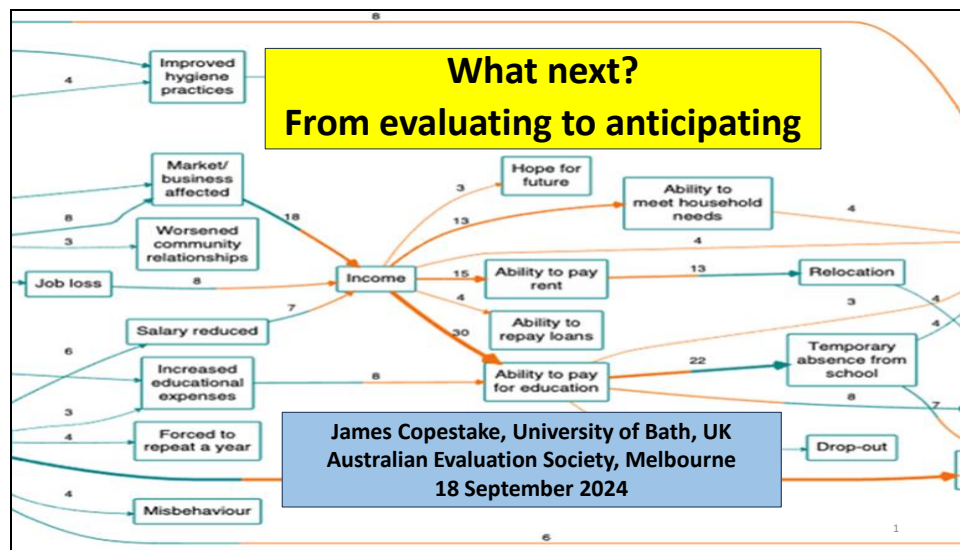


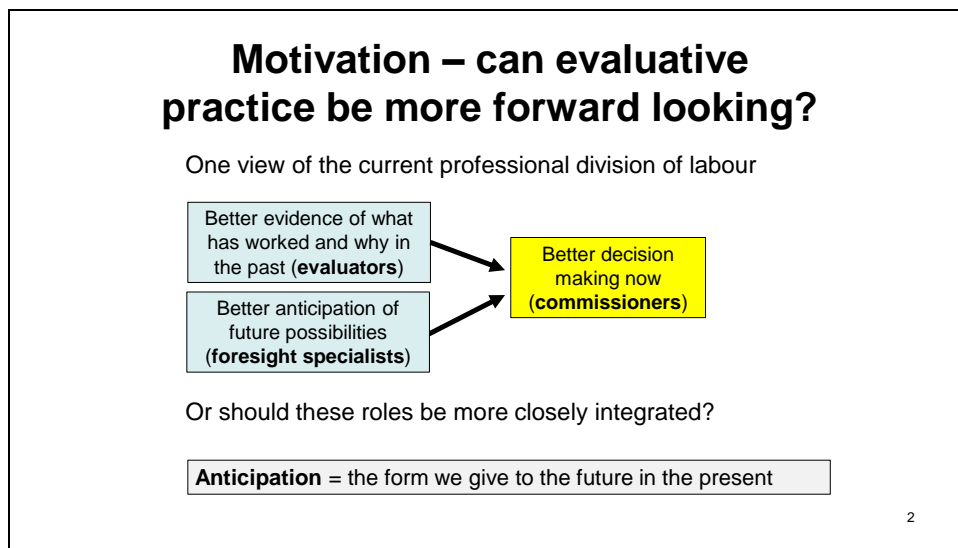
Slide 1



What next? From evaluating to anticipating.

Many thanks to the AES for giving me this opportunity to speak, an opportunity to visit Australia for the first time, and for the choice of the Wayfinding theme for the conference, which inspired me to think harder about how we navigate through time.

The background to this slide is part of a causal map – or a way of visualising how we make sense of what caused what in the past. What I’m going to do is share with you my first attempt to apply this approach to thinking into the future. In retrospect it probably wasn’t such a great idea to try out some completely new ideas for the first time in front of such a large audience, but its too late to switch now so here goes!




I've been motivated to do this by a sense of the need for us to be more incisive and forward looking in how we address seemingly ever more pressing global challenges, including those highlighted by June Oscar in the opening keynote address.

My starting point is the existence of quite a strong division of labour between evaluators, foresight or futures specialists, and those who commission their services.

If we as evaluators are to be more incisive, forward-looking and useful then perhaps we need to challenge this division of labour. We need to do evaluation in a way that anticipates looming issues, and the decisions that need to be made about how to respond to them.

Or is futurology for fools?



"The inability to predict outliers implies the inability to predict the course of history... What is surprising is not the magnitude of our forecast errors, but our absence of awareness of it."
N N Taleb (2007) *Black Swan*: the impact of the highly improbable.

"Thinking usefully about the future of the planet is too important to be left to states, corporations and technologists... The difficulty of the task is an argument for investing more in tackling it, not less."
M J Albert (2024) *Navigating the global polycrisis: mapping the futures of capitalism and the earth*.

3

But do we as a community of evaluators really want to distract ourselves from the important task of assessing the value, merit and worth of past activities (difficult enough in itself) by engaging more with the trying to anticipate what will happen next too?

The picture is a screen shot of my colleague Fiona Remnant's Satnav, taken recently while she was driving through Birmingham in the UK. Every conceivable route she could take showed either traffic jams or road works. How useful was that she commented? Nassim Taleb, author of *Black Swans*, warns against trying too hard to predict the future, adding that there is much we can do when we focus on what we don't know. For example, we lean supply chains may look efficient, but redundancy can also enhance resilience.

