



# How Governments Address Complex Policy Challenges and Manage Whole-of-Government Issues

Professor Evert Lindquist  
*School of Public Administration  
University of Victoria, Canada*

For a panel on 'Integrated Governance and Public Administration:  
What lessons can be learned from international experiences?'

**INA-DSRGM Conference on *Integrated Governance:  
International Experiences and Challenges for Portugal*  
Lisbon, Portugal, 15-16 October 2015**

# Pressures Towards Integrated Governance

Integrated governance a goal since the early 1990s, but...

- more complex challenges seem to be arriving
  - increased awareness of different facets problems
  - greater humility about limitations of interventions
  - citizens are more demanding, seeking new service models
  - governments motivated by efficiency and effectiveness
  - digital technology creating new possibilities on many fronts
- Today's presentation will not delve into specific examples of whole-of-government or horizontal initiatives – there is never a shortage of those, and they are unique!

Complex policy  
challenges



Horizontal  
Initiatives



Whole-of-Government  
Initiatives (WoG)

# The flow of today's presentation

## 1. Complex Challenges and Whole-of-Govt Responses

- *A surfeit of complex and wicked policy challenges*
- *Are complex, horizontal challenges a new phenomenon?*
- *The coordination toolkit for WoG & horizontal initiatives*

## 2. Essential Strategic Perspectives to Review

- *Strategic postures for complex, horizontal challenges*
- *Acknowledging strategic realities of modern governance*
- *Collaborative, coercive or crisis situations?*
- *Skills and capacities for boundary-spanning & horizontal initiatives*

## 3. Alternative Perspectives to Consider

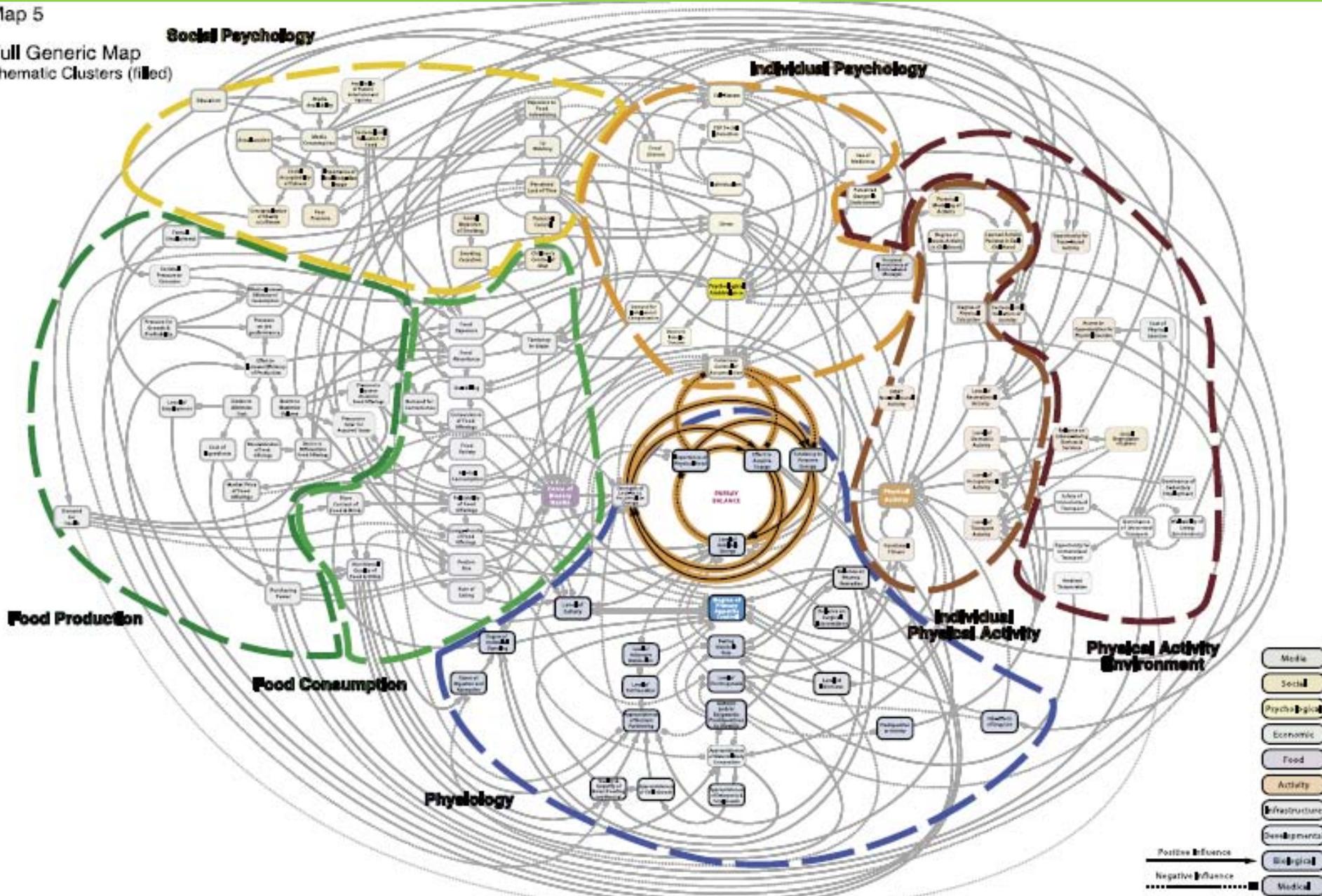
- *Engagement: sizing up and responding to complex challenges*
- *Visualization: capturing complexity, diverse views, and progress*
- *How does 'integrated governance' link with complex challenges, 'whole-of-government' initiatives, and horizontal management?*

