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Connecting agricultural economics research to policy

David Pannell





Useful to policy makers – how?



- Scale of resources to allocate to an issue
- What the goal should be for that issue
- Better design of policy
- Better implementation of policy
- Evaluating effectiveness of policy

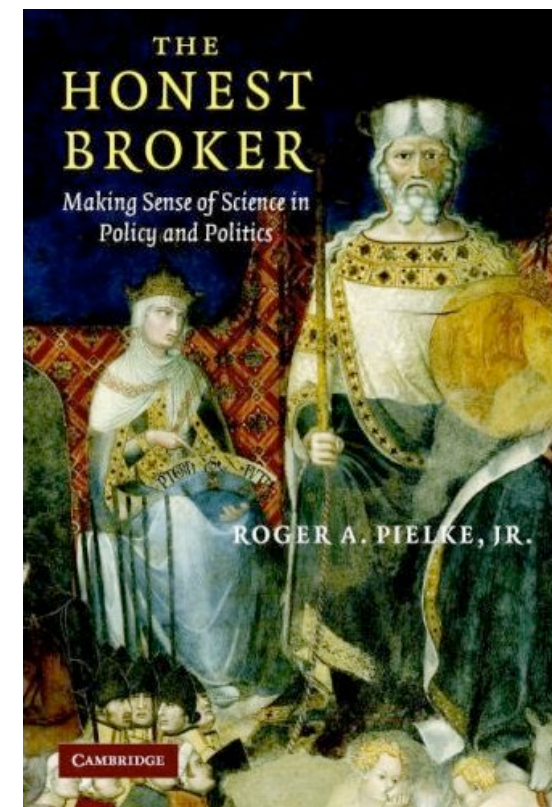
But how to make that happen?



Different policy roles for researchers

(Pielke Jr, 2007)

- *Pure scientist*
 - ❖ Stays distant from the decision making process.
- *Science arbiter*
 - ❖ No specific recommendations. Answers factual questions.
- *Issue advocate*
 - ❖ Makes specific recommendations. Attempts to persuade.
- *Honest broker*
 - ❖ Attempts to provide balanced information. Expand or clarify the choices available.





Research in policy

- Recognise that research (including agricultural economics research) is only one input to policy
- Is it given due weight?
 - ❖ Sometimes yes
 - ❖ Often too little





Examples of too little

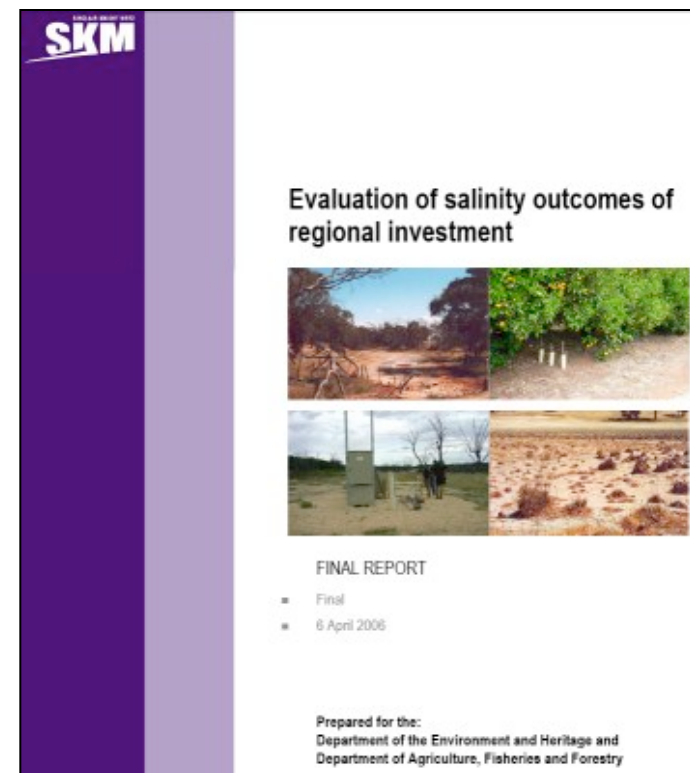
- Natural Heritage Trust
- National Action Plan for Salinity & Water Quality
- Several \$billion delivered through 56 regional NRM bodies





NHT/NAP weakness

- No consideration of farm-level economics of actions, or other drivers of practice change
- No overall economic assessment of actions
- Poor selection of policy tools
- Neglect of science that determines benefits of actions





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Challenges connecting agricultural economics analysis to policy





Why is it hard to connect?