However, if we aspire as evaluators to inform and influence important public decisions then it makes sense also to participate in analysis and discussion of future priorities and risks. In his recent book on navigating the global polycrisis, Michael J Albert makes a spirited defence for doing so, subject to also retaining a healthy dose of humility. "Thinking about usefully about the planet is too important to be left to others... the difficulty of the task is an argument for investing more in tackling it not less"

Other evaluators' views

<p>Patton, Picciotto, van den Berg... Aspirations for a more "transformational" role for evaluators</p>	<p>Schwandt & Gates... <i>Evaluating and valuing in social research</i>, 2021. Evolution from "conventional" and "expanded conventional" to "emerging alternative" approaches.</p>
<p>Carden... <i>Back to the future: are we trapped in our past?</i> Evaluation and Program Planning, 2023. "... fundamentally, theories of change are about the future"</p>	<p>Gardner, Davies, Kelly... <i>Bridging foresight and evaluation: a bridge worth building</i>. New Directions for Evaluation, Special issue, 2024 Includes a paper by Rick Davies reviewing use to date of ParEvo</p>

4

In arguing that evaluators need to engage more with the future I'm in line with plenty of others across the profession. The last few years have seen repeated calls for the transformation of evaluative practice, particularly in the face of climate change.

A recent special edition of *New Directions in Evaluation* make a sustained and spirited case for building a stronger bridge between evaluation and the foresight community of practice. Let me pick out two of the articles.

Our very own Jess Dart (with Emily Gates) reminds us that the theories of change at the heart of many evaluations are not just about explaining and exploring causal processes but also draw upon our imagination to peer into the future. And Rick Davies reflects on use of ParEvo, his brilliantly integrative participatory tool for scenario building. I'm inspired by the fact that these two pioneers of the Most Significant Change approach to evaluation continue to point us in new directions.

Purpose of my presentation

1. To promote useful forward-looking evaluative practice.
2. To explore (with examples) what this could look like.
3. To suggest this should include
 - more use of **causal mapping**
 - more **backcasting**
 - hence go beyond better evaluation of foresight tools and anticipatory actions.

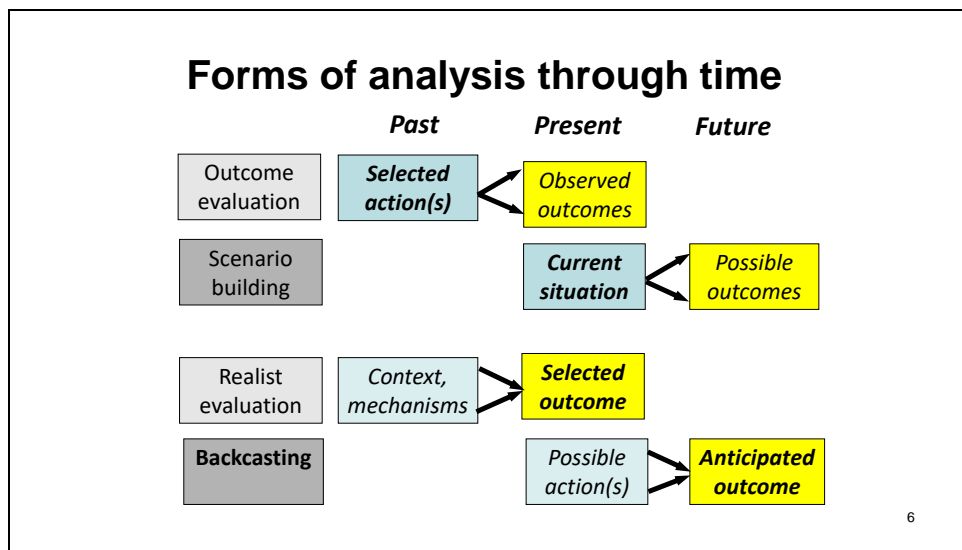
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I hope this talk can add something to promoting forward-looking and useful evaluative practice. To do so, I will take a case study approach by reflecting on a few examples of where I'm trying to be more reflective in my own evaluative practice. In doing so I will also make two more specific arguments: first to suggest that causal mapping has a useful role to play in building this bridge; second that evaluators can contribute particularly to the use of backcasting in future studies.

In so doing, I neglect two other issues bridging evaluation and future studies

(a) evaluation of anticipatory interventions – e.g. in the field of disaster risk financing; and

(b) evaluation of the impact of using foresight tools themselves, such as ParEvo.

