



# A realist approach to evaluating the rationales and practices of collaborative governance in Australian water policy

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Research in tropical societies



# Collaborative governance of water policy

- Water policy as a wicked problem
  - Collaborative governance recommended
  - But...
- 
- Understanding what works, when, how and why



[http://tenonservices.com/mortice/?page\\_id=2366](http://tenonservices.com/mortice/?page_id=2366)

# Policy trends:

Neo-liberalism



Regionalisation



Public participation

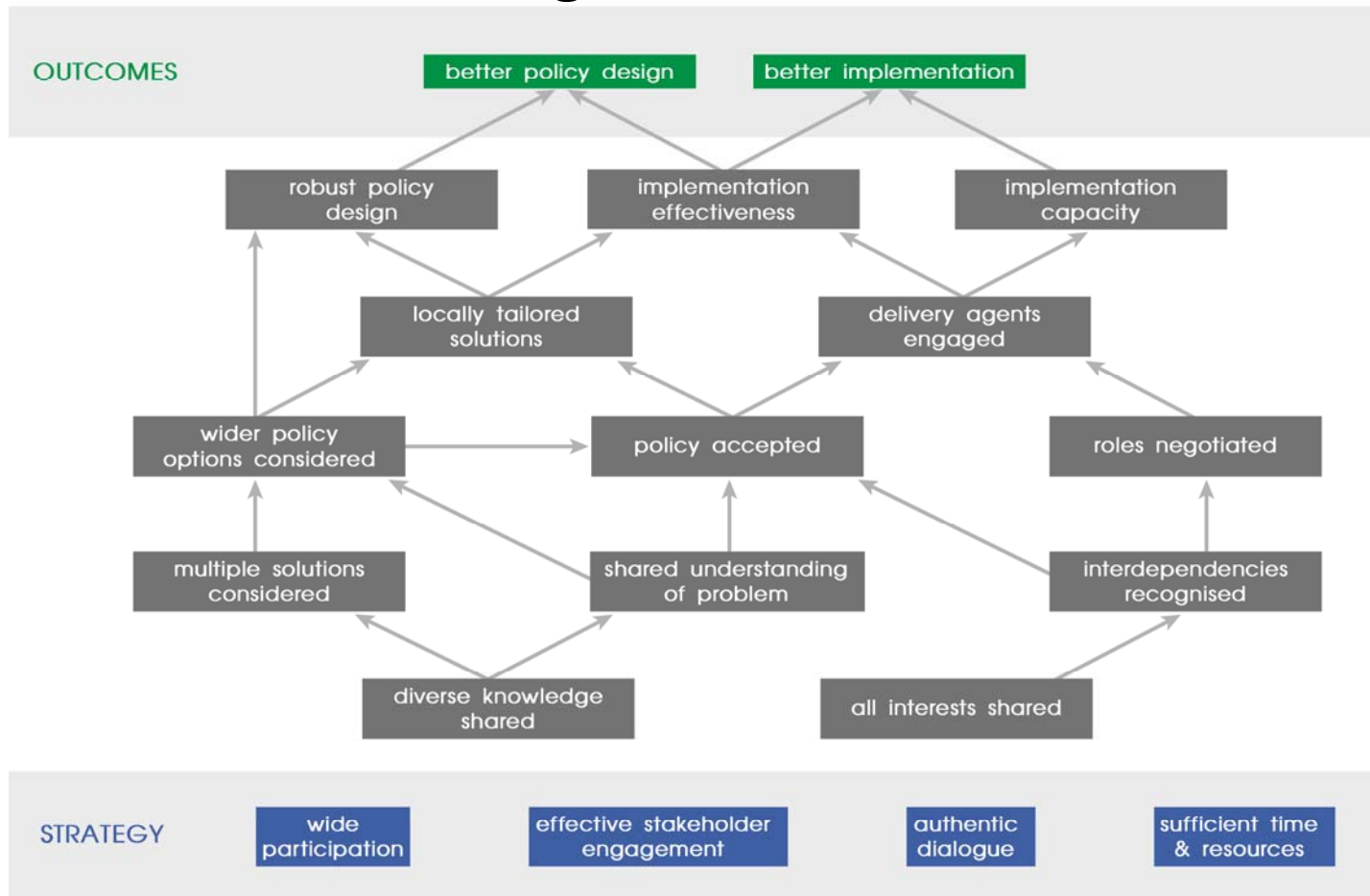


# Collaborative governance

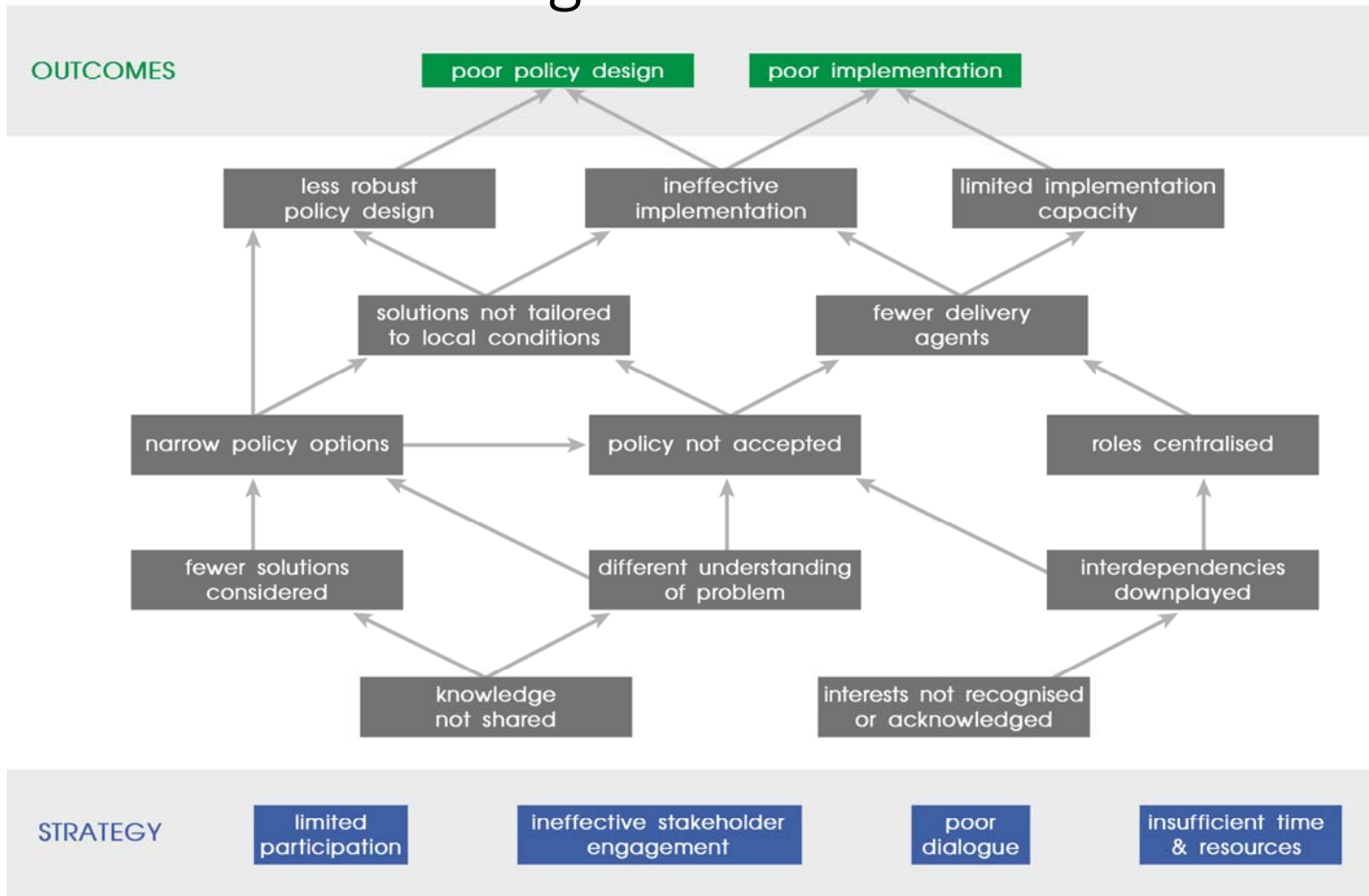
“A governing arrangement where one or more public agencies directly engage non-state stakeholders in a collective decision-making process that is **formal**, **consensus-oriented**, and **deliberative** and that aims to make or implement public policy or manage public programs or assets”

