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Verweij, Stefan

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Addressing the Evaluation-Implementation Gap in Infrastructure Megaproject Research with Qualitative Comparative Analysis

Stefan Verweij

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Abstract

In this book chapter, I argue that there is a gap between the evaluation and implementation of mega projects, and I advocate Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) as a remedy notably in transport infrastructure research and evaluation. Mega project evaluation tends to focus excessively on the planning stage, overlooking the complexities involved in the implementation of mega projects. The open-system nature of these projects means that the project outcomes and their causes cannot be predicted and identified unambiguously, which in turn makes it difficult to evaluate the implementation processes. Large infrastructure projects face uncertainty and ambiguity, but their evaluations are often informed by a linear-rationalist, objectivist worldview, which compromises the capacity of evaluation to promote learning. I advocate QCA as a complexity-informed evaluation approach, able to account for key phenomena associated with mega projects, notably their non-decomposability, contingency, non-compressibility and time-asymmetry. Illustrating the arguments by drawing on the Dutch € 2 billion transportation infrastructure project A15 Maasvlakte-Vaanplein, the chapter concludes by discussing the applicability of QCA for mega project research and evaluation.

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