- Other issues matter
 - ❖ legal mandates, societal desires, rights, distributional equity, procedural fairness, political considerations
- Hidden agendas
- Policy fashions and crises
- Getting access
- Timing issues





Why is it hard to connect?

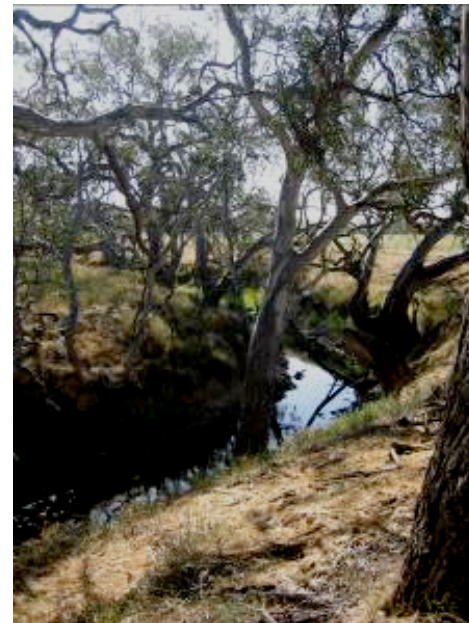
- Analysts/modellers and policy makers are very different
- Communication problems, distrust
- Lack of economic expertise by some policy people and many stakeholders
- Incentives facing research economists
 - ❖ Rewards for publications
 - ❖ Citations
 - ❖ Innovation trumps usefulness
 - ❖ Useful research is often simple (not always)





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Case Study





Case study

- Investment framework to address key weaknesses in natural resource policy: INFFER
- Not a full BCA, but close
- Introduce a BCA mindset





Philosophy of INFFER

- Engage at grass roots and policy levels and with broader stakeholders
- Participatory/partnership
- Aim to change mindsets
- “Adocate” for public interest
- Recognise the severe capacity limit of the environmental decision makers
 - ❖ Lack of expertise (e.g. economics, integration)
 - ❖ Any tools need to be as simple as possible





Philosophy of INFFER

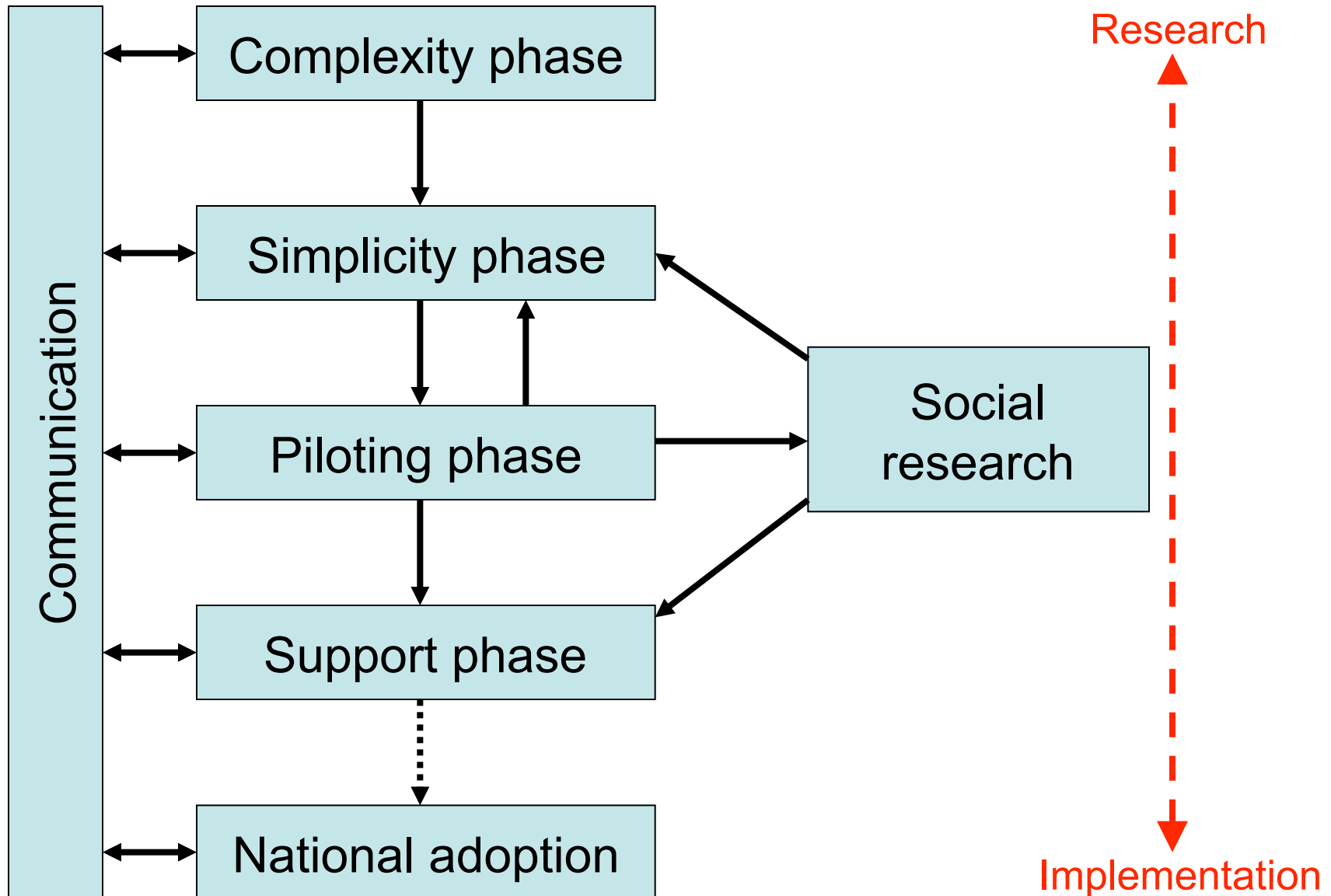
- Use best available knowledge
 - ❖ Science, Expert, Local
- Exactness is unnecessary
- Comprehensiveness is essential



