

## **Collaborative governance and a strategic approach to facilitating change: lessons learned from forest agreements in South East Queensland and the Great Bear Rainforest**

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### **Abstract**

*Successful agents of change can leverage their impact by understanding how change is institutionalized and by designing policy solutions in collaboration with one-time adversaries. Collaborative outcomes can pose a threat to traditional agencies and institutions by legitimating new, radical ideas outside the cognitive boundaries of the existing policy sphere.*

*This article presents a comparative analysis of two case studies, the South East Queensland Forest Agreement (SEQFA) in Australia and the Great Bear Rainforest Agreement (GBRA) in British Columbia, Canada, as examples of integrated policy solutions achieved through collaborative efforts after years of intractable conflict. In these cases, collaborative governance signifies an enhancement in public policymaking and administration not by replacing, but integrating competitive and collaborative decision-making.*

*Even though state actors are often reluctant to yield control, the case studies demonstrate that collaborative coalitions empowered by public consent can legitimately compel governments and powerful interests to renegotiate contested policies and institutions. This article provides a new analytic framework for assessing and explaining the dynamics of policy change in a collaborative context. Activists are encouraged to use this framework in developing strategic approaches to facilitating change.*

### **Collaborative governance and activism**

Activists are playing increasingly prominent roles in facilitating significant changes in official policy; including the renegotiation of resource regimes and the development of integrated solutions for economic and ecological sustainability. In fact, civil society in general is exerting a strong influence on the continuing redefinition of liberal democracy.

How do we determine the success or failure of a particular social or environmental movement? In liberal democracies the political system is the ultimate determinant of success or failure, as reflected in official policies and

institutions. When policies and institutions change to reflect the goals and aims of a particular movement, we have tangible evidence that activists and supporters have indeed contributed to meaningful change.

This article explores the relation between policy change and collaborative governance in the context of seemingly intractable conflicts and successfully renegotiated resource regimes.

*Collaborative governance*, to paraphrase Culpepper (2002), is the availability of institutions that promote interaction among governmental and non-governmental actors, without state actors monopolizing problem definition, goal-setting, or methods of implementation.

*Resource regimes*, to paraphrase Kissling-Näf and Varone (2000), are social institutions with a regulative component, including formal property and use rights, and a policy component, consisting of resource-specific use and/or protection policies, designed to meet specific goals and objectives.<sup>1</sup> This definition explicitly recognizes resource regimes as social constructs and resource use as a blend of social decisions with rules and institutions subject to re-evaluation and renegotiation as society's values and priorities change and diversify. Attempts to renegotiate rules governing unsustainable resource practices are consistently opposed by powerful interests since social institutions and practices become ingrained and are seen as authoritative and "natural" given long-standing social relations of power and capital (Lipschutz and Mayer 1996: 22).

How does collaboration arise in real-world conflicts? What can activists and practitioners learn from such dynamics to become more effective agents of the changes they seek? A better understanding of this relationship is critical for at least two reasons: first, the role of activism and public participation in modern governance is highly contentious; and second, there are unresolved questions about collaborative processes and outcomes being replicable in other contexts.

This article examines such questions in relation to two strategic land-use planning initiatives that have proven noteworthy both in terms of collaborative processes and innovative policy outcomes; the South East Queensland Forest Agreement (SEQFA) in Australia and the Great Bear Rainforest Agreement (GBRA) in British Columbia, Canada. These agreements formally recognize the renegotiation of resource allocations on a regional basis, institutionalizing integrated ecological and economic policy solutions after years of intractable, value-driven conflict.

In both of these cases, rival environmental and development coalitions undertook collaborative processes after years of open conflict, in response to

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<sup>1</sup> "Property rights are the social institutions that define or delimit the range of privileges granted to individuals to specific assets... By allocating decision-making authority, they also determine who are the economic actors in a system..." (Libecap 1989: 1, quoted in Lipschutz and Mayer 1996: 36).

government incapacity and institutional failure and managed to achieve consensus based on mutual interests. As a result, government agencies discovered themselves in the “shadow of collaboration” compelled to respond and integrate innovative policy solutions under intense political pressure. This notion is based on, and analogous to, the “shadow of hierarchy” (Scharpf 1993) under which reluctant adversaries are compelled to cooperate in response to pressure by the state authority.<sup>2</sup>

### **A note on conflict**

Contrary to common attitudes about conflict being almost exclusively negative, Dryzek (1996: 481-2) views an oppositional civil society as a vital impetus for democratization and, counter intuitively, he argues, a degree of exclusion by the state can lead to a more robust democracy. He contends that an “examination of the history of democratization indicates that pressures for greater democracy almost always emanate from oppositional civil society, rarely or never from the state itself” (1996: 476).

Some degree of conflict can improve the quality of solutions reached during social interaction, particularly when combined with, or setting the stage for, some level of cooperation.

## **Case Studies**

### **Case Selection and Methodology**

The two case studies were chosen because of their public prominence, relevance to the topic, and because each has been extensively documented. The units of analysis are the policy subsystems and geographical regions associated with the South East Queensland Forest Agreement (SEQFA) in Queensland, Australia and the Great Bear Rainforest Agreement (GBRA) in British Columbia, Canada.

In contrast to typical policy processes resulting in incremental adjustments, both the SEQFA and GBRA agreements signified radical shifts in policy goals from those focused on commodity production and integrated resource management (IRM) to ecological and economic sustainability frameworks. The result in each case is a common-pool resource regime in which all concerned, including activists and the wider community, are invested by virtue of their participation in the renegotiation process (Lipschutz and Mayer 1996).

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<sup>2</sup> In the “shadow of hierarchy” the “credible threat of state agents is more likely to force non-cooperative actors into successful negotiations” (Viehöver 2000: 280); in the “shadow of collaboration” societal actors and the threat of public opinion can force non-cooperative, including state, actors into negotiation.

In addition, the governance frameworks that encompass the transformative processes and institutional and policy changes achieved in the SEQ and GBR are examples of collaborative governance.

### **Case study: South East Queensland Forest Agreement (SEQFA)**

The story of the SEQFA is one of competing coalitions successfully breaking out of structured conflict over the native forests of South East Queensland, Australia to collaborate in renegotiating the resource regime. The key to the success of this renegotiation was the agreement to make a complete transition from harvesting native-forests to cutting plantation-based timber by 2025

In September 1999, the government of Queensland, key conservation groups, and the Queensland Timber Board (QTB) entered into a written agreement that changed the course of natural resource management policy in the state. The SEQ Forest Agreement<sup>3</sup> represents the successful resolution of complex social and environmental issues, in particular, the allocation and tenure of approximately 689,000 hectares of public native forest with high conservation value as well as high suitability for commercial forestry.

