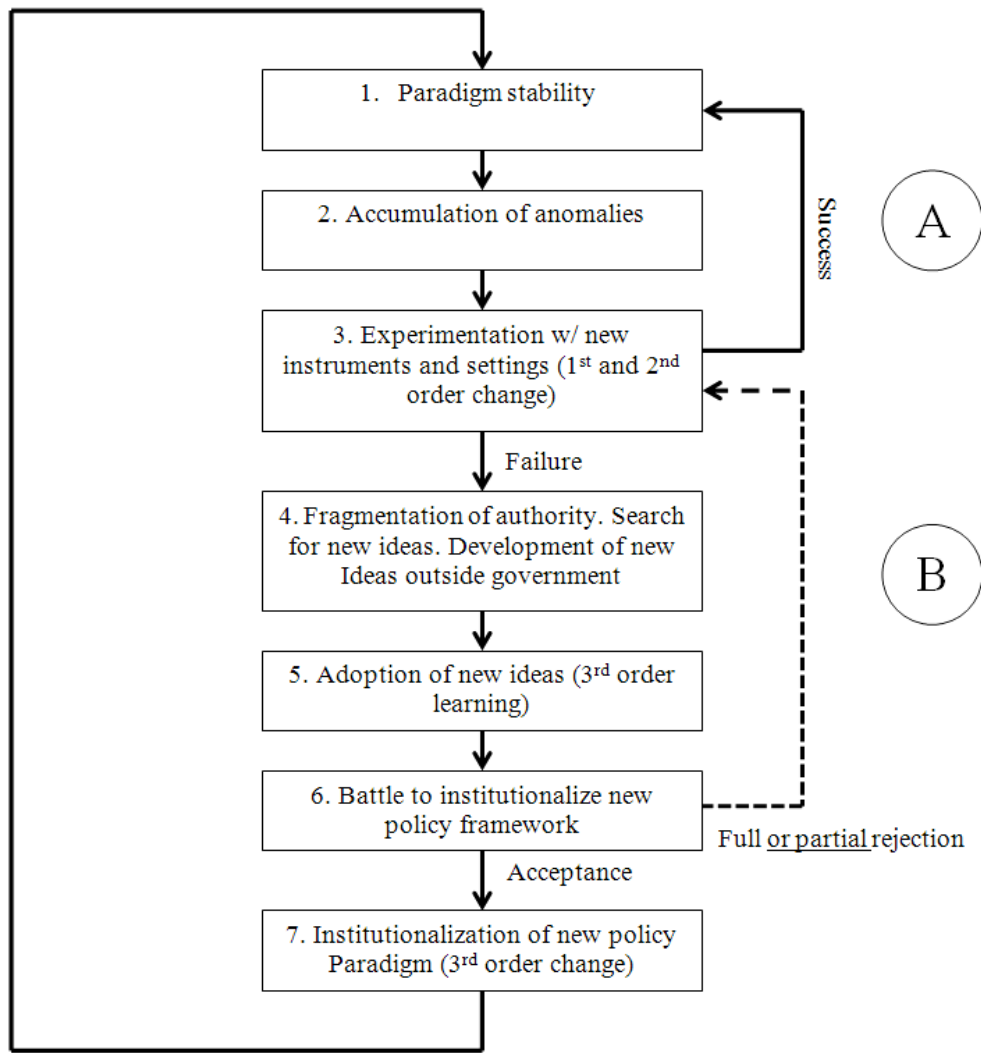
In their replication of Hall's case study, Oliver and Pemberton (2004) were less concerned with developing or refining Kuhnian analogies and more interested in assessing the accuracy of Hall's Kuhnian-inspired model given the empirics of the historical development of British economic policy over the past eighty years. Oliver and Pemberton ultimately repudiate the strong version of the incommensurability thesis adopted by Hall with their observation that elements of two co-existing paradigms may be joined in synthesis (Palier 2005; Kay 2007). Their revised model also moots the possibility of a slight rather than wholesale paradigm shift if there is no clear winner in the kinds of administrative struggles Oliver and Pemberton argue to be critical to the consolidation paradigmatic policy change (Coleman, Skogstad and Atkinson 1996; Baker 2013). This is apparent in their concession that "the evidence of our analysis is that such change can result in alterations to the prevailing framework of policy that, while insufficient to justify the term 'paradigm shift,' are certainly much more significant than the 'second order change' of Hall's typology" (Oliver & Pemberton 2004: 436; cf. Skogstad 2005). Oliver and

Pemberton also demonstrate that “third order” change did in fact materialize endogenously, rather than exogenously, in at least three instances in the case of British macroeconomic policy since 1930: once in the transition from classical-liberal to Keynesian economic theory, once in the processes involved in the movement toward what they term the “Keynesian plus” paradigm, and once in the transition out of a purely monetarist paradigm into what they call the contemporary “neoliberal” paradigm (Oliver & Pemberton 2004: 435).