INFFER project strategy

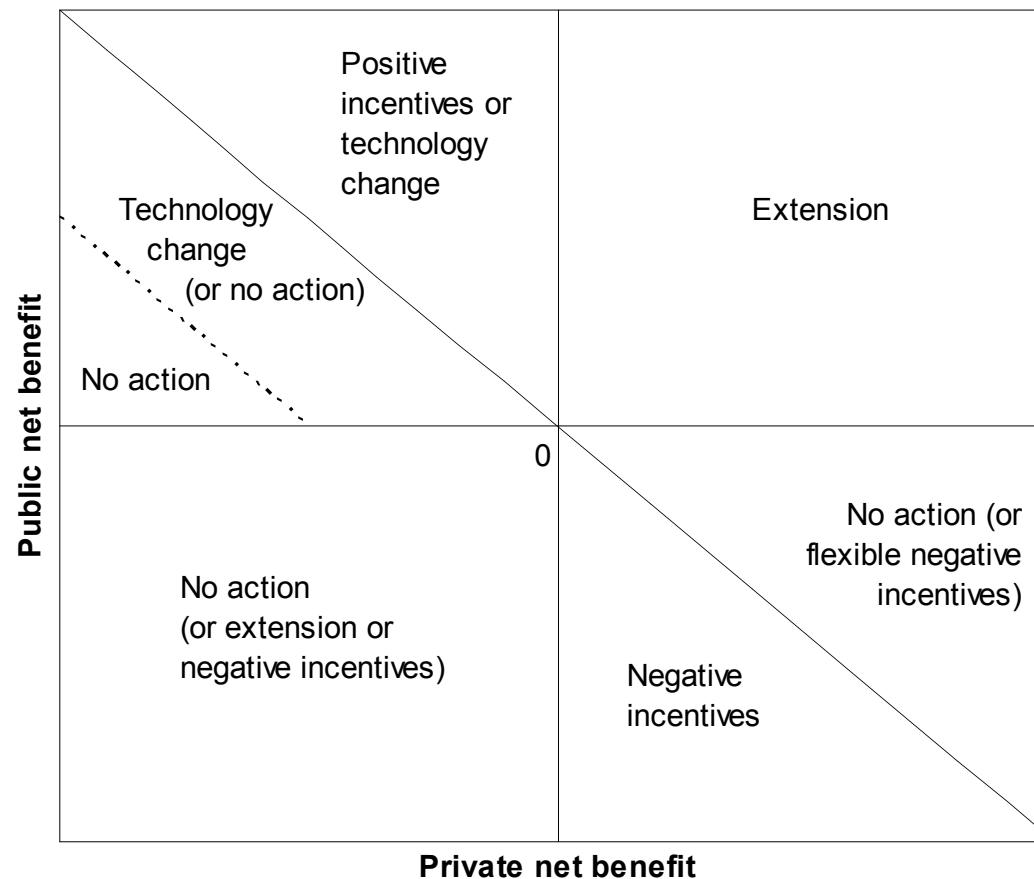


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