Confrontations over the native forests grew intractable in the 1990s as forest industry sought to increase production at the same time as conservation groups mobilized to protect biodiversity and prevent further loss of irreplaceable habitat. The forces at work in the policy domain included economic adjustment, civic engagement, and a strengthening biodiversity and sustainability discourse. This is also the story of government incapacity and institutional failure in establishing a policy context capable of integrating the level of innovation needed to resolve the impasse. With much of the conduct of the SEQFA and the context of the Regional Forest Agreement (RFA) policy process already well-described by Brown (2001, 2002), McDonald (1999), and Clarke (2000), this article focuses primarily on the discursive practices and collaborative processes involved in achieving integrated, sustainable policy solutions.

The SEQ region encompasses about 6.1 million hectares in the South Eastern corner of Queensland, with about 45 per cent covered in forest. About 55 per cent of the native vegetation has been cleared for urban development and agriculture. In the early 2000s, the forest industry in Queensland contributed approximately \$1.7 billion to the state economy and directly employed around 17,000 people (Queensland 2004).

In Australia, ongoing conflict over the remnant forests has kept the conservation of native forest ecosystems on the political agenda for several decades. In 1992, the National Forest Policy Statement (NFPS) was signed by

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<sup>3</sup> *South East Queensland Forests Stakeholder/Government Agreement* signed by Premier Beattie and lead representatives of the Australian Rainforest Conservation Society, the Queensland Conservation Council, The Wilderness Society, and the Queensland Timber Board, 16 September 1999 (Queensland 1999; also see Beattie 1999a).

the Australian States<sup>4</sup> and the Commonwealth to provide an intergovernmental policy framework for the management of forests. Regional Forest Agreements (RFAs) are the means by which the principles and objectives of the NFPS are to be implemented. RFAs are 20-year agreements between the Commonwealth and State governments designed to resolve the conflicts over forest management by providing a balance between environmental, social, economic and heritage values.

By the late 1990s, the Queensland forest industry faced severe challenges, the main issue being certainty of access to timber. The yield for sawlogs on public forest land declined by 50 per cent from the 1970s to 2000 while the total cut from native forests and plantations increased during that time. The industry had been making a quiet transition from native forests to plantations, consistent with national trends, while so intent on maintaining access to native forests that they almost lost sight of the growing importance of plantation resources (Brown 2002: 22).

In early 1997, an RFA "scoping" agreement was signed between Australian Prime Minister John Howard and Queensland Premier Peter Beattie, identifying the boundaries, broad objectives, and the legal and policy obligations of both governments. A scientific bioregional assessment confirmed the difficulty of achieving both a comprehensive forest reserve to protect biodiversity *and* a native forest logging industry. The RFA process became highly politicized as the federal government pursued its political agenda of a forest industry based on continued logging of native forests in perpetuity<sup>5</sup> and chose to intervene in the process, as it had with RFAs in other states. Commonwealth and Queensland government officials took control of the process and excluded the scientific reference panel from meetings as forest management options were developed.

By late-1998, the structural deficits of the formal Commonwealth-State RFA process had become apparent to key stakeholders, as well as many knowledgeable observers and concerned public, with a growing realization that the status quo was simply unacceptable. Conservationists, the timber industry and key State agencies became increasingly dissatisfied with the command-and-control Commonwealth approach and the incapacity of the RFA process to accommodate innovative solutions. In July 1999, in the face of intractable conflict, Queensland Premier Beattie stepped in to play the role of policy broker, committing State government resources to supporting the process with or without Commonwealth government support. As a result, competing coalitions undertook direct negotiations outside the RFA framework; a move welcomed by the Premier and affiliates within State government who were determined to end the politically damaging conflict, and viewed with alarm by the "conservative" faction within the Commonwealth and State governments and forest industry.

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<sup>4</sup> Except for Tasmania, which signed in 1995.

<sup>5</sup> The Howard government's view at the time was that an RFA must provide for "resource security for a sustainable native hardwood timber industry in perpetuity" (Tuckey 2000).

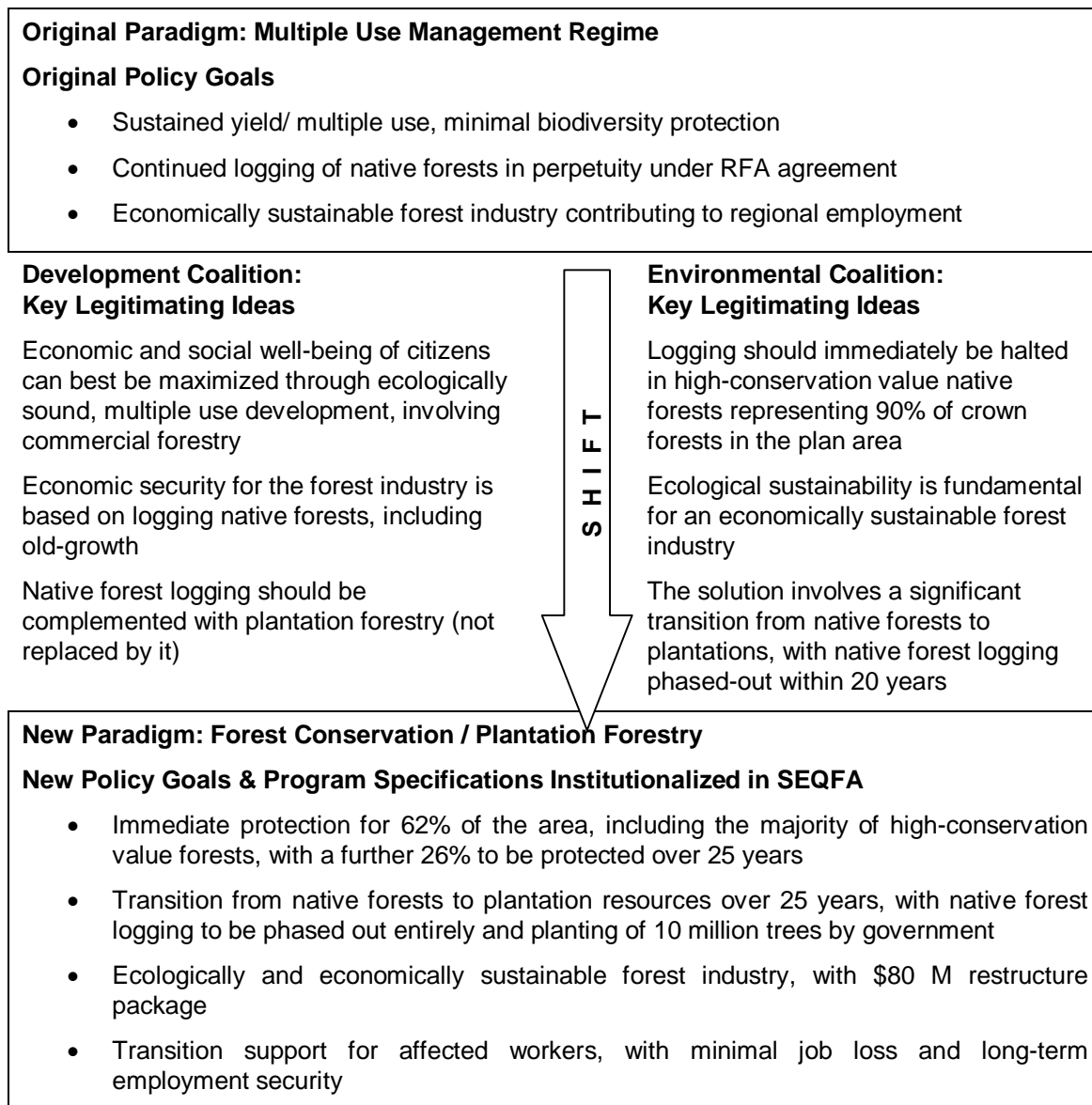
Contrary to the expected outcome for an RFA – a typical compromise solution carving a contentious area into various conservation and development zones – the SEQ stakeholders chose to think outside of the “spatial” box and opted for an innovative transitional solution that introduced a temporal element to the policy discourse. The collaborative coalition successfully developed a shared vision for new outcomes, devised the technical solutions necessary for implementation, and communicated the new direction to a diversity of stakeholders in such a way as to gain their support. Recalcitrant State government officials and agencies found themselves compelled to support the new vision (in the shadow of collaboration), even though the Commonwealth continued to attempt containment of the discourse within the old RFA/ multiple use framework.