To reconcile these deviations from Hall’s original model, Oliver and Pemberton develop an alternative framework that focuses on iterative processes of anomaly identification and resolution. In doing so, they rely on a framework of ideational and policy change first introduced by Hay (2001) as a means of accounting for “the crisis of Keynesianism” and its replacement with neoliberal policies in British political economy. While Hay situates his model within the standard Hallsian framework, Oliver and Pemberton build upon Hay’s method by making two important amendments to his concept of iterative sequences of paradigm change and stability. First, as mentioned above, Oliver and Pemberton allow for significant change to ultimately be accomplished internally, so that even when new paradigmatic ideas are developed elsewhere, these ideas need not be imposed from without by a change in the locus decision-making authority or a shift in the institutional venue of decision-making (cf. Baumgartner & Jones 1991). Second, whereas following Kuhn’s lead, alternatives are paradigmatically restricted for both Hall and Hay, this is not the case for Oliver and Pemberton, who instead allude to ideational bargaining occurring within specialized policy domains as the main driver of alternatives, at least some of which can transcend existing paradigmatic barriers.

Oliver and Pemberton’s amendments to Hall’s standard model are represented by Box 6 and Path B respectively in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Oliver & Pemberton’s Evolutionary Iterative Framework



Source: Adapted from Oliver & Pemberton (2004).

These amendments represent a considerable departure from Hall since the processes leading to paradigm change following “third order” anomalies are not linear or deterministic, but are rather dependent upon experts’ adherence to paradigmatically-pure renditions of an alternative paradigm (see Surel 2000: 508-509). This challenges Hall’s view of how the articulation of a new paradigm occurs and, at the same time, the axiom of epistemological incommensurability he inherited from Kuhn.

Analysis and Critique: The Hermeneutics of Paradigms and Paradigmatic Change

Oliver and Pemberton's findings have important implications for our understanding of paradigmatic change processes in the policy sciences. The most significant consequence of their revisions to Hall's work is that policy change, and especially paradigmatic policy change, may be much less sudden and all-encompassing than originally surmised, and instead a more gradual, hermeneutic and discourse-intensive activity (Gadamer 1989, Ricoeur 1981; Lejano & Leong 2012). Specifically, their allusion to possibilities for cross-paradigm learning and paradigmatic syntheses raise several questions that must be addressed about the nature and interpretation of policy anomalies and their impact on policy actors and their activities.³

For instance, Oliver and Pemberton's model highlights the significance of the battle to institutionalize ideas that ensues as a new paradigm is articulated, which pre-figures paradigmatic shift or replacement. This stands in contrast to Hall's original formulation which derives the impetus for change exclusively from the recognition of anomalies in otherwise consistent paradigms that are subsequently confirmed by elections and elite rotation. Also, as we have seen, the assumption of exogeneity that is prevalent in the majority of discussion of paradigmatic policy processes in the policy sciences has been softened in Oliver and Pemberton's analysis⁴

Oliver and Pemberton's reformulation is an improvement upon Hall's original in so far as it avoids the central problems of exogeneity and incommensurability Hall inherited from too closely relying upon Kuhn's ideas, but has its own difficulties linking policy change processes to specific policy components. For example, how are we to know which order of change follows from a partial rejection of a new paradigm? A related problem in need of clarification has to do with what exactly constitutes a paradigm, which has been significantly eroded by Oliver and

Pemberton's amendments (cf. Field 1973; Kordig 1973). As such, a new model is required that builds upon this earlier work but addresses these important conceptual issues head on.