1

# Complex Challenges and Whole-of-Govt Responses

Map 5

Full Generic Map  
Thematic Clusters (filled)



# A Surfeit of Complex and Regular Problems

- It has become commonplace to label complex problems as ‘wicked problems’, bundles of issues and features difficult to comprehend ‘no-stopping’ features.
- But are all complex problems the same? What might be the differences among them? Comprehensibility, scale, problem definitions by citizens, experts, politicians, etc.
- Often such challenges are difficult to separate from the horizontal initiatives themselves, some being whole-of-government approaches (e.g. Canadian/Australian lists).
- The important question is: what if there is no shortage of regular and complex policy challenges? What does it mean to have a surfeit of challenges?

# Diversity of Horizontal-WoG Approaches

## Examples from Canada

- The Trends Project (PRI)
- Team Canada
- Urban Aboriginal Strategy (Saskatchewan)
- Science and Technology MOU on Sustainable Development
- Implementation of the Oceans Act
- Search & Rescue - Swissair 111 Disaster
- Voluntary Sector Task Force
- Federal Regional Councils
- The Leadership Network
- St. Lawrence Action Plan

## Examples from Australia

- Greenhouse Australia
- Australians Working Together
- Council of Australian Governments Indigenous Trials
- Goodna Service Integration Project
- iConsult (ICTs & community over-consulting)
- National Illicit Drugs Strategy
- Response to the Bali Bombings
- Sustainable Regions Program
- The Sydney 2000 Olympic Games

Management Advisory Committee. 2004. *Connecting Government: Whole of Government Responses to Australia's Priority Challenges* (Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia.

Hopkins, M., Couture, C. and Moore, E. 2001 .*Moving From the Heroic to the Everyday: Lessons Learned from Leading Horizontal Projects*. Ottawa: Canadian Centre for Management Development Roundtable on the Management of Horizontal Initiatives.