On 16 September 1999, the Queensland government, QTB and key conservation groups signed the SEQ stakeholder forest agreement (Queensland 1999). Stepping outside of the constraints of the RFA process, the stakeholder solution comes close to meeting the national reserve criteria (JANIS 1997) by immediately protecting 425,000 ha (62% of the area) of the high conservation value forests, with continued logging on 184,000 ha (26%) to be phased-out over 25 years, and future management options to be decided on 80,000 ha (12%).

The key concept underlying the success of the agreement was the provision for the timber industry to make a complete transition from native-forests to a plantation-based resource by 2025. This innovative, integrated solution addresses the interests and objectives of both environmental and development coalitions, in contrast to the typical RFA approach advocated by the Commonwealth and implemented in the other States.

Figure 1 depicts the discursive shifts that occurred in this policy subsystem by comparing two sets of interdependent factors: 1, the original policy goals and the new policy goals institutionalized through the SEQFA, and 2, the key legitimating ideas prominent in the parallel discourses of the two competing coalitions prior to the consensus discourse that emerged. The figure also shows the original alignment between the multiple use policy goals and the dominant discourse of the development coalition, and the subsequent alignment between the collaborative discourse, integrating the ecological sustainability ideas of the environmental coalition, and the new collaborative policy goals.

**Figure 1: SEQ Policy Regime - Paradigm Shift in Ideas and Policy Goals**



As further evidence of the successful institutionalization of the SEQFA process, in October 2001 the Queensland Government used it to model the Statewide Forests Process over the rest of the state (Queensland, 2009, also see ARCS, nd). For example, in 2002 the Queensland Government committed to exclude logging from 1 million hectares of state forests in the Western Hardwoods region, and is in the process of establishing a total of 20,000 hectares of hardwood plantation as a replacement resource for the crown native hardwoods in SEQ and the Western Hardwoods region. Timber Queensland argues that the SEQFA approach has delivered one of Australia's best examples of achieving resource security for the hardwood processing industry. Furthermore, they

indicate that the "key elements of this success have been to engage directly and reach agreement with the conservation movement and the State government about future forest management." (Burgess, n.d.)

### **Case Study: The Great Bear Rainforest Agreement (GBRA)**

In April 2001, an internationally recognized consensus agreement for sustainable management of the Great Bear Rainforest (GBR) on the west coast of British Columbia (Canada) was signed by forest companies, environmental groups, First Nations and the provincial government, after years of intractable conflict. In March 2006 the GBR agreements were formalized by the BC Government and First Nations, setting the stage for protection of 2 million ha and ecosystem based harvesting throughout the remainder of the region (British Columbia, 2006).

The forest land use policy regime in British Columbia, including that of the GBR (Central Coast) region has been extensively researched and analyzed by numerous scholars including Hoberg (2001), Magnusson and Shaw (2003), Salazar and Alper (2000), Shaw (2004), Stanbury (2000), Wilson (1998, 2001) and Winn (2001). Given the comprehensive nature of the literature, this account focuses on the discursive practices of the competing coalitions, the collaborative processes, and government's response to stakeholder consensus.

The story of the Great Bear Rainforest Agreement (GBRA) is one of institutional inadequacy in response to economic adjustment, domestic and international civic engagement, market pressures, and a strengthening biodiversity and sustainability discourse. Conflict escalated to intractable levels in this region in the 1990s as forest industry and the BC government continued to operate under an established industrial forestry paradigm that privileged development over conservation, while environmental groups successfully mobilized public support for the protection of globally significant old growth forests.

The very visible and highly publicized face-off between environmentalists and the entrenched development coalition in Clayoquot Sound on Vancouver Island set the stage for BC forest policy discourse in the 1990s. During the summer of 1993, over 9,000 protesters from all walks of life joined blockades to protest against plans to clearcut old-growth forests in the largest act of civil disobedience in Canadian history. Nearly nine hundred environmental supporters were arrested and charged, and most were found guilty of violating the B.C. Supreme Court injunction supporting the right of forest companies to continue cutting old-growth. Two key lessons emerged from the Clayoquot Sound conflict that would have a profound impact on the GBR negotiations; 1. the effectiveness of market-based campaigns in changing an established incentive structure, and, 2. the ability of actors to develop collaborative solutions in spite of seemingly irreconcilable differences.

Clayoquot Sound signified a fundamental shift in the efficacy of environmentalism in B.C., representing a turning point in the ability of the



environmental coalition to thrust its problem-solution narrative not only into the sovereign political space, but also onto the global political stage.

During the late 1990s, the Land and Resource Management Planning (LRMP) process became the B.C. government's primary institutional strategy for minimizing land-use conflict and the primary mechanism for forest land-use planning in the province. In July 1996, the Central Coast Land and Coastal Resource Management Plan (CCLCRMP)<sup>6</sup> was initiated to deliver recommendations on the use and management of Crown lands in the GBR region, including land-use zones and protected areas (British Columbia 1996).

Government took the position that it could not halt resource development in the GBR completely during the planning process because this would result in serious social and economic disruption for communities inside and outside the region. The only viable solution, environmentalists argued, was a moratorium on logging in all sensitive watersheds until all parties could agree on a comprehensive land use strategy for the region. Eventually frustrated with the "talk and log" tactics of the forest companies and the provincial government and the lack of results from public opinion campaigns, the environmental coalition shifted venues by: 1) strengthening connections with international environmental advocacy networks, and 2) renewing commitments to market action in the USA and Europe aimed at targeting large consumers of BC's old growth.

Efforts to politicize the "chain of consumption" proved effective, particularly since the boycott threats alone were enough to convince most companies to change their purchasing behavior out of fears of consumer protest and loss of market share (Shaw 2004: 379). The stakes for forest companies operating on the BC coast were immense, with many hundreds of millions of dollars in sales in jeopardy unless forest companies could broker a deal with environmental groups to end the conflicts.<sup>7</sup>

By 1999, BC forest companies were losing millions of dollars in contracts because of the market boycotts in the US and Europe. International public relations campaigns by industry and government were proving ineffective and the development coalition could no longer control policy outcomes in its favor. At the same time, the formal LRMP process was "having difficulty reaching

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<sup>6</sup> Originally referred to as the Central Coast LRMP (CCLRMP), government renamed the process to integrate the coastal component.