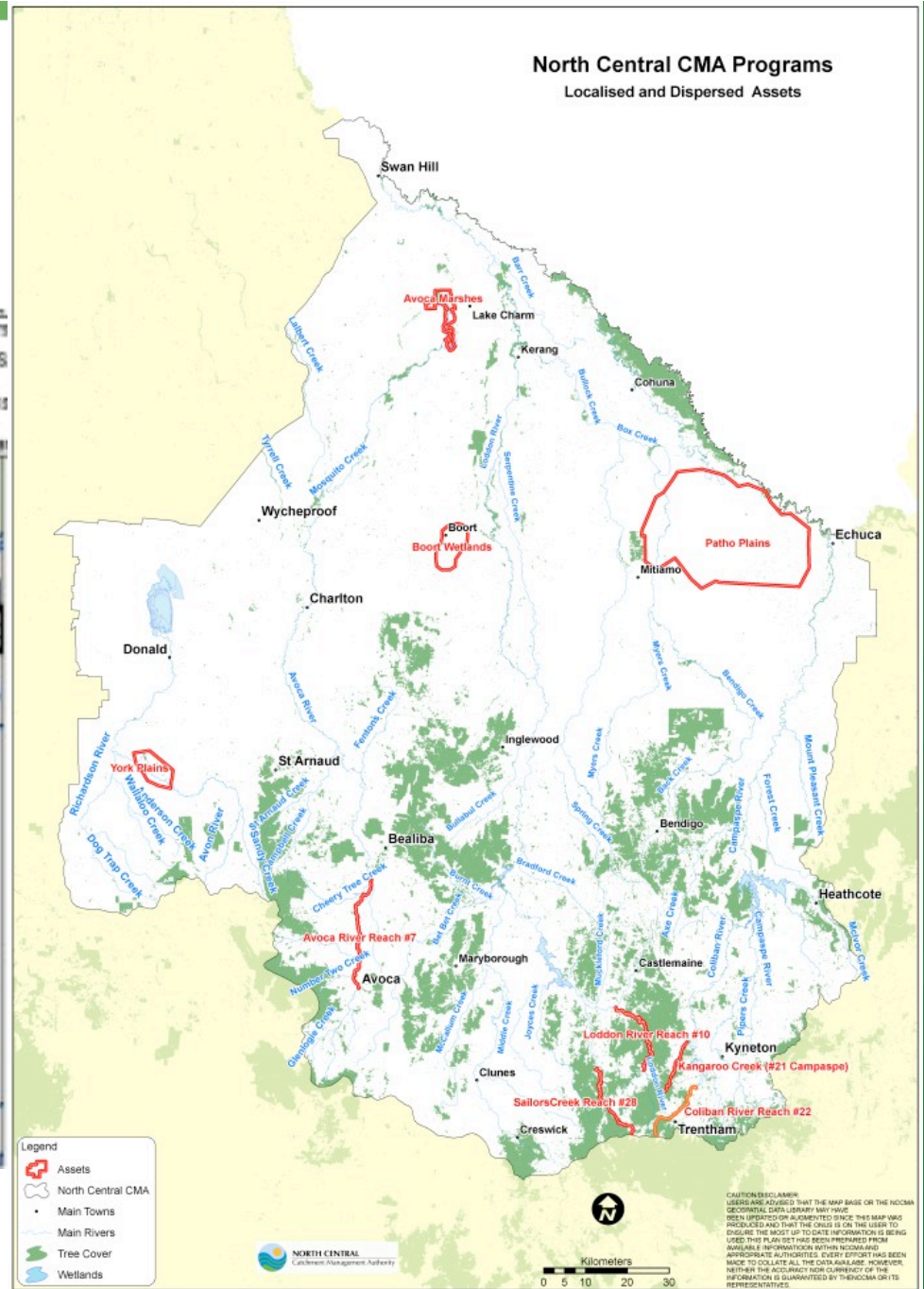
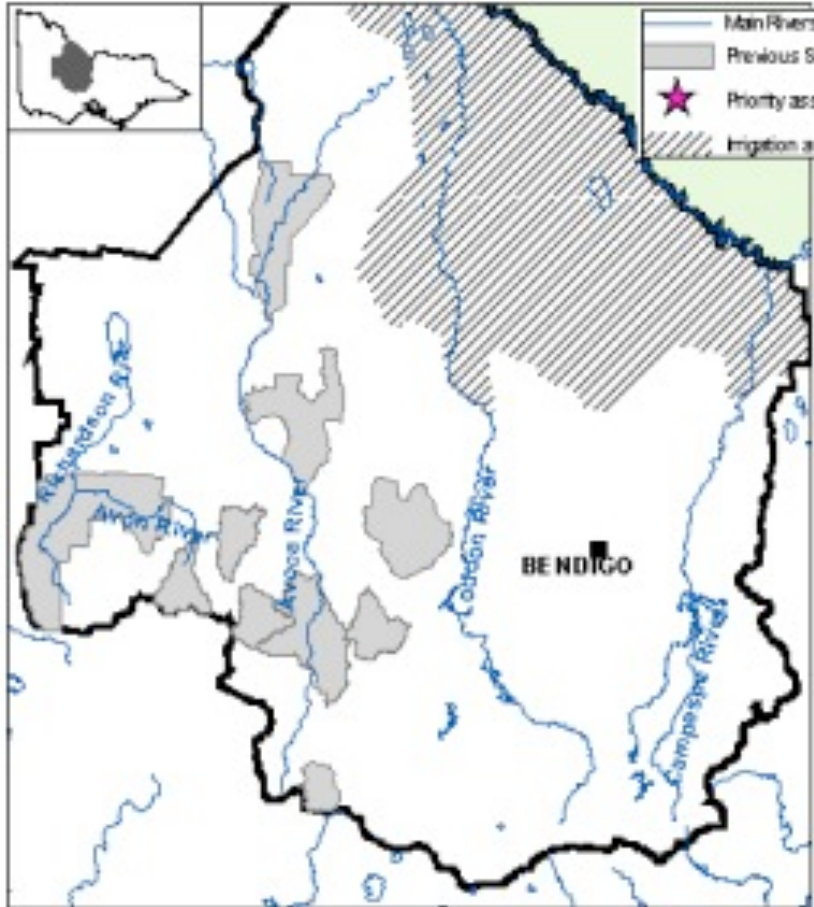


