Creating Numbers: Carbon and Capital Investment

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Abstract

This paper is concerned with the way in which carbon emissions are given calculative agency. Using stories from a water company we show the multiple ways carbon emissions were made to become iconic in organisational practices (Mol, 2001). Adopting a Sociology of Quantification framework we demonstrate how the carbon emission calculation made people work in certain ways, it gave authority, and provided discipline (Espeland & Stevens, 2008). As the carbon calculation came to life in the organisation’s accounts the aesthetic appeal of the calculated number continued to reinforce the other attributes.