# Are complex, horizontal challenges new?

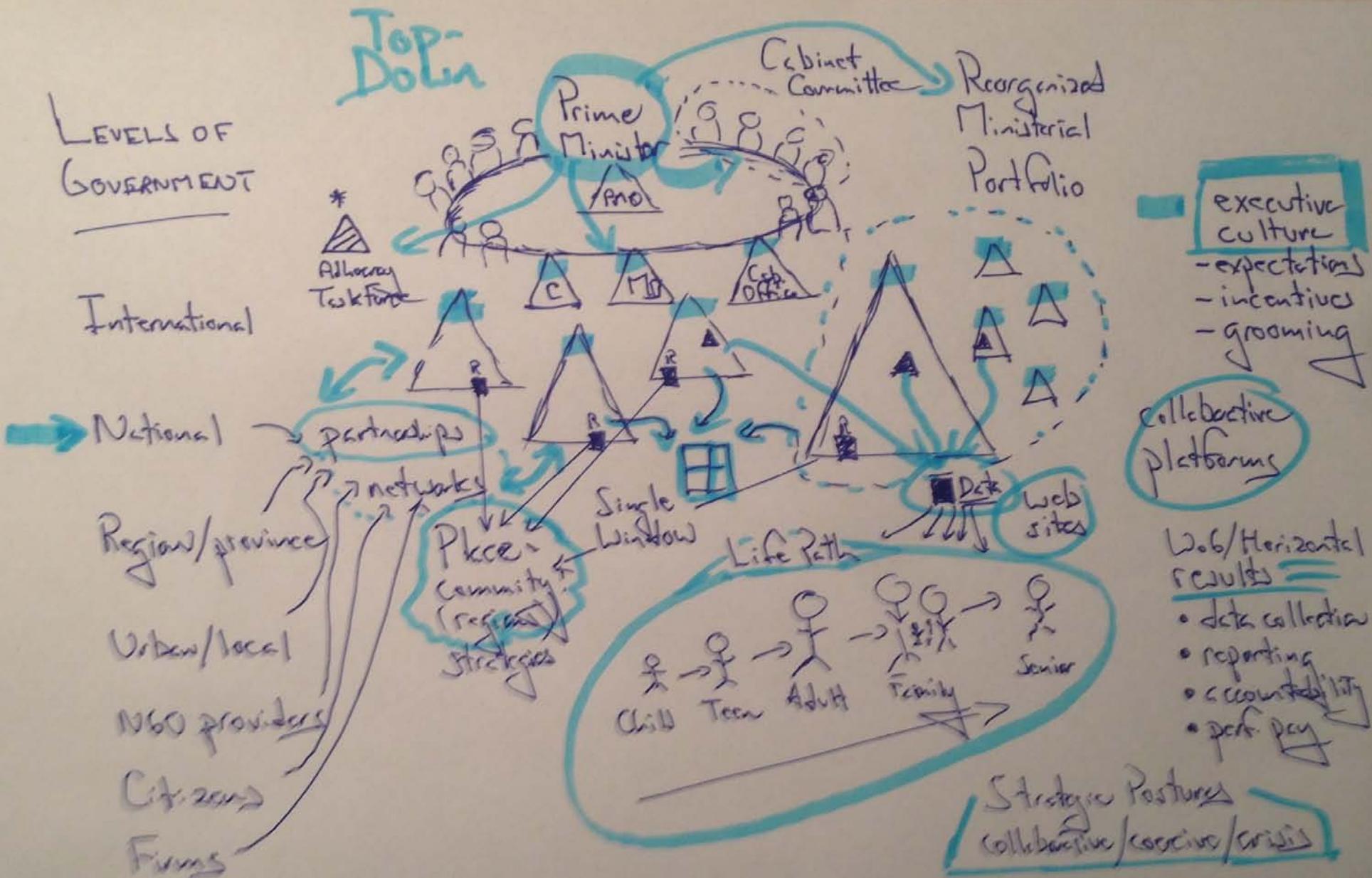
- Addressing complex challenges requires coordinating and aligning many policy instruments and programs.
- Such problems do not fall neatly in the domain of any given program of government, or even a department.
- Typically addressing real complex problems requires instruments, information, and insights from across the government and involve many departments/agencies.
- In turn, many challenges involve working across levels of government, presenting additional coordination issues.
- Increasingly government involve firms, NGOs, citizens
- Bakvis & Juillet (2004) warn that managing in a whole-of-government way is “pulling against gravity”
- More so with ‘distributed governance’ (MLG and MSG)

# Tools for Whole-of-Government Initiatives

- Governments edicts to focus on specific challenges
- Ministerial portfolios, cabinet committee structure, and department mandates (including 'lead status')
- Working across boundaries with adhocracies, incentives, central funding of initiatives, corporate culture
- Supportive central agency administrative frameworks
- Creating focal points: client focus, place, networks, etc.
- Building new web interfaces, channels, and platforms
- Collecting, tracking and using data to monitor & control

→ *But no substitute for political leadership  
...or a government priority...or a crisis.*

# Diverse Tools for Horizontal/WoG Initiatives



2

# Essential Strategic Perspectives to Review

# Strategic postures for complex challenges

1. Comprehensive policy interventions: what used to be called rational-comprehensive-synoptic interventions or massive planning interventions, requiring tremendous front-end knowledge, good theory, great political will.
2. Incrementalism: relies on multiple governments, agencies and others moving forward in their own ways – relies on mutual adjustment, proximate learning, and lowers the cost of failures but can lead to policy drift.
3. Synoptic incrementalism: with articulated goals, relies on *emergence* and *experimentation* with multiple actors in a distributed governance context (Bourgon, *New Synthesis in PA*, 2011).

**For all postures:** how to ensure ‘policy durability’ and ‘shift-points’ as well as ‘flexibility’ and ‘learning’? For different examples and perspectives, see the chapters in Lindquist, Vincent & Wanna, *Delivering Policy Reform* (2011).

