Learning from mistakes
– A modified backcasting approach to investigate success and failure in reaching the preferred future

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Backcasting

• An approach for assessing the feasibility of a preferred future end-state by looking backwards from the preferred future to the present

• Classic references:
  • Robinson 1988
  • Robinson 1990
  • Dreborg 1996
Rationale

• Robinson 1990: “Iterate analysis as required to ensure consistency between goals and results.”
  • How to report?
• Usually inconsistencies and failures are not an explicit part of analysis and reporting
  → Mapping pathways to success
• What about pathways to failure?
  → If you know where the underwater rocks are you have better chances of avoiding shipwreck!

The concept of critical juncture

• Originates from study of history, especially historical institutionalism

• Capoccia and Kelemen 2007:
  “Relatively short periods of time during which there is a substantially heightened probability that agents’ choices will affect the outcome of interest”
  → Increased contingency and possibilities to shift onto a new trajectory
  • See also e.g. Mahoney 2001, Hogan 2006 and Tiberius 2011

• Applied in the context of backcasting:
  • potential crossroads that make the difference between success and failure in reaching the preferred future
From inconsistencies to critical junctures

1) Identify inconsistencies

2) Analysis:
   • What is the problem?
   • What is the solution? → Path to success
   • What if solution not found/applied? → Path to failure
   • Is the juncture critical?

3) Report critical junctures
Different types of inconsistencies

Deviations

Breaks

Dysfunctional paths

Unacceptable paths (crisis)

Discussion

• Practical implementation? To be tested!

• Other types of failure with no critical juncture (e.g. gradual change)?
Kiitos!
Thank you!

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References:


