

INSTITUTIONS, MISFITS AND BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION



Photo: Square peg into a round hole, 26 May 2010 via Flickr, rospaw, CC BY-SA

Institutions that do not fit the policy problem are called 'misfits'.

The Problem

- Biodiversity values continue to decline, despite institutional commitments to halt the loss.
- Legislative review calls on the Australian Government to look beyond threatened species and ecological communities to larger, landscape-scale and connectivity initiatives.
- Requires cooperation across tenures and between networks of individuals and organisations.
- Institutional arrangements need to match the problem attributes.

Research Aims

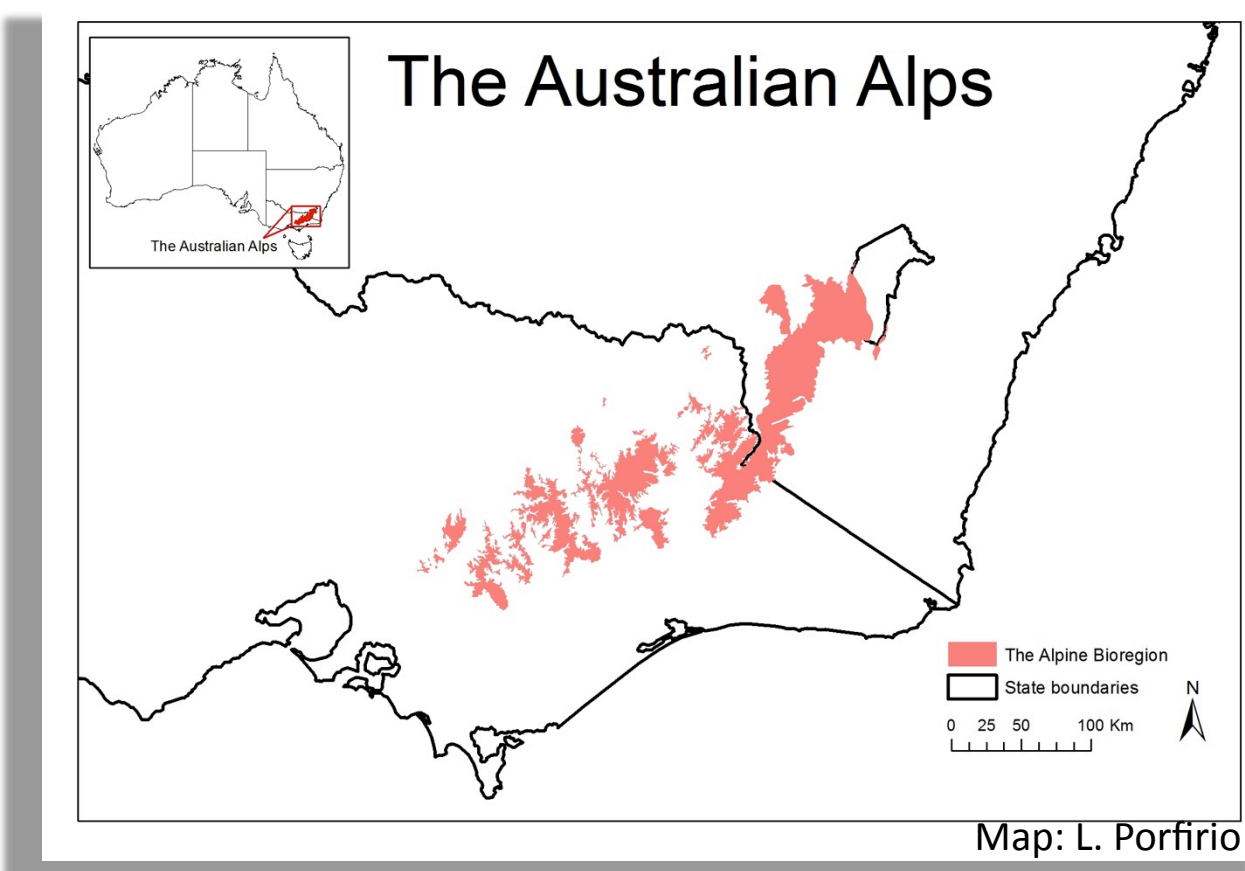
1. Evaluate how institutions support or constrain landscape-scale biodiversity conservation.
2. Identify ways governance and institutions can be designed to better support landscape-scale efforts, using the Tasmanian Midlands and Australian Alps as case studies.