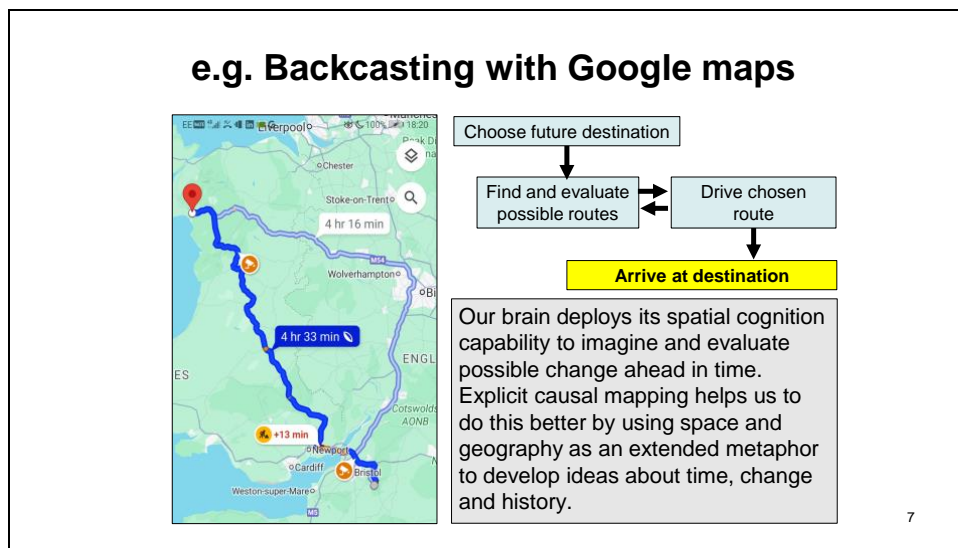


To explain what I propose to do more clearly, this slide contrasts four different ways in which we do causal analysis through time.

The first two are examples of forward chaining. Both start the analysis with drivers or causes (written in bold) but differ according to whether they start with causes in the past or present. The second two are examples of backward chaining. They start the analysis with outcomes, and then work back to drivers or causes.

Backcasting with imagined outcomes in the future, and so is the most forward looking of the four.

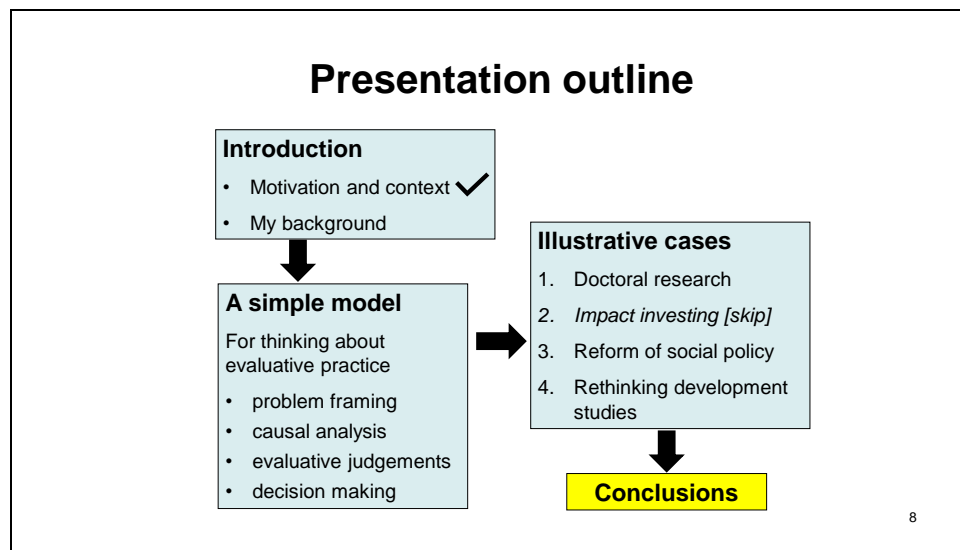
Note these diagrams are themselves high level causal maps, and in this and other slides to follow, I adopt the convention of highlighted outcomes in such maps in yellow.



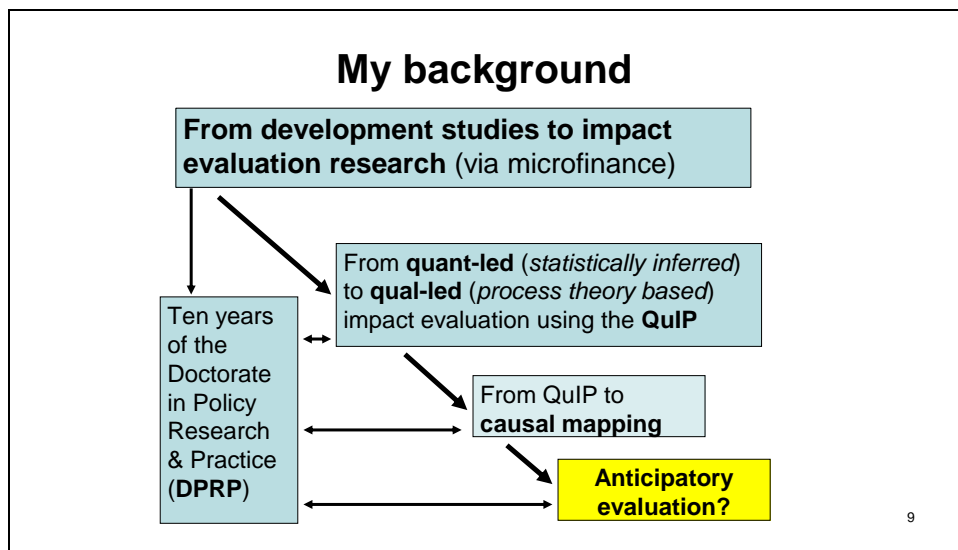
To illustrate what I mean by backcasting consider the familiar but special case of a geographical map (on the left) that can also be drawn through analytical time as a causal map (on the right). The causal outcome (red flag, top left) is the destination, which happens to be Porthmadog in Wales where I spent my summer holiday. The reason for choosing this example is that between leaving my home in Bath and crossing the Severn Estuary, Google Maps switched between **six** different 'optimal' routes, the change being triggered by real time information about changes in traffic congestion – some (I suspect) endogenously generated by people also navigating with Google Maps! At one point I found myself stuck on a single lane road behind a mobile holiday van, and rebelled against what Google Map was telling me by opting for a slower route that I hope would keep more opens open if the traffic got even worse. No doubt others here have had similar experiences.

