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Authors: Graeme A. Riddell, Hedwig van Delden, Graeme C.
Dandy, Aaron C. Zecchin, Holger R. Maier



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Enhancing the policy relevance of exploratory scenarios: Generic approach and application to disaster risk reduction

Graeme A. Riddell^{a, b*}, Hedwig van Delden^{b, a}, Graeme C. Dandy^a, Aaron C. Zecchin^a, Holger R. Maier^a

^a School of Civil, Environmental and Mining Engineering, University of Adelaide, North Terrace Campus, SA 5005, Australia

^b Research Institute for Knowledge Systems, P.O. Box 463, 6211 NC Maastricht, Netherlands

* Corresponding author at: School of Civil, Environmental & Mining Engineering, University of Adelaide, North Terrace Campus, SA 5005, Australia

Email: graeme.riddell@adelaide.edu.au

Abstract

Exploratory scenarios (i.e. scenarios that question what could happen) have been widely applied to a vast array of complex and uncertain socio-environmental system problems. Despite this fact, they have also been criticised by policy makers for not being relevant to policy processes and assessment. This paper proposes a generic approach to enhance policy relevance in the development of exploratory scenarios. This is carried out by participatory exploration and categorisation of available policy responses and framing of scenarios in terms of challenges to these. An exploration of the factors that make these policies more or less effective is used to develop a narrative for temporal developments in scenario instantiation, in comparison to more generic drivers for change. Within this paper, this process is applied to a case-study exploring the future of natural disaster risk; improving understanding of future uncertainties and subsequently the effectiveness of long-term disaster risk reduction. The case-study application consider bushfire, earthquake, flooding and heatwaves and resulted in five scenarios framed on challenges to resilience and challenges to mitigation for policy makers in Adelaide, Australia.

Keywords

Exploratory scenarios; disaster risk; participation; policy; risk reduction

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