CASE STUDIES

Australian Alps



Photo: L. Porfiro



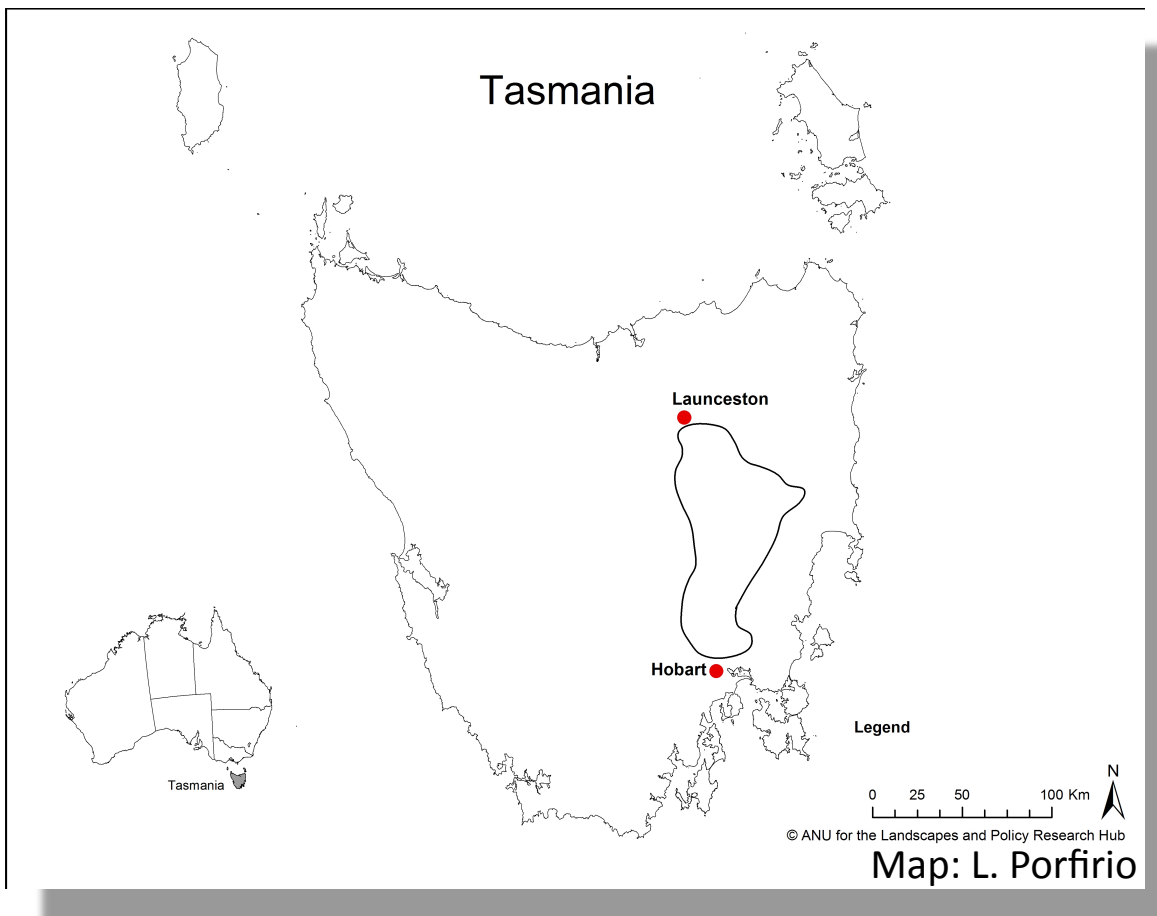
Map: L. Porfiro

The Australian Alps is a publicly owned mountain range. The only area of Australia where snow cover persists for several months, it provides habitat for rare species like the Mountain Pygmy-Possum. Feral horses are amongst the key threats at a landscape scale.