Despite such problems Google Maps is a far more powerful navigational tool than policy makers normally have to guide them. It is also a useful example of backcasting, because its causal analysis starts when we tell it to help us achieve the outcome of getting to a planned destination.

As the theme of this conference is wayfinding, I think it is also worth reflecting on the way our brain relies on its spatial cognition capability to imagine and evaluate possible change ahead in time. Explicit causal mapping helps us to do this better by using space on the page as an extended metaphor for setting out ideas about time.



This is rather a long introduction, but we will eventually get to the core of this presentation – comprising application of a simple model of evaluative practice to four illustrative case studies of backcasting. But first let me spend a few minutes telling you how I got to this point.

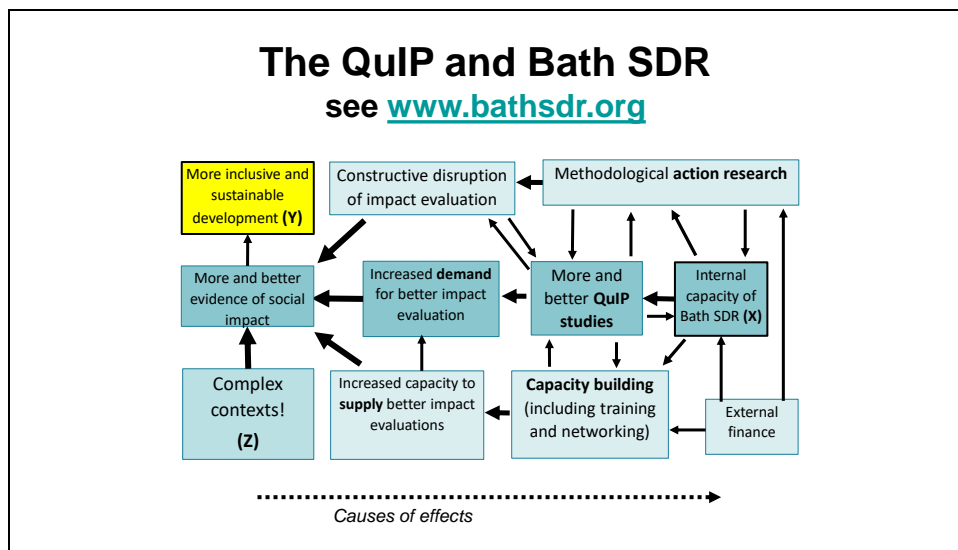


My ability to think about the connections between evaluation and future studies is perhaps made easier by being semi-attached to both, with firmer roots in the academic field of development studies.

That said, I've been doing impact assessments on and off for forty years, starting with my doctoral research into the impact of rural credit programmes in India. Impact assessment of microfinance also took me to Africa and Latin America.

However, over time I came to appreciate just how cumbersome and unhelpful much quantitative impact assessment often turned out to be. These thoughts coincided with the ascendancy of impact evaluation by randomised controlled trial in the field of international development. I found them mostly too slow, narrowly framed, expensive and self-referential to my taste, but instead of adding to the distinguished chorus of criticism of them, I decided instead to explore what a more credible and cost-effective approach to impact evaluation might look like by starting to experiment with qualitative alternatives.

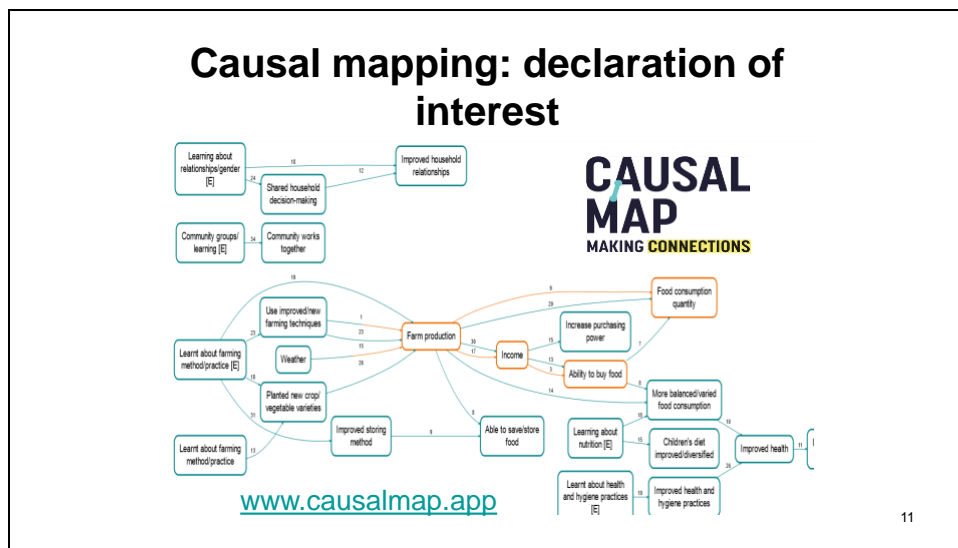
My role as Director of Studies for the part-time Doctorate in Policy Research and Practice (DPRP) at Bath – which this year recruited its 100th student – also brought me into contact with many mid-career evaluation and policy professionals who encouraged this line of investigation.