(Ansell & Gash 2008)

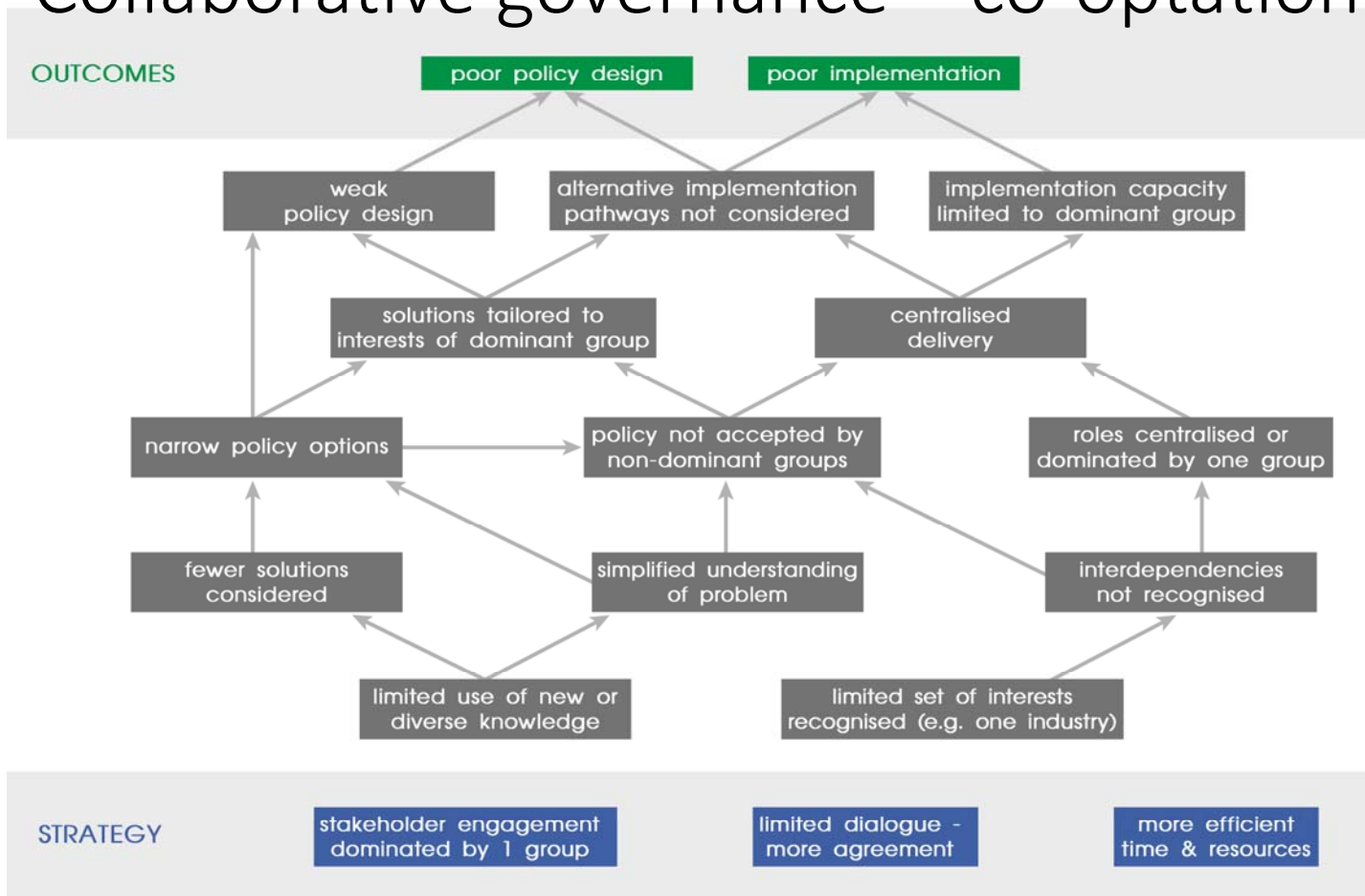
# Collaborative governance - ideal



# Collaborative governance - failure



# Collaborative governance – co-optation

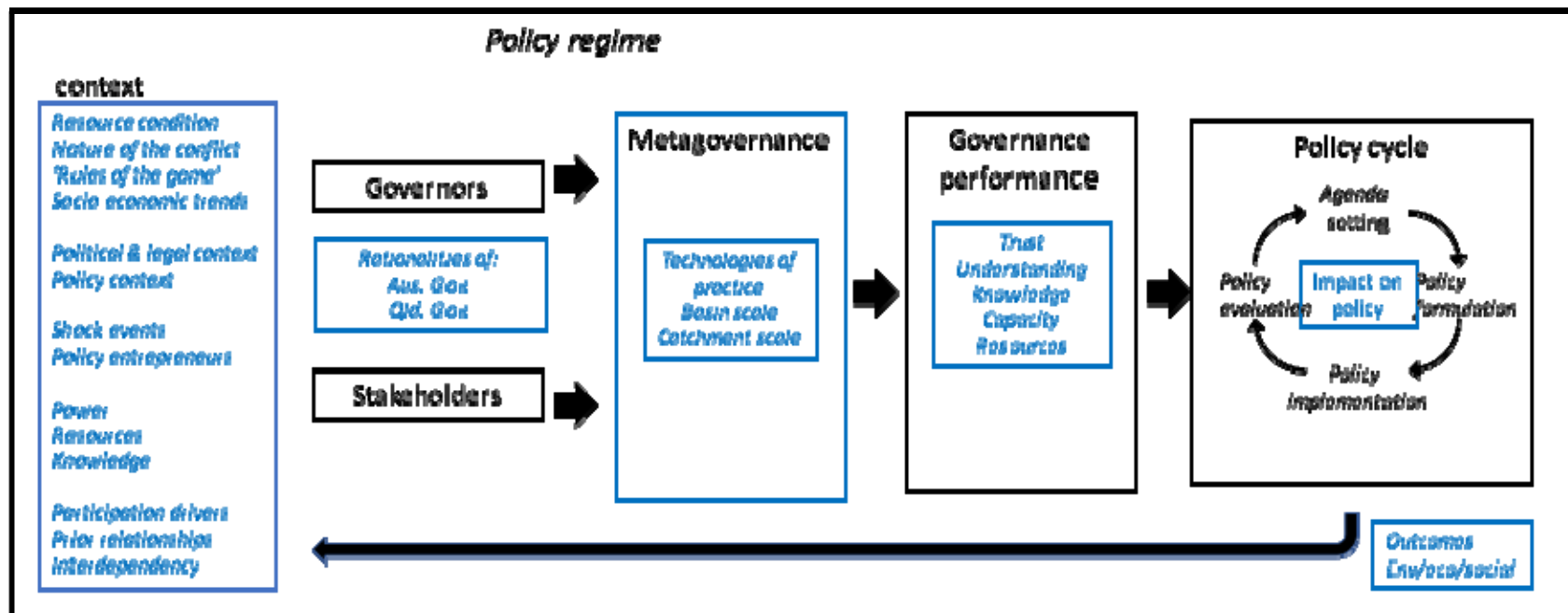


# Theoretical foundations

Concept	Features	Key references
Governance	Decision-making systems, involving government & society	Kooiman, 2003; Rhodes, 1997