An Improved Model of Paradigmatic Change: Policy Bricolage and the Construction of Policy Anomalies

In addressing these concerns, it bears reminding that the behavior of causal agents continues to receive insufficient attention in the literature on paradigmatic change (cf. Keck & Sikkink 1998). Re-conceptualizing what key policy actors do in processes of paradigm formation and replacement is a good place to begin revising existing models since both Hall and Oliver and Pemberton stress the importance of ideas rather than agents in their models. A major question to be addressed has to do with how participants involved in the assessment of policy problems and solutions come to view changes to specific elements of policy as being necessary. Here a critical component of paradigmatic change processes involves the manner in which these actors perceive and interpret policy anomalies, a process taken largely for granted in earlier models.

This approach takes to heart Carstensen's (2011a) argument that policy-makers' ideas are not bound by dominant, interlocking and coherent sets of ideas, but are rather the products of ideational *bricolage* in which policy-makers cobble together paradigms in a disjointed process of ideational construction. Like processes of bricolage found in anthropological studies, policy bricolage leaves in place many loose logical ends and hanging threads, discordances and outright contradictions (cf. Lévi-Strauss 1966). Arguing that policy formulation is a game played by "bricoleurs" rather than "paradigm men" per se, Carstensen (2011a: 147) contends that "actors face a complex array of challenges in getting their ideas to the top of the policy agenda, which makes it all the more important to act pragmatically, putting ideas together that may not be logically compatible but rather answer political and cultural logics." This view is amenable to

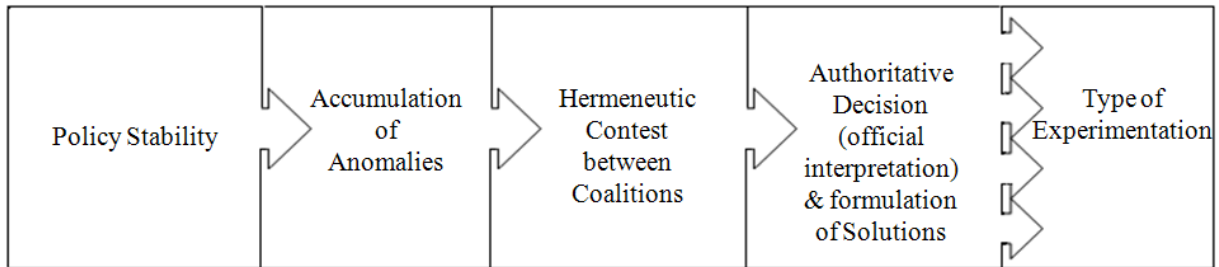
observations made by Capano (2003), who argues that operative paradigms may be dominant as opposed to hegemonic, and Kay (2009), who suggests that two paradigms may operate in tandem or even as a synthesis, despite incongruencies which might exist between them (cf. Surel 2000). Acknowledging policy anomalies to be subjective, hermeneutic constructs and not simply self-evident or purely deductive in nature allows for the elaboration of a superior explanatory approach to understanding which elements of policy change in paradigmatic change processes and why.

Given this interpretive dimension to the behavior of the bricoleur, greater attention to hermeneutics or ‘the interpretative science’ (Gadamer 1989; Lejano & Leong 2012) provides an avenue for bringing agents into models of paradigm change and stability in a way that is compatible with both Hall’s original framework and Oliver and Pemberton’s revised typology. Greater explanatory power is, however, achieved by treating policy ideas as malleable hermeneutic constructs that embody causal ontologies linking means-related and ends-related components of public policies, suggesting that paradigmatic ‘shifts’ may be much more common than paradigm replacement (Toulmin 1972). Why should we speak of paradigms at all? A focus on policy discourses necessitates a close examination of the *rationale* given by stakeholders and authorities as to the legitimacy of the programs these actors advocate for. Although the durability and very existence of ideational cores has been questioned by Carstensen (2010), policy rationales—the ends-related elements of public policies—do appear to possess something of a paradigmatic or theoretical core (Lakatos 1968; Kuhn 1962: 11; Barthes & Duisit 1975) if one is careful to distinguish programmatic ideas from the more abstract elements of cognitive paradigms (Campbell 2002).⁵ The core of a policy idea can be conceived of as the policy’s *purpose*, or what Hall (1993) called policy “goals”, the essence of which depend on a causal

ontology linking together the means and ends-related component parts of the policy.

Figure 2 offers a revised sequence for understanding the general processes generating both small and large-scale policy change. The most consequential amendment to Hall's conventional framework is introduced in the middle-stage, where hermeneutic contest between coalitions is said to occur. This stage incorporates (and at least partially endogenizes) both the agents and mechanisms ultimately responsible for policy change, and allows for more potential outcomes than simply the success or failure of paradigm transition.