# The strategic realities of modern governance

- The number of complex challenges and horizontal issues will outstrip the central capabilities of governments to coordinate sustain momentum of WoG initiatives.
- Additional issues emerge, unexpected crises occur, and groups can influence public opinion – all competing for political attention and resources.
- This leads to different implementation trajectories →
- If making progress on big challenges requires top-down political support, many initiatives may be precarious or at risk; *but if they rely more on administrative coordination or technological solutions, more likely to be sustained.*
- From a macro perspective, requires distributed approach to assigning responsibility for WoG/horizontal initiatives.

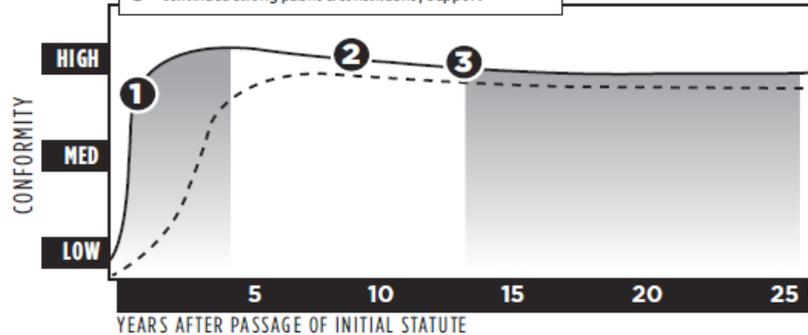


# How **policy outputs** and **target-group compliance** conform with statutory objectives over time: four scenarios

Diagram 3 in Lindquist & Wanna (2015);  
levering Mazmanian & Sabatier (1983).

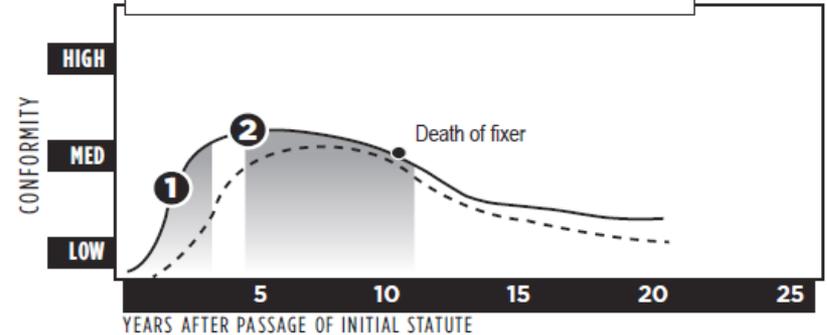
## EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION

- 1 Strong staff & constituency support
- 2 Original staff leave
- 3 Continued strong public & constituency support



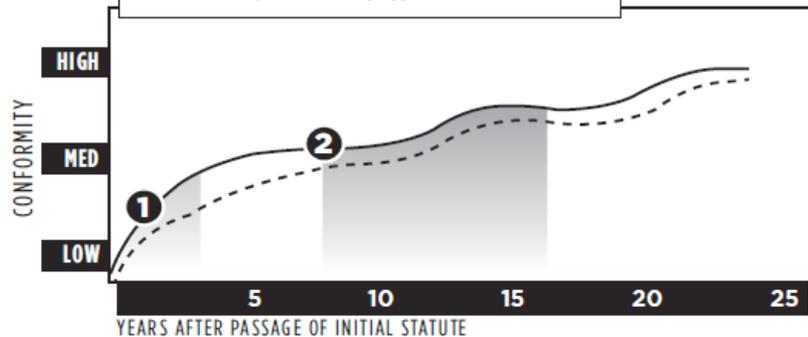
## GRADUAL EROSION

- 1 Initial start-up problems
- 2 Gradual erosion of constituency support & consequent nibbling away at statute – exacerbated by loss of committed staff



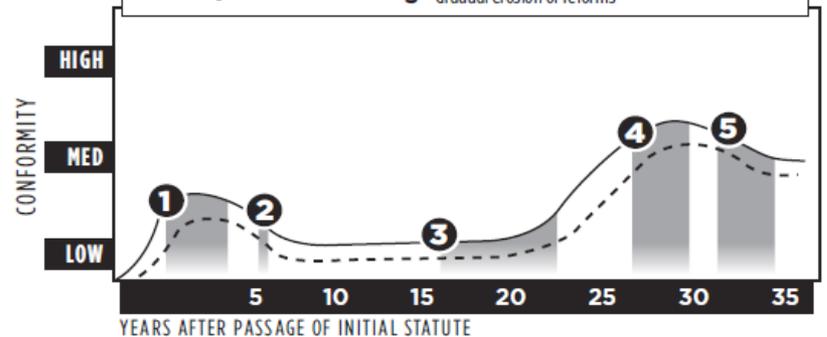
## CUMULATIVE INCREMENTALISM

- 1 Modest initial effort
- 2 Gradual improvement in monitoring statutory provisions, compliance administration, and constituency support