Photo: R. Magierowski

Tasmanian Midlands



Map: L. Porfiro

The Tasmanian Midlands is an agricultural valley, between Launceston and Hobart. The Lowland Native Grasslands – already a fraction of their former extent – are under further threat from irrigation development.



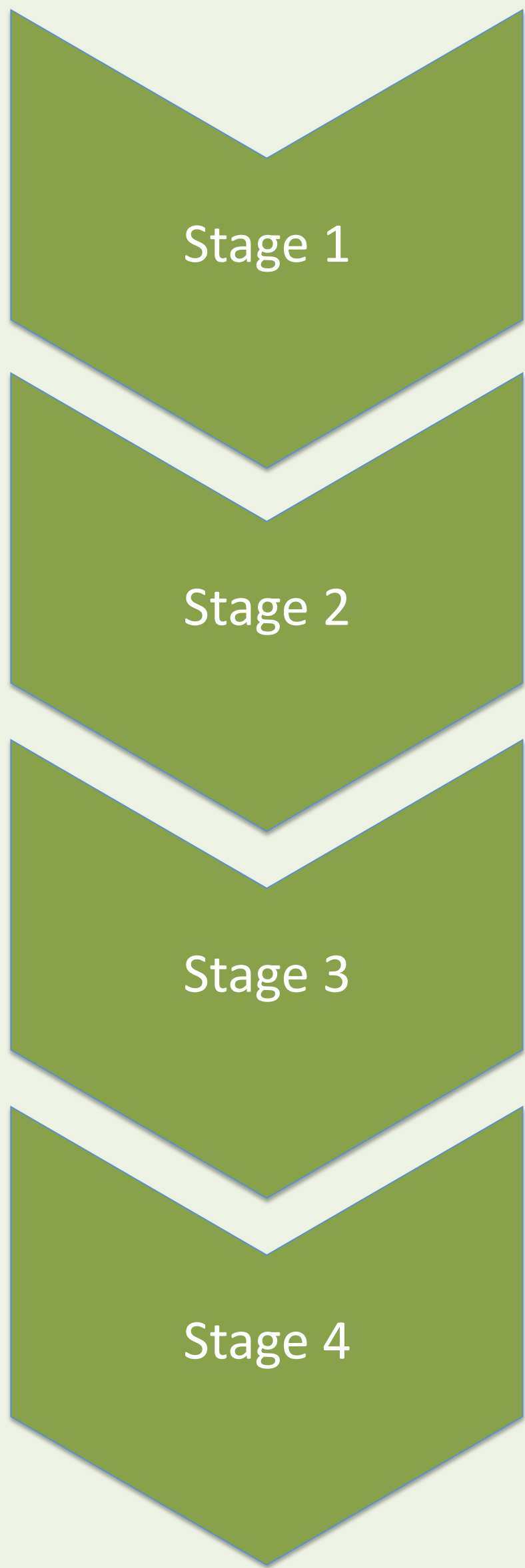
Photo: S. Gaynor



Photo: S. Clement

Stages and Methods

This research is divided into four stages.