Figure 2: An Amended Process of Policy Change



Thomas's (2001) study of educational reform in the Baltic area provides an empirical example of such an hermeneutically-informed analysis of policy bricolage by developing a four-part micro-process theory of policy formulation (cf. Brewer 1974; Anderson 1975). Thomas's sub-stages of the overall formulation process include a conceptualization and appraisal phase, a dialogue phase, a phase whereby policy is formulated in the literal sense, and a consolidation phase. While *conceptualization and appraisal* involves the refinement of abstract notions prevalent during agenda setting and the specification of programmatic objectives and instrument designs, the following *dialogue* phase fosters discursive interaction, permitting advocates to adjust their proposals and allowing positions established during conceptualisation to become more or less paradigmatically precise as a result of discursive interaction and ideational bricolage (see Garud & Karnøe 2003).

The process of actually formulating policy that follows these initial stages involves decision-makers' interpretation and re-interpretation of policy proposals. During this process, paradigmatic tenets are reinforced, weakened, or layered onto one another in a process of synthesis and structuration rather than declaration (see Giddens 1984). The first three micro-level processes determine the degree of ideational or paradigmatic consolidation going into the last round of discursive interaction. During the subsequent *consolidation* phase, the finishing touches on the structure of proposals are made via post-formulation discursive interaction before being submitted to authorities charged with choosing among fully-articulated 'policy products' (i.e., the outcomes or products of formulation processes).⁶

Since ideas exist within the minds of actors, the process by which bricoleurs' ideational novelty is weakened or reinforced during deliberations is discourse-contingent. While the processes yielding specific combinations of means and ends-related components are deliberative, why specific actors decide to take the positions they take, make the arguments that they do, and align with particular coalitions or issue groups is reliant upon those actors' perceptions of the feasibility of a given group's proposals (May 2005; Meltsner 1972; Majone 1975). That is, the convincingness of policy proposals is contingent upon how accurately they address perceived problems according to what is an inter-subjective definition of accuracy and necessity (Scharpf 1997; Teisman 2000; Majone 1989). Arriving at this definition is a highly political enterprise that relies upon a hermeneutic contest to authoritatively define policy anomalies.

Differing interpretations of policy contexts during deliberation suggest that coherence between preferred policy means and preferred policy ends will often be precariously maintained at best (see Kern & Howlett 2009). The implication here is not only that processes of (recurrent) formulation will be experiment-oriented, as both Hall and Oliver and Pemberton argued, but that

the micro-processes within bouts of policy formulation allow for unusual and cross-paradigm pairing of means and end-related components, contributing to incidences of layering, conversion and drift that may occur rapidly or come about gradually over time (Kay 2007; Skogstad 2005; Hacker 2005; Béland 2007; Carstensen 2011b; Thelen 2004). The result is that policies will often ultimately embody contradictions and conflicts within them.