## REJUVENATION

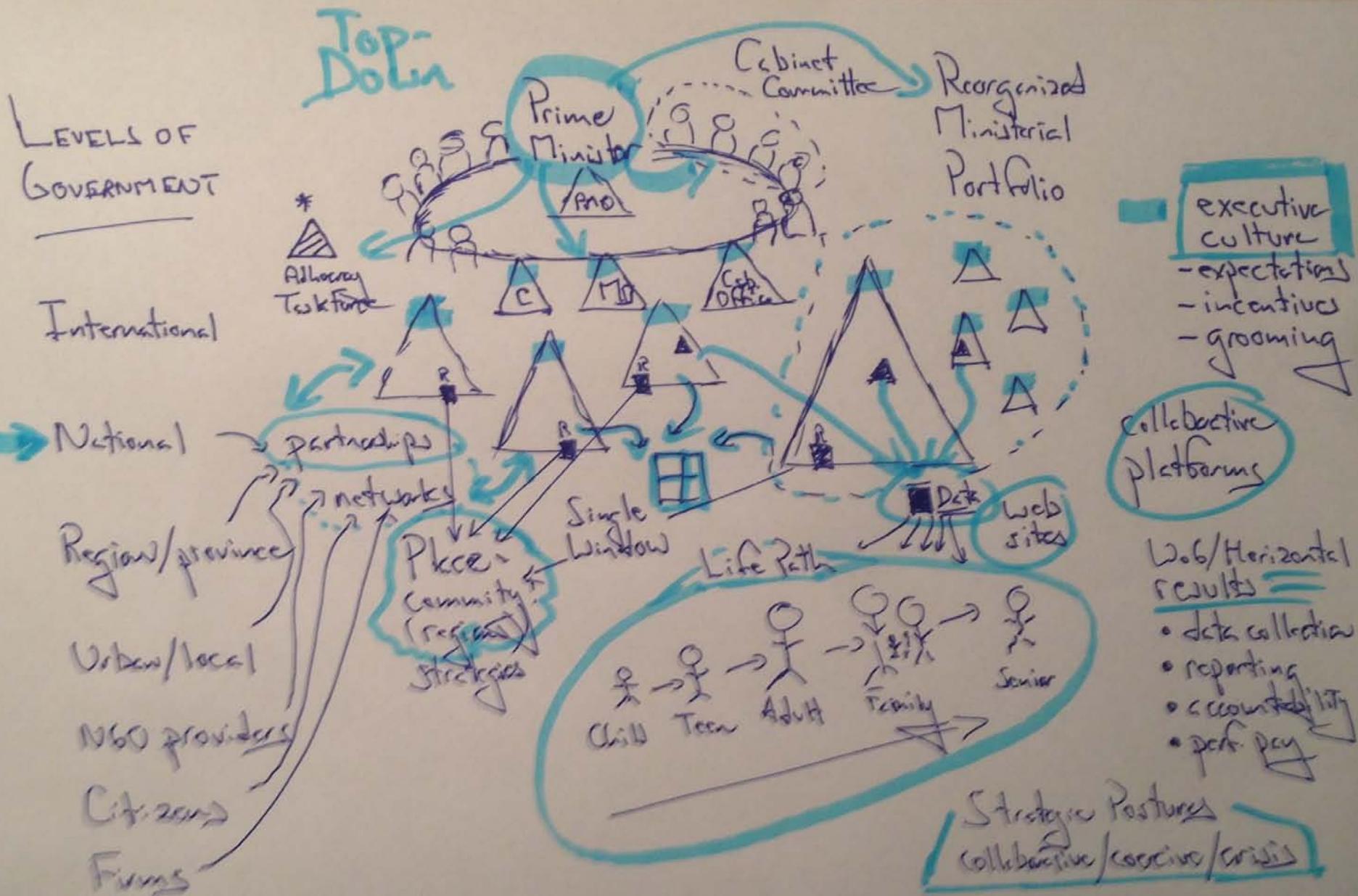
- 1 Initial burst of enthusiasm
- 2 Undermining of statute by sovereigns
- 3 Gradual change in socioeconomic conditions
- 4 Reforms produced by new statute & staff
- 5 Gradual erosion of reforms



