Planning as performance: the Murray-Darling basin plan

Ray Ison

Professor of Systems (Open University, UK)
Professor, Systems for Sustainability
Monash University
Planning – what constitutes a ‘good performance’
A policy/plan? A social technology that mediates practice?

Policies/plans reify understandings at particular historical moments.

Policy/planning rarely considered as a form of praxis – theory informed practical action.
New’ Federal arrangements
Cross-jurisdictional policies and practices
Victorian water policy and practices
GBCMA
‘Local’ land and water managers

GBCMA = Goulburn-Broken Catchment Management Authority

A ‘model’ of the ‘performance space’

International developments
Why is a concern with ‘performance’ important?

- Stein Ringen (2009) studied UK New Labour’s flagship policies of child poverty, education, social justice and health – found that they had achieved ‘absolutely nothing’.
- provides strong evidence for the systemic failure of UK governance
  > by highlighting the problems that emerge when governments adopt a command and control approach
  > and fail to mobilise citizens or stakeholders in policy development and implementation.
- His sobering conclusion was that no UK government, of any political persuasion, can currently get done what it is elected to do.
Starting from here – what next?

• Create a cabinet level interdepartmental ‘water committee’ - make water everyone’s business?

• A national, on-going, *systemic inquiry* into water and energy governance in a climate change world (variation on UK Climate Committee or Royal Commission on Pollution Control)?

• Use refocus on regional Australia to address systemic opportunities for rural futures – a rural livelihoods strategy?

• Reform, on a coherent national basis, CMAs, as institutions able to manage a coupled ‘socio-ecological system’?