<sup>7</sup> For example, in 1998, B&Q, the largest home improvement chain in the UK, decided to phase-out purchases of BC hemlock. In total, three European companies cancelled contracts worth about \$7.5 million. In 1999, IKEA, with annual sales worldwide of \$8 billion, announced that it would completely phase out old growth wood products by 2001. During 1999 and 2000 the three largest home improvement retailers in the USA – Home Depot, Lowe's and Menards – all announced that they would stop purchasing products from old growth forests, to be followed shortly by others, including Wickes Inc, HomeBase Inc., and Centex Corp (Stanbury 2000: 197). In addition, sales of over \$600 million per year in Germany alone were in jeopardy prior to signing of the GBRA.

agreement and achieving tangible outcomes for all of the different groups involved" (CFCI n.d.).

A number of forest companies decided that the only option, given mounting economic losses, entailed direct negotiations with the environmental groups outside of the formal government decision-making framework. In 1999, four large forest companies holding tenures in the GBR began to meet and formed a negotiating group called the Coast Forest Conservation Initiative (CFCI),<sup>8</sup> opening the policy domain to new ideas. Their goal was to work together with environmental groups to develop "a conservation plan for forests on the Central and North Coast of British Columbia that will be credible both locally and globally" [CFCI, 2001].

The relationship between the BC government and CFCI was strained, since government faced the problem that the CFCI and environmental groups represented only two of the interests involved. Aboriginal 'First Nations' had invested much effort in government-to-government treaty negotiations linked to the formal LRMP planning process and refused to participate in an informal process without such links. Government was firm in its position that the responsibility for land use decisions rested with the government of British Columbia and First Nations. Meanwhile the formal LRMP process designed to include all of the stakeholders in the region had made little progress after three years, largely because it had not adequately addressed the problem of First Nations land claims. Above all, government was not open at the time to truly creative solutions, largely because of the structural inertia and "path dependence" of past policy choices and its insistence on Integrated Resource Management as the solution (which increasingly became a legitimacy trap; see Wilson 1998).

In spite of many setbacks, CFCI companies and environmental groups formalized their discussions by establishing the Joint Solutions Project (JSP) to explore ways to end the market-based conflict over the forests in the GBR by collaborating on integrative solutions and developing a new vision for forest management on the coast. Active participation by the First Nations in the Turning Point process coordinated by the David Suzuki Foundation (Greenpeace 2001), shifted the discussions to a new level where the provincial government had no option but to engage with the CFCI/JSP/Turning Point collaborative.

In July 2000, a "standstill" agreement was forged between forest companies and environmental groups, whereby environmental groups agreed to halt their market campaigns in return for a promise from Weyerhaeuser and Western Forest Products not to log in 30 sensitive watersheds. The draft agreement was

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<sup>8</sup> The make-up of CFCI varied over time with some forest companies joining and then dropping out. At the time of signing the GBRA there were five companies represented: Canadian Forest Products, International Forest Products (Interfor), NorskeCanada, Western Forest Products, and Weyerhaeuser (CFCI n.d.).

presented to government as a realistic solution to resolving the conflict. The initial response from government, particularly the forests ministry, was disbelief concerning the amount of potential protected area on the map.

Government officials generally held the view that the formal multi-stakeholder LRMP planning process had been hijacked by the narrow special interests of the environmental groups who had successfully coerced forest companies into negotiation through economic extortion. Because of the shift in incentive structure represented by the new economic realities, the forest companies involved were committed to achieving and implementing an agreement, almost regardless of government's position. In their view, there was simply no other choice; they would stop logging if necessary, since they could not continue to operate at a financial loss. At the same time, government also began to recognize the need to bring the "outsiders" back to the LRMP table, or at least appear to do so. The most difficult challenge was to integrate the draft agreement and its radical solutions with the interests and demands of other participants in the Central Coast LCRMP process. In the end, government was forced to revise provincial statutes to accommodate the conditions of the logging moratorium.

Much of the resulting GBR framework agreement built on the principles and processes created and articulated by the JSP, in consultation with a wide range of individuals and organizations. The April 4 2001 GBRA announcement by the provincial government represents a consensus agreement among all the parties involved at the CCLCRMP table.<sup>9</sup> It was in the best interests of all parties involved to demonstrate support for the consensus agreement, even though the outcome was distasteful to some. Government sought to increase its credibility by proclaiming leadership in negotiating a truce and members of the JSP needed the legitimacy of government endorsement "to counter accusations that their process had been undemocratic and unrepresentative" (Shaw 2004: 382). In the end, self-interests became aligned with mutual interests.

In February 2006, the Great Bear Rainforest Agreements were formalized and announced by the B.C. government and First Nations; including plans to protect two million hectares (5 million acres) and to phase-in Ecosystem-Based Management<sup>10</sup> throughout the region by March 2009 (British Columbia, 2006).

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<sup>9</sup> "In order to receive support for the agreement from the IWA and Truck Loggers Association, on April 18th the government increased the transition fund commitment by \$25 million [to \$35 million in total], subject to matching funds being provided by forest companies or other parties" (Morishita and Hoberg 2001).

<sup>10</sup> Ecosystem-Based Management (EBM) is defined as: "An adaptive approach to managing human activities that seeks to ensure the coexistence of healthy, fully functioning ecosystems and human communities. The intent is to maintain those spatial and temporal characteristics and processes of whole ecosystems such that component species and ecological processes can be sustained and human well-being can be improved." For more information see *The Ecosystem-Based Management Handbook* by the Coast Information Team: <http://www.citbc.org/c-ebm-hdbk-fin-22mar04.pdf>. Also see "Definition of 'Full Implementation of Ecosystem Based Management ('EBM') by March 31, 2009" at

In 2007, \$120 million was dedicated for conservation management and economic diversification for First Nations in the GBR. At the time of writing (November 2010) government has legally protected 2.1 million hectares (33 per cent of the GBR) from logging. New regulations, based on Ecosystem Based Management, ensure that 50 percent of the natural level of old growth forest will be maintained over the entire region. Outside of the protected areas over 700,000 hectares (1,700,000 acres) of rainforest is off-limits to logging (British Columbia, 2009; also see Coast Sustainability Trust, 2007).

This analysis shows that new actors became engaged in the GBR policy arena in the form of environmental groups (FAN, CRN, RAN), transnational ENGOs such as Greenpeace Germany and Greenpeace UK, and, importantly, the new cross-coalition collaborative alliances such as the CFCI and JSP. The new ideas introduced by transnational knowledge networks proved particularly influential in the discursive shift that occurred with the GBRA (Bernstein and Cashore 2000). These involved ideas related to "leverage politics,"<sup>11</sup> including market-based tactics and strategies involving boycott campaigns and threats of economic reprisals, as well as ideas involving innovations in civic engagement, consensual discourse and collaborative strategies (for example, see Dodge 2001 and Webster 2002).