### LEGEND



# Distributed Approach: Horizontal/WoG Initiatives



# Collaborative, Coercive or Crisis Situations?

- Most of the literature on whole-of-government and horizontal initiatives casts them as **collaborative** efforts:
  - Many phases: dialogue, problem-definition, trust-building, analysis, framework-creation vs agreement, implementation, monitoring, assessment, and accountability.
  - Such collaboration is remarkable for ratio of upstream to downstream activity (50-50): imagine what auditors think!
- But whole-of-government initiatives can be very strong top-down and **coercive**, driven by government priorities and relying on political and administrative coordination.
- The elixir of **crises**: clear need, strong coordination, and cooperation with mutual adjustment & alignment: *why can't this be bottled-up and built into govt. repertoires?*

# Skills & Capacities for Horizontal Leadership

Whether horizontal initiatives are fully ‘whole-of-government’ or not, several skills for executives and managers are needed:

- Collaborative leadership and **fostering engagement** with partners and others whether in collaborative, coercive, or crisis situations.
- Building the right **adhocracy/boundary-spanning capacity**, and adroitly leading these usually temporary/thin capabilities.
- **Balancing** commitment and fidelity to horizontal partners while meeting the minimum threshold needs of ‘home’ organizations.
- **Embracing turnover** among staff and partners, as well as political succession (which can present opportunities, not just frustration).
- **Creating coherence** (sense making) in an emergent way.
- For executives and ‘the centre’: instincts about **timely support**.
- **Downstream tracking**, performance management, accountability.

3

## Alternative Perspectives to Consider

# Engagement and Complex Challenges

- Engagement as a **leadership skill** and **organizational strategy** deserves a closer look because it can have many distinct components...
  - engaging other departments and agencies
  - engaging citizens and other clients
  - collaborating with service delivery partners
  - collaborating with other governments
- The right balance will vary according to the challenge at hand, the horizontal initiative under consideration, and how much co-production is involved.
- Much depends on how top-down and directive the initiative is vs. collaborative and emergent. Resources?

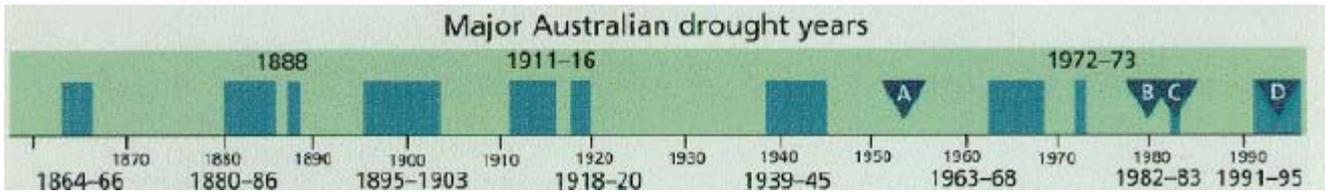
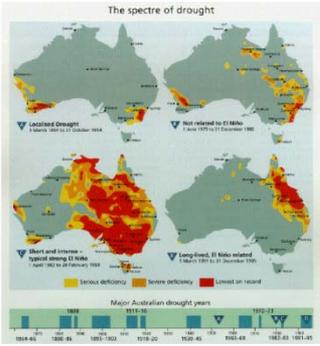
# Visualization and Complex Challenges

Are we sufficiently investing in visualization techniques to:

- fully capture and share complexity,
- invite and acknowledge diverse views of experts and stakeholders,
- develop macro perspectives and micro contributions, and
- track and measure progress?



Diagram from Grove Consultants International web site. For more on the visualization movement, see Lindquist, E. 2015. "Visualization Meets Policy Making: Visual Traditions, Policy Complexity, Strategic Investments."



ABC News

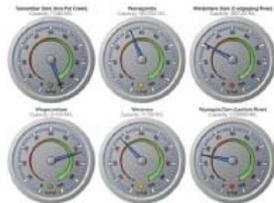
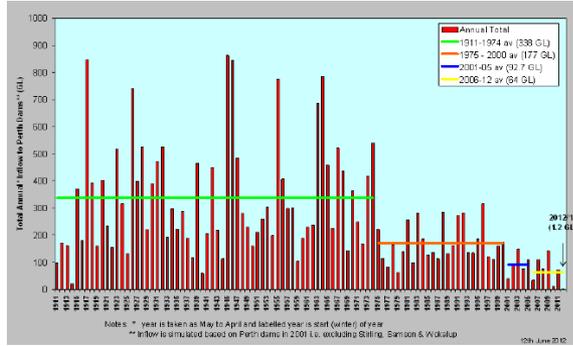


### Heated debate

As anger grows in Murray-Darling Basin towns the Government has announced a federal parliamentary inquiry into the impact of water cuts on communities in the basin.