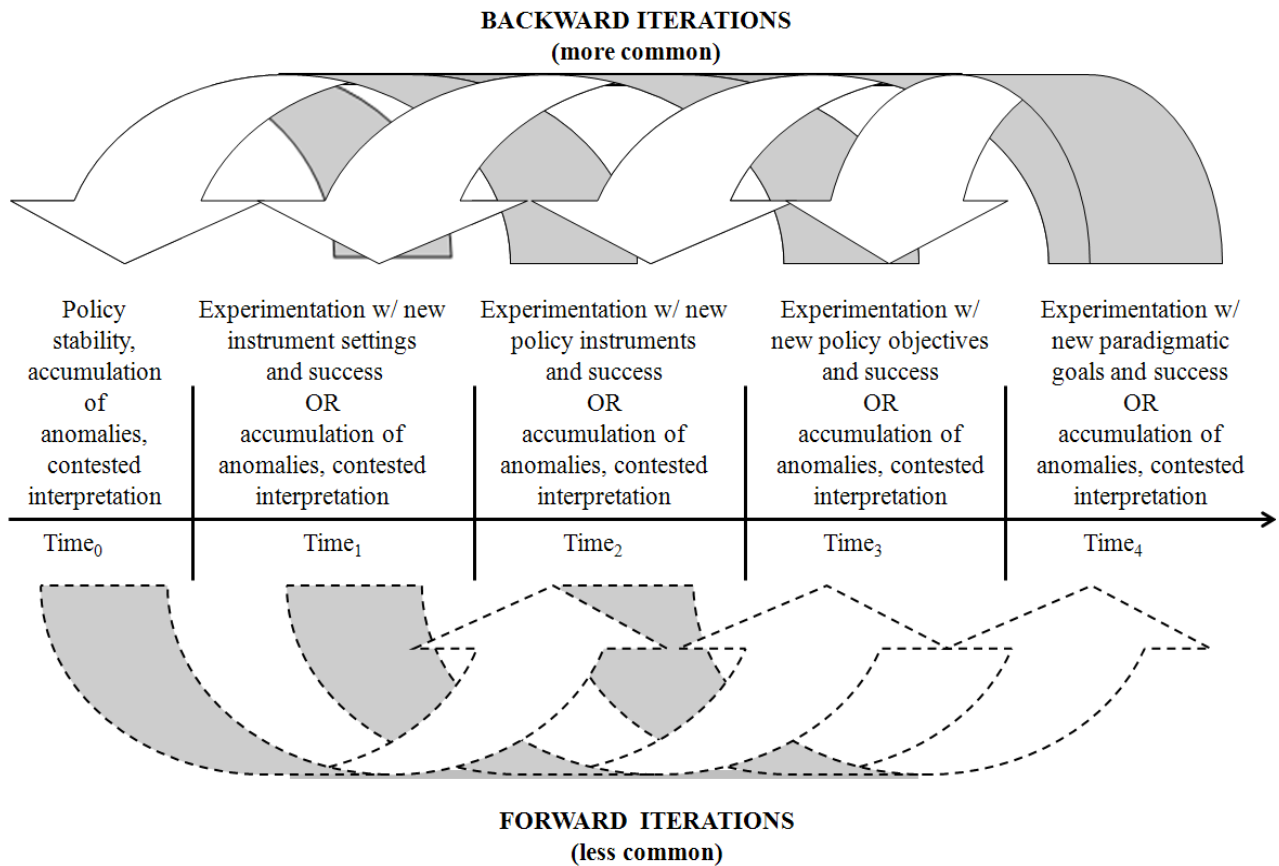
Discussion: The Politics of Anomalies and the Role of Institutional Gatekeepers Therein

The most significant implication of this approach to understanding paradigmatic policy processes is that it reorients the focus of analysis toward policy anomalies and their discursive articulation and construction, rather than toward the analysis of policy outcomes alone. Recalling Campbell's (2002) conceptual distinction between abstract and programmatic ideas, a revised typology would aim to identify such anomalies by considering four different types of anomalies linked to four elements of policy outlined by successors to Hall (see Cashore & Howlett 2007).⁷ That is, one would expect there to be four categories of anomalies, with one category associated with instrument settings, one with the choice of instruments themselves, one with programmatic objectives, and one with abstract societal goals.

Although the generic sequence in Figure 2 emphasizes what could be considered a linear process of problem-solution articulation, introducing the idea of anomaly contestation into the model abandons this assumption of linearity and cumulative change that has been maintained in most paradigm models, such as Oliver and Pemberton's sequence laid out in Figure 1.⁸ The framework outlined in Figure 3 illustrates how anomaly interpretation and contestation may yield a non-linear and multi-iterative process over time. The horizontal axis from $time_0$ to $time_4$ is indicative of a linear sequence similar to that described by Hall. Backward iterative paths above the axis highlight the common tendency toward iterative looping back to previous or existent

policy designs in the effort to correct anomalies while retaining the basic shape and structure of a policy (see Hay 2001; Oliver & Pemberton 2004; Cashore & Howlett 2007). Such backward iterations may occur in spite of prior experimentation with, and even the partial institutionalisation of, higher-order changes in circumstances in which experimentation with new goals are determined to have been unsuccessful in practice or have otherwise failed to gain widespread institutionalization. The addition of forward iterations below the axis accounts for programmatic or goals-related problem-solutions prior to any experimentation with new instruments or settings.