Governance networks	Self-regulating, interdependent actors working to a common goal	Lowndes & Skelcher, 1998; Powell, 1990; Powell & DiMaggio, 1991; Kooiman, 2003
Metagovernance	Managing governance systems 'the governance of governance'	Jessop, 1997; Meuleman et al 2008
Governmentality theory	Governance arises from rationales and practices of the state and society; power & knowledge	Foucault, 1991; Dean, 1999; Miller & Rose, 2008

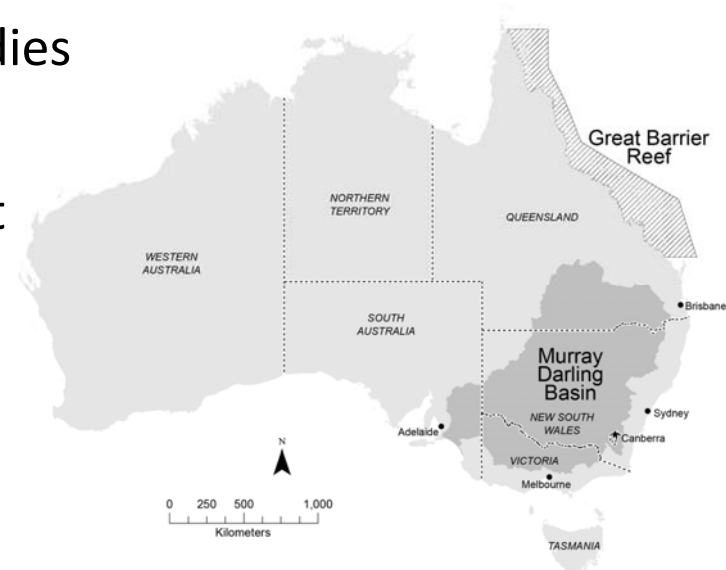