An important transition in the discursive shift occurred in 2000 when participants in the JSP collaborative coalition achieved a draft consensus agreement on a set of principled ideas after having struggled to develop a solution that integrated shared ecological and economic interests and values.

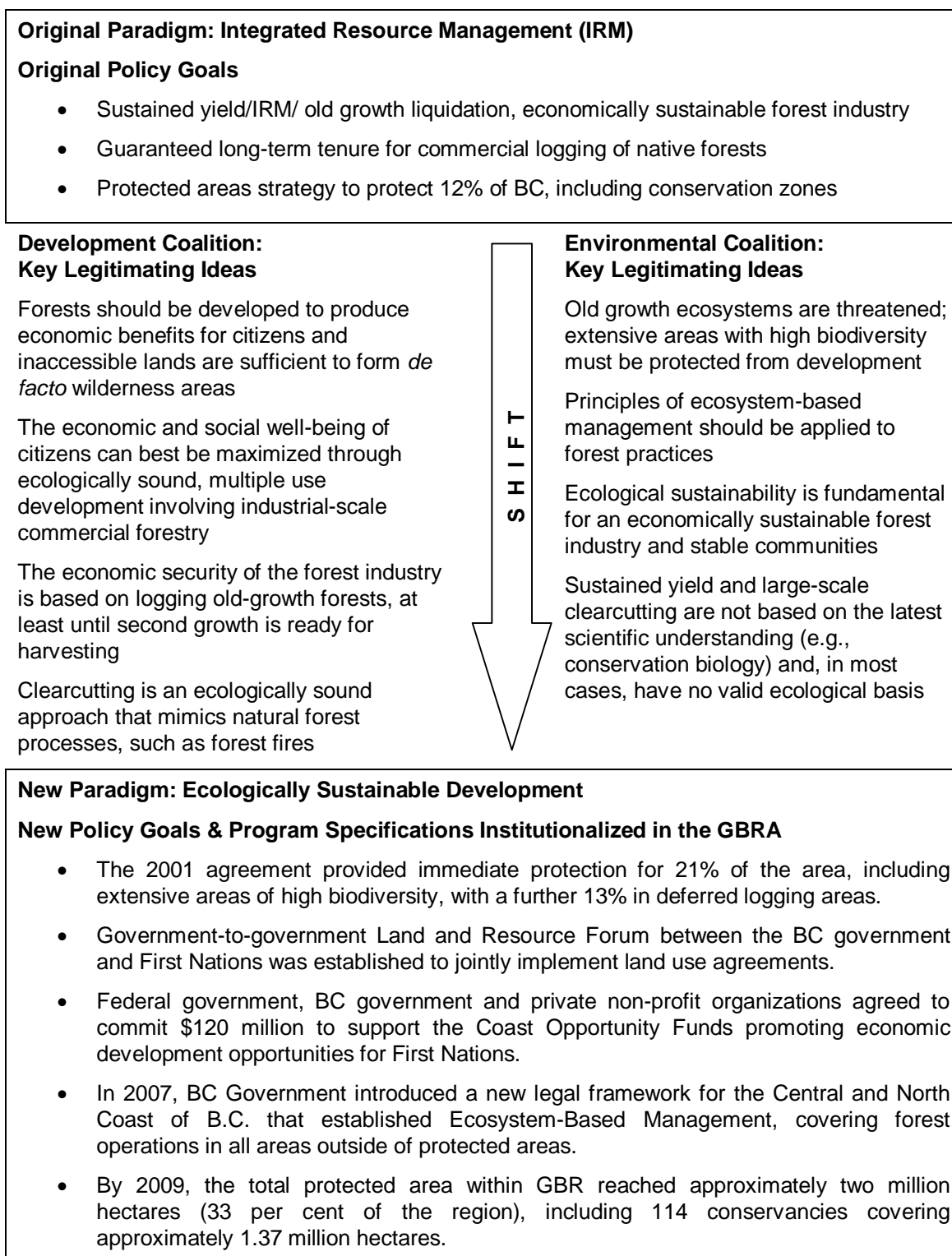
Figure 2 depicts the discursive shifts that occurred in this policy subsystem.

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[http://archive.ilmb.gov.bc.ca/slrp/lrmp/nanaimo/central\\_north\\_coast/docs/Full\\_Implementation\\_\(Final%20July%2010%202007\).pdf](http://archive.ilmb.gov.bc.ca/slrp/lrmp/nanaimo/central_north_coast/docs/Full_Implementation_(Final%20July%2010%202007).pdf)

<sup>11</sup> See Keck and Sikkink (1998: 23 - 4): "In order to bring about policy change, networks need to pressure and persuade more powerful actors. To gain influence the networks seek leverage... By leveraging more powerful institutions, weak groups gain influence far beyond their ability to influence state practices directly."

**Figure 2: GBR Policy Regime - Paradigm Shift in Ideas and Policy Goals**



Lertzman et al. (1996: 147) demonstrate that the paradigm shift in BC forest policy was based on the recognition that “commodity production under increasingly stringent Integrated Resource Management constraints is both inefficient as a way of allocating land between competing uses and ineffective in sustaining the full range of ecological services...” Consequently the policy goals within the GBR shifted from commodity production within an IRM framework towards those aimed at maintaining healthy forest ecosystems and sustainable communities using an ecosystem-based management approach for logging along with an extensive system of reserves and protected areas.

### **Policy dynamics of the case studies**

A change in policy is confirmed by the institutionalization of policy decisions through statutes, regulations, agreements, and policy statements that carry the force of state. Anything less fails to indicate firm choices by government (Bernstein and Cashore 2000: 70). Detailed analysis indicates that the SEQFA and the GBRA served to institutionalize new commitments made by state and non-state actors. In both cases, substantial public and private resources have been dedicated to facilitating implementation, indicating that paradigmatic policy change has indeed occurred in both regimes.

### **How does policy change occur?**

Policy change typically unfolds according to two key determinants: 1. how contested ideas are framed, and, 2. the discursive competence of respective actors (see below for a brief discussion of this term).

In a stable policy context, there is enough overlap between competing frames for incremental policy change to occur. Incremental policy change involves “non-innovative changes at the margin of existing policies utilizing existing policy processes, institutions and regimes” (Howlett 2001: 313). In extremely difficult policy disputes, such as those profiled in the case studies, mutually exclusive principles and values can appear irreconcilable. Such conflicts can challenge the political culture, institutions, and governance capacity of a system to the point of impasse.

In such cases, progress becomes dependent upon an adequate reframing of the problems and solutions and the emergence of a new dominant policy frame or paradigm. As demonstrated by the case studies, paradigmatic policy change involves new policies which represent a sharp break from the past in terms of how policies were developed, overall policy goals, the dominant problem-solution frame, and the policy instruments chosen (Howlett and Ramesh 1995: 193).