As a result much of my most recent writing has arisen from design and use of the Qualitative Impact Protocol or QuIP. This relies on careful collection and analysis of stories people tell about change in their lives as evidence of causal attribution, rather than more narrowly framed RCTs and similar methods that rely on statistical inference to make inferences about attribution. The QuIP started out as UK government funded action-research, but we then mainstreamed it by setting up a University spin-off social enterprise called Bath Social and Development Research Ltd. This is directed by Fiona Remnant – the self-same person who is probably still stuck in traffic somewhere in Birmingham. The slide shows Bath SDRs theory of change, drawn as a causal map.

In brief, we aim to contribute to sustainable development (top left) by three interconnected routes: first by doing QuIP studies ourselves – more than fifty so far (middle level of boxes), second by helping others to do them (bottom level), and third by contributing to debate over impact evaluation methodology (top level).

You can find out more about the approach on the BetterEvaluation website, or collar me and I can give you a flier.



Working with the QuIP fed my interest in causal mapping, and indeed led to the formation of a second company – Causal Map Ltd - directed by Steve Powell. Causal maps, such as the one shown here, generally aggregate narrative evidence on how the intended beneficiaries of public interventions explain changes in different aspects of their wellbeing, and they are central to how we visualise the findings of QuIP studies. Causal Map Ltd was set up to develop and support dedicated software for coding and combining causal claims embedded in natural stories. It is now in its third version, with recent upgrades written in R by Steve, partly in response to daily suggestions from those using the previous version to analyse QuIP data.

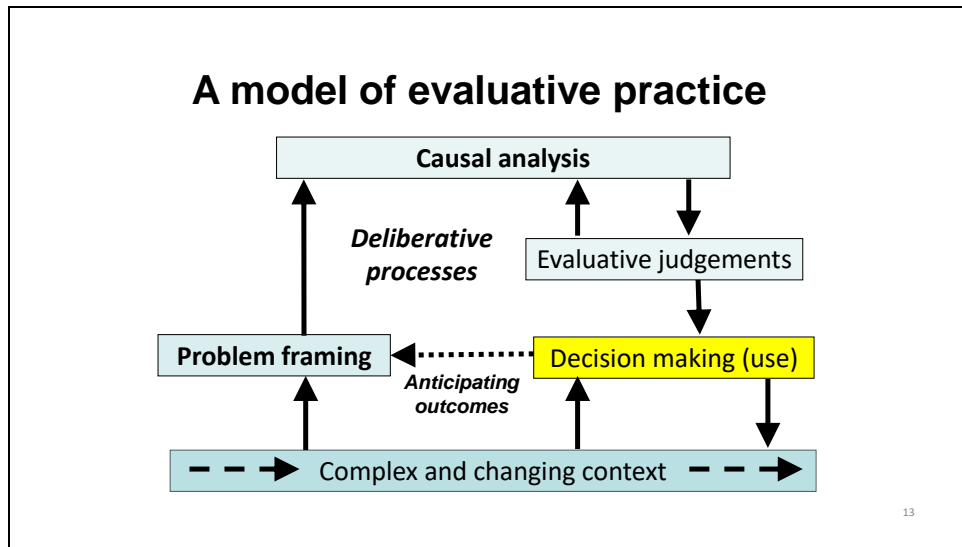
Visualisation and attribution

Powell, S., Copestake, J.,
 Remnant, F. (2024) **Causal
 mapping for evaluators.**
Evaluation, 30(1):100-119

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The causal claims depicted in causal maps are vague, because they reveal neither the magnitude of the causal claim, nor the level of confidence attached to it. To illustrate, I can tell you that a joint paper Steve, Fiona and I recently published on causal mapping in the journal *Evaluation* arose partly in response to encouragement from its editor Elliot Stern (first left) during a meeting at the European Evaluation Society conference in Copenhagen two years ago. This encouragement was certainly not a sufficient condition on its own to produce the paper. But it was probably a necessary one, because without Elliot's prompt we might never have gotten around to finishing it.

This simple example illustrates that while causality flows forward inexorably through time (the solid arrow), anticipation or the idea of a future event (publishing the paper) flows the other way (the dotted line). Life flows chronologically, and that is how our thoughts are mostly directed. But at times we also have to think backwards – particularly if we are evaluators, or the cartoonist Gary Larson.



How do we capture this interplay between ideas and events in our understanding of evaluative practice? I first drew the model on the screen when thinking about the tension between evaluators as dispassionate analysts of causal change, and as makers of value judgements. Actual events flow inexorably through time - from left to right - along the bottom of the diagram. And sandwiched in the middle is the process of how and why we choose to frame our evaluative gaze on one problem or another. Flowing backwards through time (hence a dotted line) is our anticipation of how we might influence the outcome of future decisions.

Last, but not least, there is the important issue of evaluative practice as a social process. I have chosen to call this a deliberative process because I like to think of evaluation as an intentional act of opening up ways of collective thinking what is happening and what should be done.

e.g. Wayfinding with Google maps

	Description	Deliberative processes
Problem framing	Fixed and relatively certain outcome (planned destination).	Who gets to choose? Why do we want to go there? What is the time frame?
Causal analysis	Mostly stable causal processes – roads, cars, journey times...	Relatively precise and reliable tools to assist. Endogenous response of other drivers is a problem!
Evaluative judgement	Clear criteria – time, fuel efficiency, nice scenery...	Consult with passengers. Scope for mid-journey adjustments.
Decision making	Driver implements.	Backseat drivers!