Figure 3: Taxonomy of Possible Processes toward ‘Paradigmatic’ Change



The sequence laid out in Figure 3 should not be taken to suggest that policy development proceeds in a random sequence of iterative trials between different combinations of settings,

instruments, objectives, and goals or in some kind of ‘garbage-can’-like process (Cohen et al 1972; Mucciaroni 1992). Rather, the multi-iterative sequence suggests that regardless of the level of logical or ideological coherence between policy elements, the authoritative actors who ultimately decide upon the constituent make-up of policy products do so purposefully but in a process of hermeneutic bricolage, whether their reasoning involves the persuasiveness, availability or feasibility of ideas, institutional constraints, or material or electoral considerations. It is these actors, by way of hermeneutic activities, who determine the relative novelty, paradigmatic or otherwise, of policy development in a given area.

It bears repeating that authoritative actors are key players in policy formulation. Strong and well-articulated policy products will, for instance, typically have an active and well-positioned ‘political entrepreneur’ championing them in addition to other (usually less) influential ‘policy entrepreneurs’ (Hogan & Feeney 2012; Kingdon 1984).⁹ Some of these actors have been dubbed “guardians” of paradigmatic tenets in the literature (see Orenstein 2013), although labeling them ideational “gatekeepers” better captures how they attempt to control the relative paradigmatic ‘purity’ of sometimes highly contradictory policy ideas during processes of (re)formulation (cf. McNamara 1998). These gatekeepers may be endogenous or exogenous to a policy subsystem, but work within institutional structures governing the policy venues in which they hold influence to control the predominant direction policy change takes (see Coleman, Skogstad & Atkinson 1996).¹⁰ That said, limitations of time, energy and resources, as well as institutional bottlenecks all constrain policy-makers at various stages in the overall policy process. The level of agency afforded by ideational bricolage nevertheless suggests that influential actors will be particularly suited to adjust anomalous observations to fit their preferred policy schemas (Jacobs 2009).¹¹

Conclusion: Paradigmatic Change and the Hermeneutics of Policy Anomalies

Hall (1990; 1993) can be credited with moving the understanding of policy dynamics and the role played by policy ideas a great distance forward. His development of the policy paradigm concept brought with it several major contributions to the understanding of policy processes and the role of ideas, actors and institutions in processes of policy change. Rather than pitting ideational variables against those concerned with material or institutional factors as previous work had tended to do (Schulman 1988), Hall's framework helped to explain problems that had plagued policy scholars for decades, such as how policy could be both change-oriented and continuous as well as both incremental and revolutionary (see Durant & Diehl 1989). This work was furthermore methodologically groundbreaking in its ability to render the constituent elements of policy more transparent by linking them to specific types of policy change.

In spite of these achievements, the areas in which Hall's framework achieved its greatest heuristic purchase are also those in which subsequent studies showed it lacked explanatory specificity. Interestingly, though subsequent studies replicating Hall's analysis of long-term change in British macroeconomic policy have brought these concerns to the fore, there have been few calls for a reformulation of the policy paradigms concept (cf. Schmidt 2011). As has been shown in the preceding analysis, paradigmatic models based on Kuhn's rigid model of scientific discovery suffer from three epistemological issues that necessitate their amendment or supersession.

In addressing these issues, the overall argument of this paper has been that significant policy change is often much less logical in a paradigmatic sense than has traditionally been assumed and much more interpretive in nature. This characterization of policy paradigms conforms more closely to the outcome of a theory devised through bricolage and hermeneutics

than one developed through rigorous inductive-deductive logic and testing. Bringing the role of hermeneutics or the study of the manner in which policy-makers interpret reality to the theoretical forefront, it has been argued that perceived policy anomalies can be made operable as independent variables in order to explain paradigmatic change processes. Treating programmatic ideas separately from abstract goals, a four-part disaggregation of policy yields several types of policy anomalies that may translate to distinct change possibilities. Building on insights gained from Thomas (2001) and Carstensen (2011a), the specific institutional settings in which policy deliberation and bricolage takes place can be conceived of as formulation spaces where interactions between individuals and coalitions leads to ideational concessions rather than inevitably to the institutionalization of paradigmatically-pure policy proposals (cf. Kingdon 1984). These concessions frequently yield a mismatch between policy ends and the appropriate means of achieving them, contributing to policy layering, conversion or drift and resulting in contradictory and conflictual policies on the ground (Béland 2007; Kay 2007; Feindt & Flynn 2009; van der Heijden 2011).