## **How can activists influence political agendas?**

Change agents of all stripes are coming to realize that modern political agendas are tied less to formal elected office and more to matters of political entrepreneurship and *discursive competence*. This refers to the ability of actors to employ discourse for political gain; with authority arising more from the ability to frame and present information effectively than from professional or bureaucratic credentials.

*Policy discourse* is one key to understanding how relatively minor actors can influence real change. This term refers "to the interactions of individuals, interest groups, social movements, and institutions through which problematic situations are converted to policy problems, agendas are set, decisions are made, and actions are taken" (Rein and Schön 1993: 145).

To better understand the dynamics of policy change, it is imperative to distinguish between levels of policy discourse and to recognize differences between:

- A) conflicts involving higher-level *principles* and deeply held core *values*, and,
- B) those involving technical, *causal* arguments.

Goldstein and Keohane (1993: 11) make the distinction between "ideas that develop or justify value commitments" (principled ideas) and those that "simply provide guidance as to how to achieve preferred objectives" (causal ideas).

For example, consider the discourse that might revolve around timber harvesting in a typical resource management conflict. At the causal level the discussions and negotiations would focus on technical aspects such as the appropriate size of cut-blocks (e.g., 5 ha vs. 10 ha) or the most suitable routes and standards for access roads. At the level of principles and values, however, the discourse would enter into more fundamental considerations; for example, what values and principles govern acceptable use for an area given specific climatic, ecological, and biophysical circumstances? Is resource extraction appropriate for a particular area? If so, who should benefit and to what degree? Discourse at the technical-causal level most often remains silent on such key issues because the *status quo is implicit and remains unquestioned*.

This distinction between levels of discourse offers a key entry point for activists seeking to understand the dynamics of a policy sphere they are attempting to impact. If a particular social/environmental movement is to succeed, it becomes imperative that activists become versed in these distinctions and seek to gain discursive competence.

## **Potential power of collaborative solutions**

Collaboration is fundamentally about two or more parties working together to "affect the future of an issue of shared interests" (Daniels and Walker 2001: 57).

The distinctions between “self-interest” and “mutual/ shared interest” and the notion of a “mutually beneficial outcome” provide keys to understanding the motivations of competitive actors in a conflict situation. Collaborative approaches in policy domains are not driven by altruistic tendencies or simple “good will” but by people’s awareness that their interests are interdependent. “Otherwise, they would pursue their interests outside the collaborative process. They hope to achieve something together that they cannot achieve alone” (Booher and Innes 2001: 17).

Collaborative efforts can create concerns when they arise as alternative processes running parallel to officially sanctioned government initiatives that provide clear procedural and substantive decision-making guidelines. Direct deliberations and consensus agreements between dominant actors outside of formal institutions raise legitimate questions about issues of accountability, representation, and access (see Burrows 2000; Freeman 1997; Wondolleck and Yaffee 2000).

Correspondingly, public accountability can be less than adequate where corporatist bureaucracies maintain tight control of decision-making and implementation in the policy-making process, where regulatory agencies are captive to private interests, or where minimal legislative or judicial oversight exists. In such systems, collaborative initiatives can increase transparency, access and accountability (Freeman 1997), supporting the argument “that the institutionalization of participation rights in land-use planning offers a more effective and non-discriminatory means of resolving environmental conflicts than the strategic pursuit of sectional interests” (Mason 1999: 126). Both the GBRA and SEQFA case studies reveal strikingly similar patterns, with attempts by respective government authorities to constrain the political discourse inside the cognitive boundaries of the prevailing sustained yield/IRM paradigm.

Daniels and Walker (2001: 58) make a distinction between two dominant strategic orientations: “collaborative/integrative” and “competitive/distributive” (see also Fisher et al 1997; Lewicki et al 2001). A competitive strategy is employed where disputants perceive a limited resource and anticipate gaining as much of it as possible for themselves. Each party assumes a position and employs “positional bargaining” to exert power and control in seeking to achieve its preferred outcome. A collaborative strategy arises when parties perceive the potential for an integrative solution and generate alternative solutions using creative problem solving techniques; in which case the fundamental structure of the response offers the potential for all sides to substantially achieve their objectives.

In both case studies, a transformation occurred when incentive structures shifted to the extent that rational economic calculus made it evident to industry that the benefits of cooperation exceeded the costs of non-cooperation. At this stage progressive elements within the development coalition sought to collaborate directly with individuals in the environmental coalition, outside of formal government planning frameworks. Both sides realized it was in their best interests to cooperate in order to develop mutually beneficial outcomes,



rather than exacerbating the conflict by continuing to focus on self-interests alone. The emergence of *autonomous* collaborative efforts in the SEQ and GBR, outside of formal government processes, clearly signaled acknowledgment of changes in incentive structures by actors within both policy domains. In both cases, government was compelled to acknowledge the validity of the consensus agreements and to formally recognize the changes through official policy.

While recognizing the importance of the background trends (including changes in market conditions, ecological crises and internationalization)<sup>12</sup> the contention here is that the pre-eminent factor motivating policy change in both cases was the change in incentive structure associated with a paradigm shift in the prevailing discourse. Once the paradigm shift gained public resonance, against the background of changing trends, a series of focusing events served to expand the issue and heighten salience. In both cases, this was effectively facilitated by the discursive competence and strategic practices of activists within the environmental movement.

### **Framework for integrating competitive and collaborative policy processes**

Activists who are conversant with new and emerging approaches to governance will be in a better position to take advantage of increasing public awareness and shifting paradigms at key opportunities.

In "new governance" there is growing recognition of a shift in public management from *command and control* to *negotiation and persuasion* as the preferred management approach (for example, see Salamon 2002). Competitive decision-making is often associated with "command and control" or adversarial styles of public administration. In a collaborative style of governance, negotiation based on mutual-interest complements and potentially supersedes competitive decision-making based on self-interest alone.

In Figure 3 below, four contrasting patterns of policy change are depicted in the context of collaborative governance.<sup>13</sup> Using the framework diagram, various policy scenarios can be associated with relevant quadrants, based on:

(a) the level of policy discourse associated with the key legitimating arguments of the parties involved (along the continuum of causal-to-principled beliefs – and associated policy targets), and