Public-private framework





NORTH CENTRAL Catchment Management Authority





Grass-roots work helps with policy

- Observed existing policy in action
 - ❖ Highlights problems with existing policy
 - ❖ Understand capacity of agents to deliver policy
- Build support among stakeholders
- Improve the tools so that they are ready for national adoption
- Build credibility with high-level policy makers by demonstrating success at grass roots





Policy engagement

- Media
- Brief discussion papers
- Personal meetings
- Presentations
 - ❖ To committees
 - ❖ At conferences
 - ❖ At in-house seminars
- Inquiry submissions
- Input to national policy committees
- Asked for feedback on policy documents
- Various governments
 - ❖ National
 - ❖ State



Policy responses



- Senate inquiry (2006)
 - ❖ "Recommendation 22: It is recommended that the SIF3 framework be applied within the context of the new program."
- NRM Standing Committee and Ministerial Council (2007)
 - ❖ Endorsed new set of principles for investment in salinity
- INFFER adopted by 10 regions in 4 states (2008)
- W.A. and Vic. governments (2008)



What's required?

- Good relationships, trust
- Knowledge of the policy world
- Availability, responsiveness
- Excellent, brief communication, simple compelling message, multiple channels
- Persistence, repetition
- Time, patience





What's required?

- Luck, grasping of opportunities
- A decision-making focus
- Solutions that will obviously work
- Solutions related to policy objectives
- Support from different levels from different parties
- Internal champions
- Thick skin






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