# Analytical framework



# Approach

- Critical realist
- 2 longitudinal case studies
- 5 governance phases
- Interviews & document analysis



# Murray Darling Basin

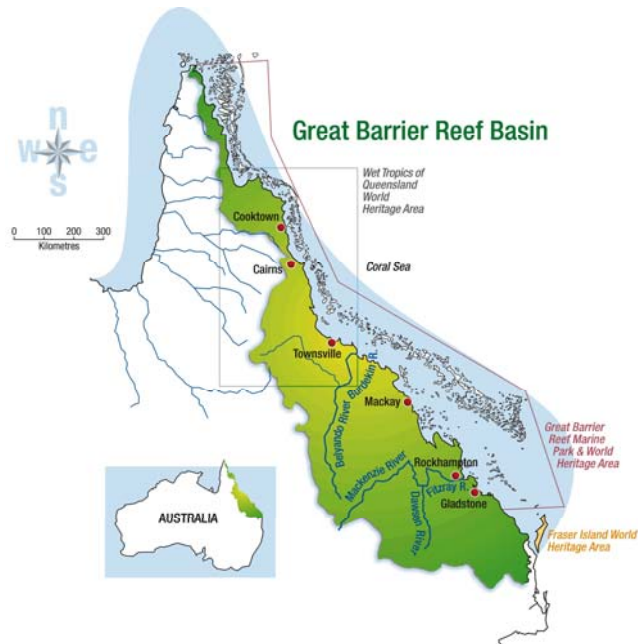


2010 release of the Guide to the Basin Plan  
Image c/- [dailyliberal.com.au](http://dailyliberal.com.au)



2016 algal bloom in the Murray River  
Image c/- [bendigoadvertiser.com.au](http://bendigoadvertiser.com.au)

