Dominant stories and their influence on strategic decision-making for the water industry
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Research question

How do decision-makers’ dominant stories influence strategic decision-making in situations where the external business environment is more complex and dynamic due to novel challenges such as climate change?

Sensemaking is the ‘recipe’ – stories are the ‘ingredients’
How I explored the research question…

Storytellers…

... creating dominant stories as new narrative elements

... faithfulness to past + future-authorising

... shift role from observer to judging...

audiences...

... emplot (heroes, villains etc)

... loyal-enough to facts – fine credibility line

... sustain ambiguity to enable individual interpretations
What I found...

Millennium drought
- Unprecedented
- Large-scale
- Blame-shifting (onto climate)

Rapid investment in large infrastructure over incremental adaptation

Armageddon situation
- Heroic solutions
- Threatening situation

Recycled water is a last resort – not sensible adaptation

Industry paternalism
- Technology solves problems
- Experts effect change
- Ideology as fact

Technical dependency over community adaptation
What next?

• Qualitative research:
  • Existing data (Hansard and media)
  • Interviews with political/policy and industry strategic decision-makers
• Analysis of:
  • Stories and their development
  • Stories and strategic beliefs about climate change (and other elements of complexity)
  • Relationship between strategic beliefs and important decisions
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References (selected):