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This slide, which I won't dwell on, applies this model to use of Google Maps as a backcasting anticipatory evaluation. Think of it as a way of road testing the model.

e.g. Pathologies of evaluative practice

	Description	Deliberative process
Problem framing	Backward looking.	Neo-liberal procurement norms blunt collaboration.
Causal analysis	Bias towards quant-led attribution.	Competition via methodological sophistry.
Evaluative judgement	Formulaic rubrics and procedures.	Evaluators marginalised and evidence ignored.
Decision making	Box-ticking legitimisation.	Instrumental participation (manufacture of consent).

This slide also road-tests the model by imagining a dystopia of pathological evaluative practice. Read out the boxes. I won't dwell too long on this one either, except to note that one way of framing an interesting anticipatory evaluation would be to imagine this as a future outcome for evaluative practice in Australia in ten years, then ask what needs to be done to avoid it.

Problem framing anticipating outcomes

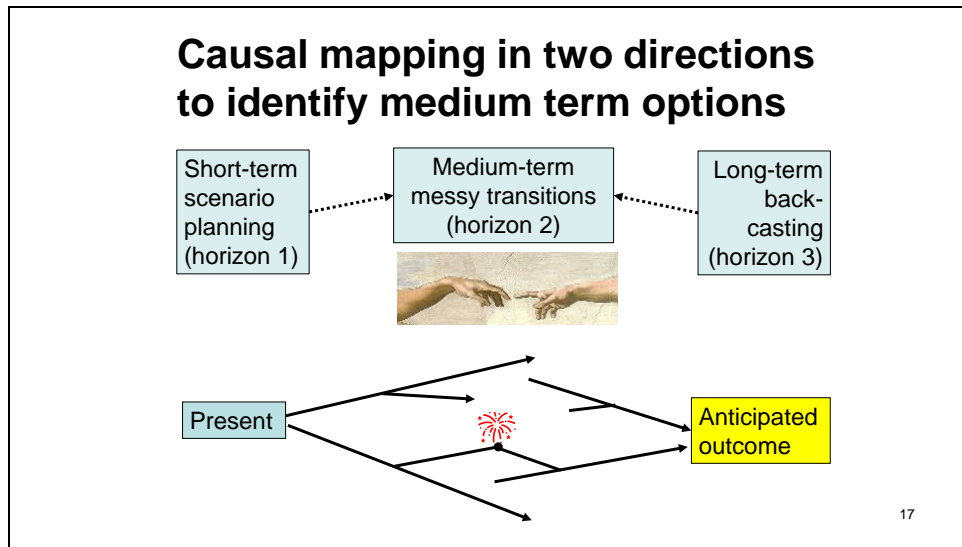
<p>Examples</p> <p>Wayfinding with Google Maps.</p> <p>Planning a doctorate.</p> <p>Energy transitions to net-zero.</p> <p>Environmental protection.</p> <p>Universal Basic Income.</p> <p>The MDGs and SDGs.</p> <p>Prefiguration in critical theory and development studies.</p> <p>Rearmament ahead of war.</p> <p>Peace agreements after war.</p>	<p>Why do this?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To motivate, inspire and be more transformational• To be more imaginative - antidote to path dependence and blinkered thinking.• To gain analytical focus – antidote to the scatter gun approach of exploring multiple scenarios. <p>Beware!</p> <p>Visionary imagining as a distraction from pragmatic problem solving.</p>
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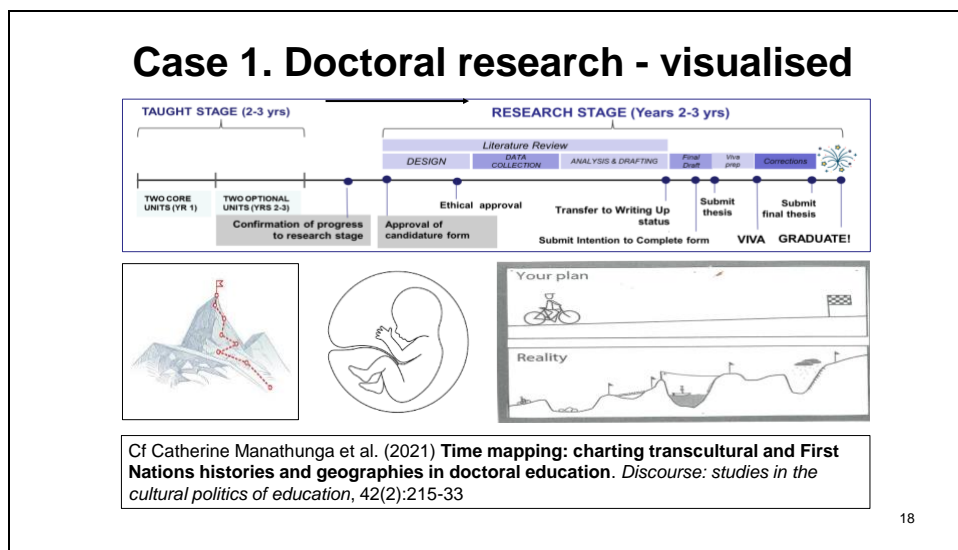
Framing evaluation around an imagined future scenario may seem novel but its happening more and more. For example, international development cooperation is framed by the Sustainable Development Goals for 2030, particularly within the UN system; and Australia, the UK, and a growing number of countries have a target to achieve net-zero carbon emissions by 2050.

Meanwhile, military planners chase moving targets for rearmament to match the build-up of similarly motivated adversaries, while political scientists debate what might constitute a sufficient package of conditions for achieving a lasting peace.