# Great Barrier Reef



The Reef Alliance 2016: NRM & ag. industry groups  
Image c/- QFF.org.au



2016/17 coral bleaching events (c. 50% mortality)  
Image c/- theguardian.com.au

# Broad findings

- Context shapes 'the possible'
- Change enabled by disruption
- Purpose renegotiated
- In line with international findings
  
- Decisions filtered through 'institutional lens' which reflects previous history

# Disruption

- Climate events – floods, droughts etc.
- Politics – e.g. green tape reduction
- Agency of individuals, organisations and networks – e.g. WWF, Reef Alliance

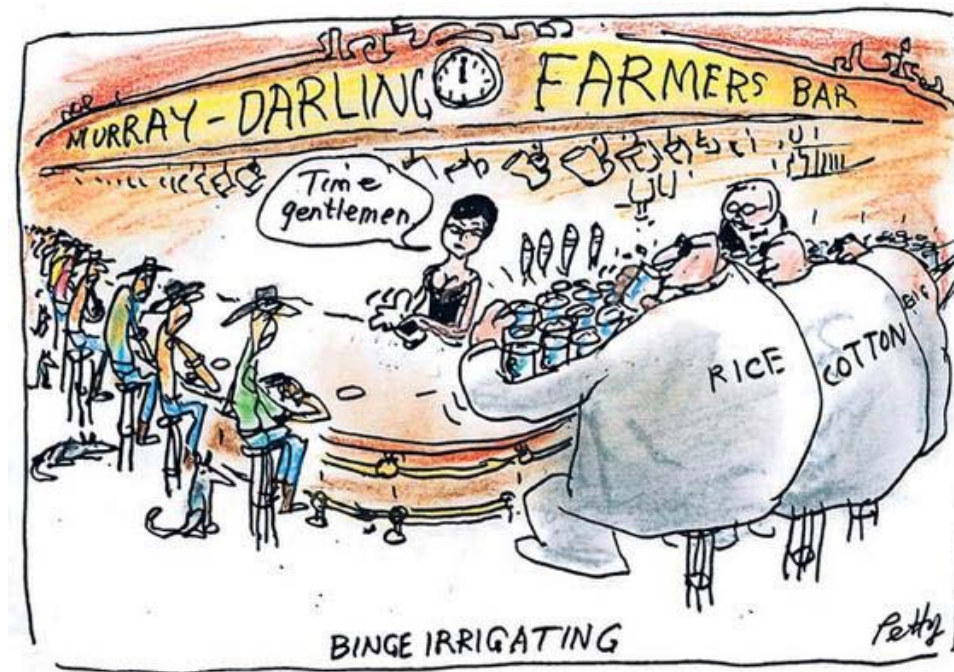
# Bilateral relations are important



C/- Ron  
Tandberg,  
Sydney  
Morning Herald



# Stakeholder relations are important



C/- Bruce  
Petty, Sydney  
Morning Herald



# Metagovernance – practice and rationales

- Practice – advisory committees, consultation etc
- Rationales – public acceptance, implementation knowledge
- Collective potential?
- Stage of policy cycle & nature of issue important

## Necessary conditions for effective collaborative governance

- Political significance
- Government commitment & capacity
- Policy coherence – bilateralism & bipartisanship
- Knowledge-base agreed
- Trust in process
- Empowered stakeholder organisations
- Actionable solutions

thankyou



# Methodological reflections

- Use-by date of recollections
- phases - not precise, mini-phases
-

# Potential benefits and risks

## Benefits:

- Shared risks and responsibilities
- Access to wider knowledge, understanding of interests
- Capacity for coordinated action, greater impact, co-learning
- Responding to changing sectoral boundaries and societal expectations
- IMPERATIVE FOR ACTION, LACK OF ALTERNATIVES

## Risks:

- Time and resources required
- Collaboration skills
- Inertia, gaming
- Issues of power and trust, contested science
- Un-resolvability of win-lose or value conflicts