Our web map interface allows you to check dam levels at a glance across Australia.



Dashboard-style gauges provide a quick view of current dam levels and the total capacity for each dam.

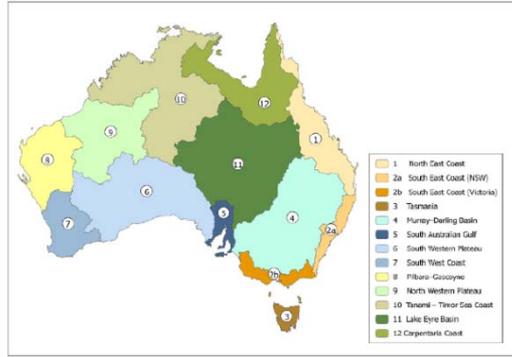


Figure 1-1. Australian Water Resources Assessment 2010 reporting regions

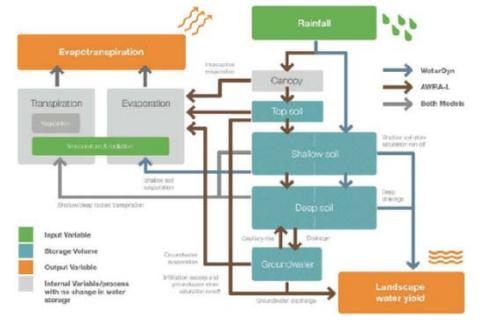


Figure 1-2. Schematic representation of inputs, outputs, flows and stores in the two landscape water balance models used in the 2010 Assessment

Table 2-1. Key information on the water flows, stores, use and climatic conditions in Australia.

Parameter	Australian average	Difference from long-term mean	Rank (out of 50)
Rainfall	636 mm	+13%	71
Evaporation	476 mm	+4%	80
Landscapes water yield	96 mm	-44%	89

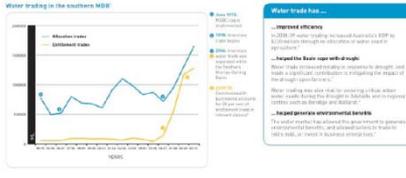
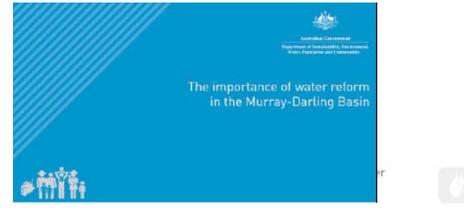
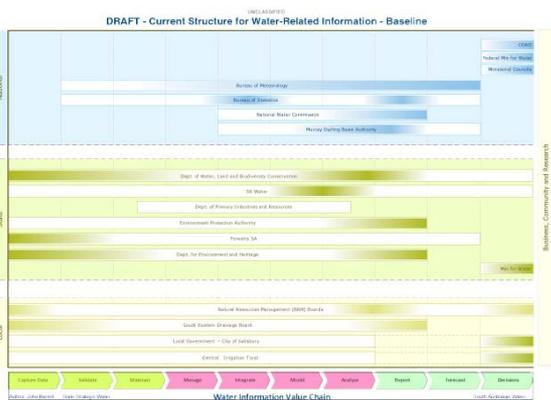
Region that becomes drier	Region that becomes wetter
North Western Plateau, Pilbara-Gascoyne, South West Coast, South Western Plateau, South East Coast (NSW) and Tasmania	Carpentaria Coast, Lake Eyre Basin, Murray-Darling Basin, North East Coast, South East Coast (Victoria), Australian East, South East Coast (Western and Southern) and Traralgon Coast

Water storage	July 2009	June 2010
Total accessible capacity	75,500 GL	45,500 GL
Available volume	35,000 GL	45,500 GL
% of accessible capacity	46%	52%

Comparison of water use between 2000-09 and 2009-10	Urban water use	Agricultural Irrigation water use
Volume	1,500 GL in 2009-10 1,407 GL in 2009-10	6,000 GL in 2009-10 6,400 GL in 2009-10
Change	-4.5%	+6.7%



# Concluding Remarks: Integrated Governance in Perspective

- How does the plethora of diverse complex policy challenges, horizontal initiatives and leadership, and whole-of-government approaches relate to the concept of **‘integrated governance’**?
- Has connotation of a specific ‘solution’ – a set of practices & services which have been ‘integrated’.
- Stepping back: it can be seen at the macro level as a worthy general aspiration and posture, but gets realized in diverse ways within and across levels of government, always evolving due to new needs, demands, political priorities & new technologies.