Foresight analysis may be more closely associated in your mind with constructing multiple scenarios, but fixing on one future outcome and assessing prospects for achieving it can stimulate more focused analysis, help policy debates get out of a rut, and even inspire a social movement – to ban the bomb, to achieve a universal basic income, or get promoted. Of course, simplistic aspirational target setting of this kind can backfire – the trick being to identify an outcome that is challenging and aspirational, rather than an impossibility or a potential distraction from more urgent needs and priorities. But incorporating such anticipatory thinking into evaluative practice brings to the fore decisions that are often made tacitly. Aristotle called the practical wisdom behind such judgements phronesis, Keynes talked about investors' intuition and animal spirits, while critical realists talk about abduction. More often this aspect of evaluative practice is unspoken.



There is also much to be said in favour of tackling messy and uncertain transitions from both sides: mapping options forward from the present with grounded step-by-step scenario planning, at the same time as mapping backwards from a more visionary view of the future. Both Charles Handy's second curve model, and the Three Horizon foresight model anticipate a coming crisis with business-as-usual, creating a sense of urgency about the need to come up with transitional arrangements for turning vicious into virtuous circles.



Let me turn at last to my case studies.

Nobody starts a doctorate without some kind of vision of what it will be like to complete it, and what the journey will be like, but in my experience thinking about both can be surprisingly vague.

Catherine Manathunga has written a marvellously imaginative paper about the images students and supervisors in Australia have of their doctoral journeys. Here are a few of mine. The top one is a standard timeline made up of fixed sequence of formal stages and milestones – actually drawn up by one of our students. The one below and to the right of it reflects another student’s satirical take on how far from lived reality this turned out to be. The mountain also suggests a less linear process – and ignores the far from trivial question of which mountain to climb in the first place. But it retains the idea of a set path and sequence of stages to follow. The image of an embryo contests this by suggesting that different parts of the thesis grow alongside each other, even if not at precisely the same rate.

Doctoral research – evaluative practices

Induction

1. What do you ultimately want to achieve?
2. What is likely to hinder your progress?
3. What can we do to reduce these constraints?

Causal mapping of messy processes

Backcasting with a thesis plan checklist

1. Field of study
2. Research community
3. Research question
4. Analytical framework
5. Methodology
6. Thesis structure

This slide shows three approaches I have used with students to evaluate their doctoral research at different stages.

The first challenges them to define their goals, then to anticipate likely obstacles and strategies for addressing them. It is a forward-looking and developmental exercise intended to build students’ collective identity and encourage reciprocal support.

The backcasting exercise comes closest to reverse engineering by suggesting to students that a thesis forms in an embryo-like fashion through emergence of six mutually consistent elements – which importantly includes narrowing down the academic ‘tribe’ they want to join or influence.

The causal map was produced by coding and aggregating narrative data from open-ended interviews in which they were asked to reflect on drivers and obstacles to their study and learning over the previous six months.

Analysis

Anticipatory problem framing	Some rules and norms constrain thesis form and scope. Some scope for reverse engineering . But the destination is highly personal to each student Intuitive/abductive jump to a workable plan is a major stepping stone.
Causal analysis	Logical formal progression steps (linear). Messier process of building a coherent argument (non-linear).
Evaluative judgements	Student's own scoping decisions, subject to supervisory feedback Ethical approval of fieldwork
Decision making	Examiners ultimately pass or fail, but student and peer assessment of value, merit and worth also matter.
Process observations	Relentless reflexivity and self-evaluation; supervisory guidance; peer support. Messy, iterative, adaptive.

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This table analyses some of my experiences with doctoral students against the model of evaluative practice. Anticipatory framing of the research problem is a critical and often neglected part of the whole process. It entails recognising that the journey entails the challenge of combining the need for cool project management, with emotional commitment and constant self-evaluation of progress.

[Case 2. Impact investment]

<p>Promise</p> <p>To transform the financial industry by mainstreaming investment that incorporates credible prospective assessment of environmental and social impact.</p>	<p>Pitfalls</p> <p>Technical complexity and weak incentives to evaluate wider impact, result in a impact wash: self-delusional, tokenistic, and/or a deliberate smokescreen for business as usual.</p>
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“The concept of ‘externalities’ will be relegated to history, with finance theory accounting for risk, return and impact equally well. Ultimately, financial markets will be central in supporting solutions to critical threats facing the world” *Global Impact Investment Network (2018:4)*

21

My second case study concerns impact investment and the challenge of simultaneously appraising financial and wider (social and environmental) outcomes of a proposed investment. Time constraints mean I’m going to comment on this very quickly, but I do want to highlight the extraordinarily ambitious goal the Global Impact Investment Network (GIIN) set for the industry six years ago. Progress in developing the ideas, systems, tools and incentive mechanisms for credibly appraising and evaluating the multidimensional impacts of social impact investment has I think been painfully slow and partial. And this I think goes a long way towards explaining its tarnished reputation as an emerging industry.