Despite the literature on policy paradigms paying little analytical attention thus far to such outcomes, this paper suggests that bouts of hermeneutic contest over the definition of policy anomalies are important events in processes of policy development, and that models of paradigmatic change ought to account for them more fully. While it is well-established that decision-makers use political influence to structure policy outcomes, bringing about significant change or ensuring policy continuity, this paper has suggested that these actors control the policy process by behaving as bricoleurs and ideational gatekeepers who adapt evidence, either positively or negatively, to conform to personal preferences and cognitive schemas often resulting in a lack of coherence and consistency in either goals or means. The preceding section

has provided a framework for understanding who these actors are, what they do, and the circumstances and processes under which ideas may be activated as causal mechanisms (Stone 1989). This revised framework offers an account of problem-solution development via the hermeneutic activities of key actors involved in the articulation of policy anomalies and policy alternatives that helps to overcome the problems associated with Hall's original formulation as well as to address some of the questions raised, but not answered, by his critics.

Endnotes

¹ Hall (1993: n.21) did recognize the possibility of “fourth order” learning, defined as “learning how to learn” (cf. Argyris & Schön, 1978). Nevertheless, the apparent arbitrariness of Hall's consideration of change to policy targets as qualitatively equal to changes in policy instrument choice is looked upon skeptically by authors who wish to differentiate the more abstract elements of policy paradigms from the more concrete. Campbell (2002), for example, categorized policy ideas as belonging to four types, cognitive paradigms or worldviews, norms, frames and programs, thereby distinguishing between belief-oriented and observation-contingent policy ideas (see Braun 1999).

² Italics in original.

³ Indeed, the impact of such a shift in thinking about policy dynamics can be seen in the emphasis on cross-coalition learning in the works of Sabatier & Weible (2007). This is also true for the analysis of change dynamics found in the influential punctuated equilibrium approach to understanding policy change, based on negative and positive feedback processes in policy communities (see Baumgartner & Jones 1993). The parallels between Hall's method and the Punctuated Equilibrium approach are outlined by Baumgartner (2013).

⁴ The exogeneity axiom has, however, only been partly relaxed by Oliver and Pemberton (see Baumgartner et al 2009; Kingdon 1984; Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith 1993). This is to say, Oliver and Pemberton are cognizant of the internal positioning of relevant actors in ideational struggles as well as of the fact that institutionalization is generated from within, and so have modified Hall's framework by internalizing the *process* of policy change. However, they continue to hold the view that policy ideas themselves are generated externally. This is an issue that is addressed by Howlett and Cashore (2009) in their development of thermostatic and neo-homeostatic types of policy transformation, and one that is critiqued by Carstensen (2011a; 2011b) as having erred in removing agency from explanations of policy change. This lack of theoretical integration of change agents in Oliver and Pemberton's model is surprising given that they allude to interpretive contestation in battles to institutionalize new ideas.

⁵ It is in this context that Campbell (2002: 28) contrasted programmatic ideas with cognitive paradigms (i.e., understandings of how the world works and how political institutions should be organized). For Campbell programmatic ideas are “more precise guidelines about how already-existing institutions and instruments should be used in specific situations according to the

principles of well-established paradigms.” This idea resonates with Dryzek’s (1982: 322) hermeneutic approach to policy design, which he defined as involving “the evaluation of existing conditions and the exploration of alternatives to them, in terms of criteria derived from an understanding of possible better conditions, through an interchange between the frames of reference of analysts and actors.” Aside from adding agency to the creation and development of programmatic ideas, the purpose of the hermeneutic approach, according to Dryzek, is to explain “residual” circumstances not captured by five conventional “niche” models: rational evaluation, advocacy, social choice, and moral philosophy. Making the case against niche methods of inquiry, Dryzek argues that this residual category is pervasive, dealing with what have since come to be known as “wicked problems” (Churchman 1967; Conklin 2006; Levin et al 2012; Van Bueren, Klijn & Koppenjan 2003).

⁶ The term policy product is used here to denote decision-makers’ synthesis of policy alternatives into tangible policy solutions (cf. Schickore & Steinle 2006). A policy product is not synonymous with “policy outcome” or “policy output” insofar as the latter two terms relate to phenomena that can only be measured post-implementation.