# Further Reading

# Selected References

Bakvis, H. and Juillet, L. 2004. *The Horizontal Challenge: line departments, central agencies and leadership*. Ottawa: Canada School of Public Service.

Bardach, E. 1998. *Getting Agencies to Work Together: The Practice and Theory of Managerial Craftsmanship*. Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution.

Desveaux, J., Lindquist, E., and Toner, G. 1994. "Organizing for Policy Innovation in Public Bureaucracy: AIDS, Energy, and Environmental Policy in Canada." *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, 27:3, 493-538.

Juillet, Luc. 2000. *The Federal Regional Councils and Horizontal Governance: a report prepared for the federal regional councils and the Treasury Board Secretariat*. Ottawa: Canadian Centre for Management Development.

Kernaghan, K. 2013. 'Changing channels: Managing channel integration and migration in public organizations.' *Canadian Public Administration* 56:1, 121-141.

Kernaghan, K. and Berardi, J. 2001. 'Bricks, clicks and calls: Clustering services for citizen-centred delivery'. *Canadian Public Administration* 44:4, 417-440.

Kernaghan, K. and Gunraj, J. 2004. Integrating information technology into public administration: Conceptual and practical considerations. *Canadian Public Administration* 47:4, 525-546.

Lindquist, E. 2015. "Visualization Meets Policy Making: Visual Traditions, Policy Complexity, Strategic Investments." Ch. 4 in E. W. Johnston, ed., *Governance in the Information Era: Theory and Practice of Policy Informatics*. New York: Routledge, pp.62-82

Lindquist, E. 2012. "Horizontal Management in Canada Ten Years Later", *Optimum Online: A Journal of Public Sector management*.

Lindquist, E. 2005. "Organizing for mega-consultation: HRDC and the Social Security Reform", *Canadian Public Administration*, 48:3, 348-85.

Lindquist, E. and Wanna, J. 2015. "Is Implementation Only About Policy Execution? Advice for public sector leaders from the literature", Ch.7 in *New Accountabilities, New Challenges*, eds. Wanna, J., Lindquist, E., and Marshall, P. Canberra: ANU E-Press, 2015, 209-242.

Lindquist, E., Vincent, S., and Wanna, J. eds. 2011. *Delivering Policy Reform: Anchoring Change in Turbulent Times*. Canberra: ANU E Press/ANZSOG, 2011.

Management Advisory Committee. 2004. *Connecting Government: whole of government responses to Australia's priority challenges*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia.

O'Flynn, J. and J. Wanna. 2008. *Collaborative Governance: A new era of public policy in Australia?* Canberra: ANU E-Press and the Australia and New Zealand School of Government.

Vincent, S. Lindquist, E., and Wanna, J. eds. 2013. *Putting Citizens First: Engagement in Policy and Service Delivery for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. Canberra: ANU E-Press.

Thank You! Questions?

[evert@uvic.ca](mailto:evert@uvic.ca)



CONNECTING  
GOVERNMENT

Whole of Government Responses  
to Australia's Priority Challenges

MANAGEMENT  
ADVISORY  
COMMITTEE

4

<b>PREFACE</b> .....	v
<b>1 THE WHOLE OF GOVERNMENT CHALLENGE</b> .....	1
<b>2 STRUCTURES AND PROCESSES</b> .....	19
<b>3 CULTURE AND CAPABILITY</b> .....	43
<b>4 INFORMATION MANAGEMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE</b> .....	57
<b>5 BUDGET AND ACCOUNTABILITY FRAMEWORK</b> .....	75
<b>6 MAKING CONNECTIONS OUTSIDE THE APS: THE NATURE OF ENGAGEMENT IN WHOLE OF GOVERNMENT ACTIVITIES</b> .....	89
<b>7 MANAGING CRISES AND THEIR CONSEQUENCES</b> .....	109

# Some Propositions to Consider

1. Public servants, and the larger institutions of which they are a part, have considerable experience working across boundaries.
2. Demands for horizontal governance and collaboration will continue to multiply.
3. Horizontal initiatives outweigh the capacity of departments and 'the centre' of government to manage.
4. Vertical structures, incentives, and accountabilities will persist.
5. Too many "heavy" coordinating mechanisms may complicate or crush promising horizontal initiatives.
6. Every horizontal initiative will have unique leadership and management challenges -- there must be multiple ways to secure advice and support.
7. Good horizontal management may simply be good management, but leaders must understand unique horizontal challenges.
8. Timely executive support of horizontal initiatives is crucial for success.
9. System support for horizontal initiatives should be cast as investments.
10. Political posturing and policy conflict across governments will continue.