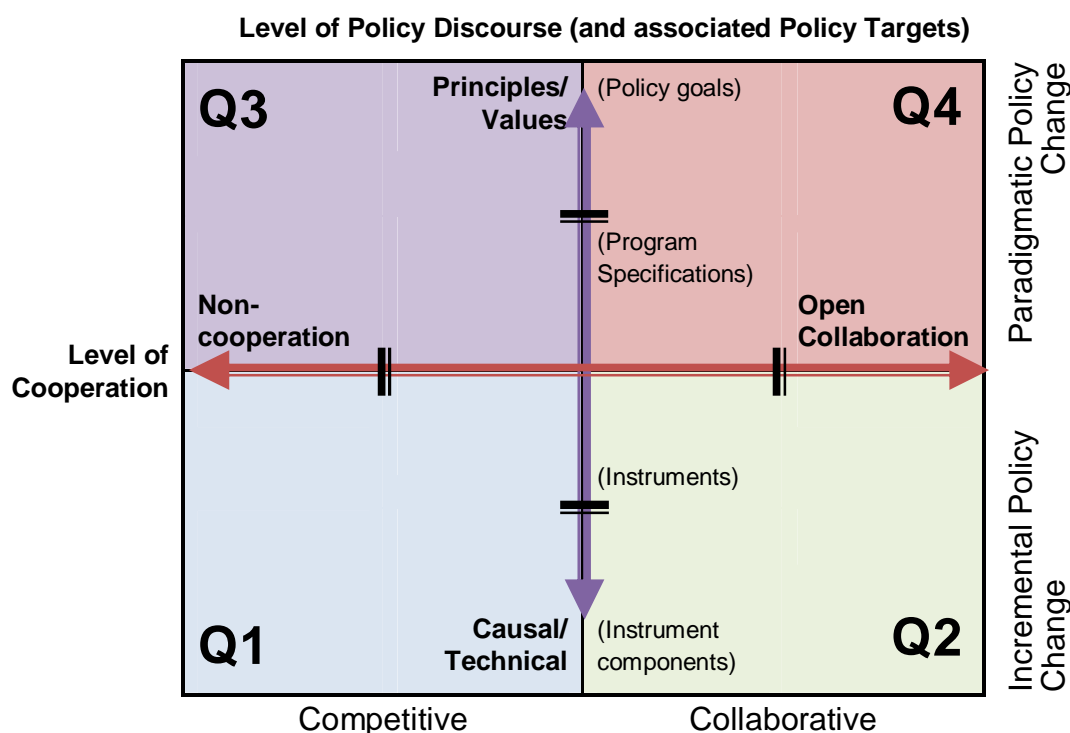
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<sup>12</sup> See Howlett (2001: 317-23) for a discussion of background trends and their likely effect on environmental policy outcomes in Canada. He identifies four key trends: internationalization of environmental politics; ecological crises; post-staples economic adjustment; and political and cultural change. These trends are also likely to be key influences in the Australian context.

<sup>13</sup> A number of highly respected typologies of public participation already exist and the intent is not to attempt to replicate or supersede them. The typology developed here is focused on explicating the relation between collaborative processes and policy change. For examples of typologies of public participation see Arnstein (1969), Renn et al. (1993), and Thomas (1993).

(b) the level of cooperation between parties (from non-cooperation to open collaboration).

**Figure 3: Typology of Policy Change by Levels of Cooperation and Discourse**



The salient characteristics of these four patterns of policy change are summarized below:

**Q1 Competitive Incremental:** characterized by a command and control approach (rigid, prescriptive) in a competitive mode (self-interest versus pursuit of mutual interests); good at problem identification, but not as good for advancing solutions; status quo bias (Dorcey and McDaniels 2001: 278); rules are considered bargains; government officials are on the inside, stakeholders are on the outside; the primary goal for stakeholders is to win; e.g., certain consensus-based models;<sup>14</sup> the RFA process in Australia.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>14</sup> There is a distinction between consensus-seeking processes characterised by a competitive orientation with adversaries in pursuit of self-interests (Q1/Q3), versus collaborative consensus-seeking processes with participants engaged in pursuit of mutual interests (Q2/Q4). Processes can begin as competitive consensus-seeking processes and evolve towards collaborative processes if participants establish sufficient common ground and develop mutual trust and

These processes typically result in instrument level changes in policy. However, complex, intractable conflicts most often remain unresolved. The prevailing discourse is at the technical, causal level. If key legitimating ideas of the dominant discourse lose scientific credibility or public legitimacy, the resulting paradigm shift could influence policy choice at the level of policy goals/programs (shifting the process to Q3 or Q4).

**Q2 Collaborative Incremental:** could be characterized as the “multi-stakeholder” emergent shared-agreement approach, e.g. LRMP process in BC (see Duffy et al. 1998; Wilson 2001).

Processes in this quadrant are suitable for resolving complex conflicts in contested policy situations *within* established institutional frameworks, by facilitating negotiated settlements (usually reflecting the *status quo*, however, there can be room for creativity and innovation) at the level of technical discourse over policy instruments (in contrast to principles/values discourse and programs/ policy goals in Q4). Often involves multi-stakeholder negotiation and decision-making characterized as consensus seeking (in contrast to position-based negotiations). Collaborative institutional arrangements (Q2 & Q4) can shift a degree of responsibility from government to multiple stakeholders.

The main differences between Q2 and Q4 include the level of policy discourse, associated policy targets, and the eventual degree of policy change. Discourse in the Q2 dynamic occurs at the technical, causal level and processes within this quadrant often result in relatively long periods of stability, because stakeholder buy-in is often substantial. If, however, the prevailing discourse shifts to the level of values/principles/policy goals, and government attempts to constrain the unfolding process to Q2, it is likely that a conflict will become even more contentious and potentially intractable.

**Q3 Competitive paradigmatic:** government retains management control; legitimacy rests with statutory authority; accountability is focused on individuals and institutions; the *status quo* bias is usually mitigated by social and political pressure; e.g., the shift in forest policy from the sustained yield paradigm to the IRM paradigm (Wilson 1998); the Fraser Island Inquiry in Queensland (see Neumann 1992).

These processes can engender significant change; typically, however, they result in relatively narrow solutions mandated by government. Conflicts may be resolved to a sufficient degree to achieve a period of relative stability, especially if policies favor powerful actors within the dominant coalition. However, long-term resolution of complex social and environmental conflicts is difficult in Q3

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respect. And the reverse can also occur, if established trust is adversely impacted (Lewicki and Robinson 1998; Lewicki et al. 1999).

<sup>15</sup> The typical RFA process includes stakeholder consultation (not collaboration) in the assessment phase and then reverts to a command-and-control process of scenario development and implementation (see Dargavel 1998: 29).

because of the competitive / adversarial orientation. Lack of participatory mechanisms can easily challenge the legitimacy of such processes.

**Q4 Collaborative paradigmatic:** involves collaborative approaches in pursuit of mutual interests; community-based management; multi-stakeholder processes involving consensus principles; policy discourse at the level of values/principles/goals, in Q4 legitimacy shifts to become more citizen-centered; power sharing becomes the norm; and government recognizes the need to adopt a facilitative network management role (Howlett 2001); e.g., SEQFA, GBRA.

Q4 processes are characterized by dramatic change involving new policy goals and/or new programs. In this quadrant, societal actors are deeply involved in the collaborative deliberations and policy choices that become institutionalized (with new ideas being more easily introduced in comparison to the other quadrants). The success of activists in compelling paradigmatic policy change is dependent upon the introduction of innovative ideas, especially at the level of principled beliefs, discursive competence and the forging of shared interests with competing actors.