⁷ A more thorough disaggregation of policy is necessary to accurately explain many types of policy change, particularly change that is more consequential than Hall’s second order change but is by no means “paradigmatic”. Cashore and Howlett (2007), for example, have approached this problem in their discussion of the “dependent variable problem” in the policy sciences, recommending that the three-order Hallsian taxonomy undergo “recalibration in light of its own logic, as well as in light of the empirical evidence gathered in many cases of policy change” (Howlett & Cashore 2009: 38). Carefully distinguishing between different levels or orders of policy ends and means, Cashore and Howlett (2007) devise a six-part taxonomy that includes three means-related components and three corresponding ends-related components of the dependent variable public policy rather than just the three elements identified by Hall. Instead of viewing changes to instrument targets as an element of second order change (see Hall 1993: 278-279), Cashore and Howlett isolate changes to instrument targets, along with changes to implementation preferences and programmatic objectives, as specific components of policies subject to change. While disaggregating policy into six components adds sophistication and nuance to Hall’s model, a four-part disaggregation of policy into settings, instruments, programmatic objectives, and abstract goals is sufficient to overcome the conflation of policy components in analyses of incremental or revolutionary change.

⁸ Baker (2013), for example, observed in the case of macroprudential regulation that ‘third order’ goals-oriented change pre-empted the institutionalisation of policy instruments and settings-oriented changes that will eventually be required to affect these goals. Paradigms that exist in tandem or as hybrids also produce the pairing of means and ends, or the synthesis of paradigmatic goals, that would be inexplicable under a strictly linear (read strictly Kuhnian) typology. Even when paradigm incommensurability is relaxed, as is the case in Capano’s (2003) examination of Italian administrative reform and Kay’s (2007) analysis of tiered healthcare in Australia, the processes by which policy paradigms become dominant, subordinate, hegemonic and synthetic cannot be accounted for by frameworks where linearity is assumed (Surel 2000).

⁹ This scenario sits in contrast to one whereby political entrepreneurs come to support an idea only at the time of decision-making, when authoritative actors choose among competing but fully-articulated policy products. The reason that ideas with a political champion during formulation are more likely to succeed is partly due to political entrepreneurs’ attention to

developing an ideas' institution-worthiness, or how well a new idea can be applied to existent institutional structures and networks of ideas already in practice.

¹⁰ Ideational gatekeepers influence the type of iteration a problem-solution constitutes by opening and closing opportunities for policy to follow in Figure 3, just as gatekeepers may operate locks in a canal system. These locks can be conceived are of two types: structural, which are largely beyond any actor to exert influence upon, such as economic constraints, the mode of governance, or constitutional arrangements (see Mucciaroni 1992); and institutional, which may be operated upon by institutionally-privileged actors. High ranking bureaucrats may, for example, affect what deLeon (1978) calls "low-level terminations", or what translates to low order iterations, while more institutionally-privileged actors may affect high order iterations with the stroke of a pen. Structural locks can only be destroyed, repaired, eroded, not opened and closed. Structural locks are therefore typically constraints on iterative experimentation while institutional locks may either constrain or provide opportunities for institutionally-privileged gatekeepers to see that this or that type of iteration plays out. The institutional or structural means of affecting change is, however, not a certainty. That is, in spite of whether policy change is determined to be desirable according to relevant actors, the means of accomplishing it may be absent. Some states or subsystems will possess the means of affecting change while others will not, given available resources and administrative capacity.

¹¹ Agency is limited in the sense that, while bricolage may be wholly internal to individual participants, structuration is not (Giddens 1984). It is in the area of structuration where authoritative and otherwise influential actors possess a unique ability to engage in cross-paradigm patching of seemingly incongruent means and ends-related components to satisfy state goals (Kay 2007). Even without sufficient evidence to support a continuation or departure from the status quo, research into cognitive psychology finds that individuals will be reluctant to abandon the schemas on which they rely to render familiar otherwise unfamiliar situations or circumstances. When sense experience is disconfirmatory, schema theory holds that actors who possess strong ontological beliefs (i.e., paradigmatic beliefs) will construe the meaning of observations to fit within one's working schema (cf. Toulmin 1972; Campbell 2002). Jacobs (2009: 259) observes, however, "confirmation bias is not absolute" but instead triggers additional neural processing, especially when the failure of expectations is obvious and repeated across multiple contexts. The interpretation of policy anomalies and the formation of problem-solutions are therefore largely internal to individual participants in the formulation process, and constitute highly significant determinants of policy outcomes since they apply equally to all actors, influential or not, in the processes from agenda setting to evaluation (Carstensen 2011a).

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