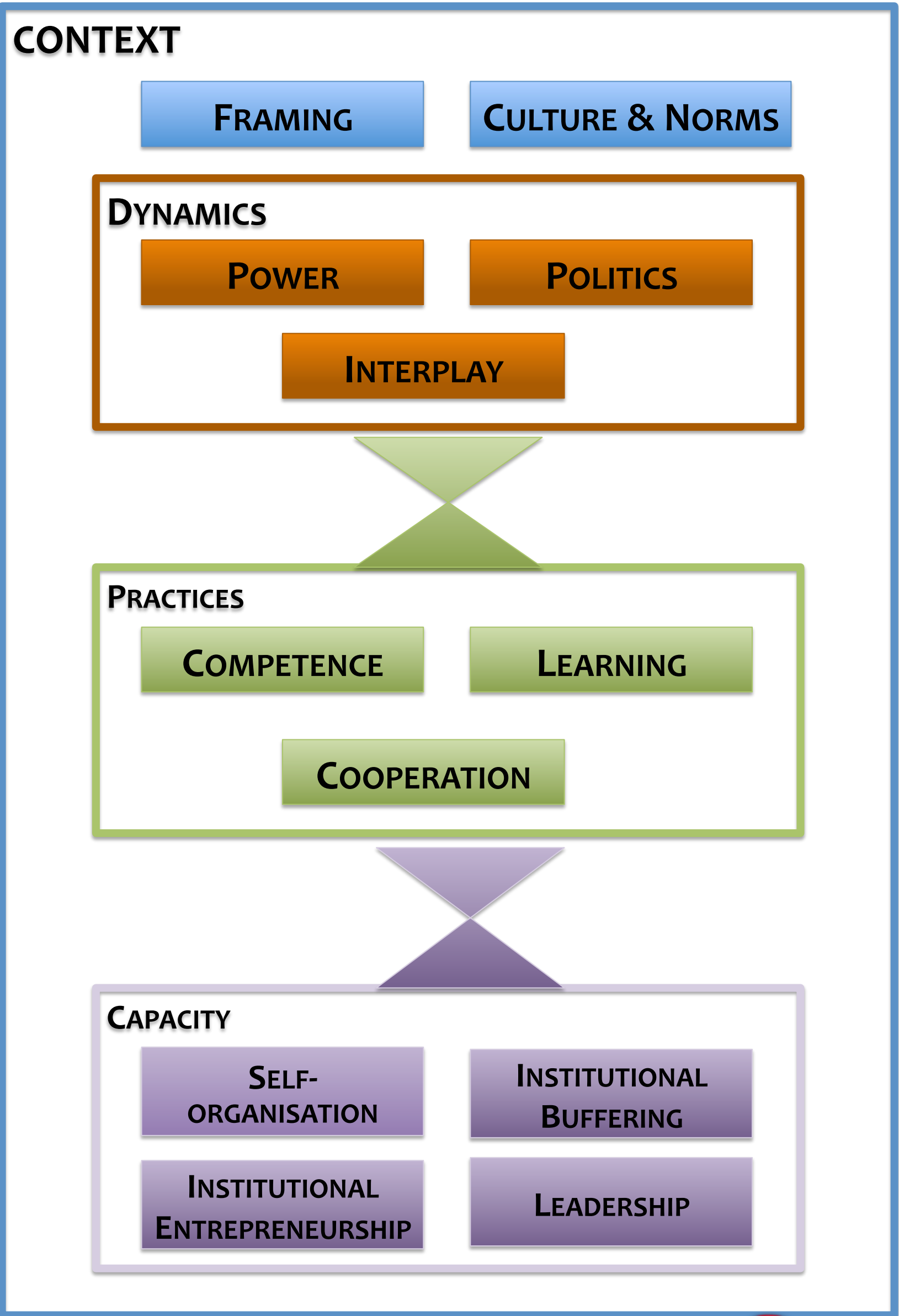


- Stage 1**
 - Describe the problem and current institutional arrangements
 - Literature review and Institutional Grammar Tool.
- Stage 2**
 - Develop diagnostic framework to guide data collection and evaluation.
 - Literature review and key informant interviews.
- Stage 3**
 - Evaluate existing institutional arrangements.
 - Semi-structured, in-depth interviews and document review.
- Stage 4**
 - Identify and develop opportunities to improve biodiversity governance.
 - Focus groups and expert review.

Stage 2 Research Snapshot: Conceptual Framework

Why the framework is needed:

- Current thinking focuses on adaptive governance to address institutional misfits.
- Literature is plagued by a gap between theory and practice.
- This framework bridges that gap.



What the framework does:

- Brings together institutional and organisational theory, political science, adaptive governance, and resilience.
- Provides a structured way to diagnose institutional problems and gaps and recommend solutions.

How it is being used:


- Data collected through 92 in-depth interviews and document analysis.
- Analysis underway.
- Findings will inform development of governance design options, which will be tested in six focus groups.

Figure: Diagnostic Framework


The framework consists of 12 components and 4 categories and is used to diagnose how well current institutional arrangements fit the problem of landscape-scale biodiversity conservation.



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