Q4 dynamics are suitable for managing complex (often seemingly intractable) conflicts featuring indirect management of self-steering networks and collaborative coalitions, where the policy subsystem is open to creative, innovative solutions delivering on new policy goals that may entail significant institutional and legislative reform. The principal role for government is network management: encouraging a shared belief system about cooperation (intersubjective knowledge), facilitating collaboration, and helping to establish a "means to reach discourse closure" (Webler 1995: 74).

### **Recognizing the strategic value of both competition AND collaboration**

The suggested framework provides activists with a practical tool for recognizing the appropriate circumstances and timing for taking a collaborative vs competitive stance, and vice versa.

In Quadrants 1, 2, and 3, government policy brokers and established decision makers retain power and control over policy goals. Quadrant 4 represents a shift to collaborative policy-making at a "higher" level of discourse aimed at resolving complex issues, with government compelled to adopt a "network management" approach (Howlett 2001). Policy brokers within government are often resistant to making a shift to Quadrant 4 because of loss of power and control, while progressive elements within government often perceive a new vector of forces pointing towards a shift in public values. Given the expanding spectrum of values in modern society, government agencies will increasingly find themselves compelled to proactively engage in facilitating collaborative processes, providing policy entrepreneurs and activists with natural points of access for introducing new and innovative ideas.

The integrated competitive/collaborative typology presented here remedies the tendency of many proponents of collaboration to advocate total abandonment of competition (and conflict) in favor of cooperation when, in actuality, a healthy system of democratic governance is reliant on a dynamic tension between the two.<sup>16</sup> It is important to remember that deliberative approaches represent an enrichment of representative democracy rather than a replacement (Munton 2003: 111).

In this regard, social and environmental movements may be able to achieve greater success by maintaining both 'competitive' and 'collaborative' factions working together in concert. If such an approach is undertaken it becomes vital to develop an overarching strategic framework that clearly identifies common goals for the entire movement.

### **Practical implications for activists**

Activists can use this typology to associate specific levels of policy discourse with particular modes of policy change. Here are some key points based on the analysis of the case studies and the suggested framework:

- Incremental change is associated with policy discourse at the level of *causal/technical ideas*.
- Ideas at the level of *principled beliefs and norms* define the very core of a prevailing paradigm.
- A prevailing paradigm is usually unassailable to reform coalitions because the principled beliefs of reformers are blocked from entering the policy discourse.
- If a reform coalition *succeeds* in penetrating the policy discourse with principled ideas aimed at revising/ renegotiating core policy goals, paradigmatic policy change can occur.
- Consequently, the reform coalition's key legitimating ideas come to play a prominent role in the emerging consensus.

As demonstrated in the case studies, government agencies and dominant coalitions often attempt to shift or constrain the prevailing discourse from the level of values/principled beliefs to that of causal beliefs and technical considerations (Keeley and Scoones 2003; Renn et al 1995: 357). It becomes evident that activists can increase their effectiveness as agents of change when they learn to identify and introduce new principled beliefs to the policy sphere that resonate with public perceptions.

In practical terms, activists involved in an unsatisfactory or intractable policy dynamic can adopt a strategic orientation by:

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<sup>16</sup> For example, Dryzek (1996) argues convincingly that a flourishing democratic society is largely dependent on the presence of an oppositional civil society which is "actually facilitated by a passively exclusive state." Dryzek considers corporatism to be the main contemporary form of such a state.

- A) Assessing their current situation in terms of the quadrants described, thereby gaining a better understanding of the dynamics involved, and,
- B) developing a strategy to progress towards a quadrant that offers the potential to enact change at the level of new policy goals and institutional reform.

In general, individuals and groups can improve the potential for instituting sustainable, long-term policy changes that reflect their views and ideas, by:

1. Highlighting relevant principles and values in communicating key ideas that are new to the policy sphere (the higher the public resonance the better), and,
2. Resisting almost certain attempts by entrenched interests to the limit the policy discourse to technicalities and causal arguments, and,
3. Seeking cooperative advantage as incentive structures change and opportunities arise, by forming informal and/or formal coalitions with one-time adversaries (thereby introducing a "new" mix of people).

## **Conclusion**

Long-term solutions to intractable conflicts are elusive, particularly in value-driven disputes. Successful agents of change can leverage their impact through discursive competence and by designing solutions that identify appropriate policy goals primed for insertion in the policy sphere. As we have seen from this research, solutions gain increased tractability when they are designed in collaboration with one-time adversaries. Even though state actors are often reluctant to yield significant control, collaborative participants with innovative solutions can play a powerful role in institutional redesign or transformation.

There are no easy solutions to the quandaries we all face with respect to maintaining the legitimacy of a representative democracy while maximizing the benefits of participatory governance, especially given the dangers of powerful players hijacking the public interest. Nevertheless, in hindsight it becomes apparent that even relatively innovative policy and planning initiatives, such as Australia's RFA process and British Columbia's CORE "shared decision-making" model and LRMP processes, have proven inadequate for integrating recently legitimated values. This is largely because politicians and policy-makers in both cases attempted to contain decision-making negotiations within the confines of established policy frameworks and top-down policy goals, in spite of changing public perceptions and shifting paradigms.

In conflicts involving deeply held values, policy goals are often at the heart of contention and state-imposed solutions at the technical, instrument level simply will not suffice.

The collaborative governance evident in these cases represents a positive response to the inadequacy of corporatist and pluralist systems to implement sustainability goals. Collaborative governance is not a likely option where the incentive structure remains skewed in favor of powerful actors determined to maintain the status quo. However, in those situations where the incentive structures shift sufficiently, in response to cognitive *or* non-cognitive influences, collaboration between long-standing adversaries becomes a viable, if not preferred, alternative.

When activists take advantage of appropriate opportunities to form collaborative coalitions, one-time adversaries can gain the capacity to develop creative, integrative solutions with the potential to penetrate and expand the cognitive boundaries of "accepted" policy discourse. Where empowered by public consent, such coalitions can legitimately compel governments and powerful interests to renegotiate contested policies and institutions in the "shadow of collaboration," improving society's response to long-term challenges.

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George has spent over thirty years as an environmental educator, activist and professional biologist. He was one of the original appointees to the Provincial Capital Commission Greenways Committee in Victoria, BC in the early 1990s and was instrumental in the collaborative efforts involved in creating one of the most successful greenways networks in Canada.

He has consulted extensively with all levels of government on a range of resource management projects involving strategic planning, development, and implementation of programs and policies. As an environmental activist he has come to realize that ecological sustainability is ultimately in the hands of citizens; and in particular those individuals and groups who are willing to take bold and radical steps aimed at shifting paradigms and creating systemic change. All too often, politicians and decision-makers remain mired in the status quo and captive to entrenched interests, to the degree that sufficiently innovative solutions must come from outside the system.

Not satisfied with theoretical discussions about collaborative processes, George is a trained dynamic facilitator, an approach proven to engender breakthrough results. For more information see [www.wisedemocracyvictoria.org](http://www.wisedemocracyvictoria.org) and [www.wisedemocracy.org](http://www.wisedemocracy.org). Contact: [gsrcranko AT shaw.ca](mailto:gsrcranko@shaw.ca).