Impact investment - timeline

2007	Two seminal conferences in Bellagio, Italy, sponsored by the Rockefeller Foundation
2008	
2009	Global Impact Investing Network (GIIN) formed
2012	Social Returns On Investment (SROI) guidelines proposed by Social Value International (SVI)
2013	G8 Social Impact Investment Forum in the UK
2015	“Millions to Billions” - impact investment linked to financing the SDGs in Addis Ababa
2018	GIIN Roadmap for impact investment
2021	Impact Management Platform launched

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Evaluative practice benchmarks

The principles of social value

(Social Value International, 2021)

1. Involve stakeholders
2. Understand what changes
3. Value the things that matter
4. Only include what is material
5. Do not overclaim
6. Be transparent
7. Verify the result
8. Be responsive

The actions of impact management

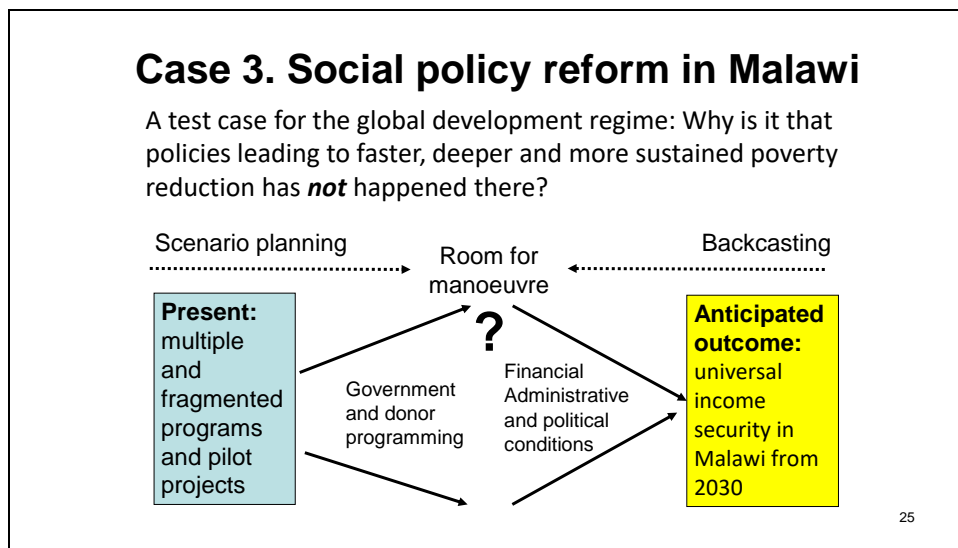
(Impact Management Platform, 2021)

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Analysis

	Principles of Social Value	Impact Management Actions
Problem framing	1. Involve stakeholders 6. Be transparent 8. Be responsive	1. Identify governance, strategy and management approach 2. Set and revise objectives
Causal analysis	2. Understand what changes 4. Only include what is material	3. Identify sustainability topics 4. Measure sustainability performance 5. Assess impact
Evaluative judgement	3. Value the things that matter	6. Estimate value created
Decision making	5. Do not overclaim 7. Verify the result 8. Be responsive	7. Verify 8. Integrate and act

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My third case study takes us up to the level of national policy and draws on my involvement with QuIP studies of two pilot cash transfer programmes in Malawi. As these proceeded, I began to question the implicit assumptions of their sponsors that these pilots might eventually be passed onto the government or scaled up across the country. This prompted me to join in wider debates over the evolution of social protection policy in Malawi.

One way to approach this is by formulating an anticipatory evaluation question – what would a sustainable and universal income security policy in Malawi look like? Backcasting from this took me down three rabbit holes: what would such a regime cost, how could it be administered, and under what political conditions could it happen?

Analysis	
Anticipatory problem framing	What would it take to eliminate extreme poverty in Malawi? Start with the simplistic sum, then explore constraints to achieving it.
Causal analysis	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Many policy design options, informed by heavy investment in mixed evaluation heavy pilot projects to assess 'what works'. 2. Scaling up options are subject to complex political economy constraints. Potential to use causal mapping to analyse multiple stakeholder perspectives.
Evaluative judgements	Incremental policy shift vs targeted 'big push' initiatives. Epistemic injustice – external agents dominate policy debate. Scope decolonising the policy space?
Decision making	Strategic planning and annual expenditure rounds of government and donors. Compete, collaborate or coordinate?

26

Two weeks ago, I joined a symposium of economists, civil servants and political scientists to discuss this issue. The meeting confirmed that there is no shortage of research into what kinds of policies and programmes can deliver basic income, nor into the political constraints to doing so on a wider scale, much of it centred on the effects of aid dependence. But it was the financial strand of the backcasting that I found most revealing.

The simplistic sum as an anticipated outcome

	2016	2019	
Population (P)	17.4	18.9	Million
Head count poverty (H)	51.5	50.7	Percent
Poverty gap or depth (D)	17	17	Percent
National poverty line (Z)	188.6	165.9	Thousand MK per person
Simplistic sum (SS)	287.3	270.2	Billion MK at current prices
SS/GDP	5.1	3.3	Percent (MK data)
SS/non-poor income	6.7	3.9	
Simplistic sum (SS)	0.400	0.369	(US\$ billion, current prices)
SS/GDP	5.6	3.3	Percent (US\$ data)
SS/Govt revenue	49.7	26.9	
SS/Official aid	32.2	31.6	

SS = H*D*P*Z where H is the poverty headcount ratio, D is the poverty depth percentage, P is the total population, Z is the annual poverty line

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This slide uses data from two contrasting years in which national household surveys were conducted to make a very simplistic estimate of what eliminating poverty in Malawi would cost. In very rough terms, ten million people (half of the population) are below the national absolute poverty line, and on average they are roughly 20 percent below it. On this crude basis, the cost of poverty elimination would be approximately US\$400 million a year – a third of aid receipts, and at least a quarter of government revenue. Of course, this figure rises when administrative costs, more relaxed targeting, and the overwhelming case for a more generous poverty line are factored in. But current spending on social assistance programmes in Malawi is less than 5% of even this simplistic sum. Thus, a relatively simple backcasting evaluation quickly revealed that using cash transfers to make a significant dent on Malawi's shockingly high rate of poverty and destitution is impossible without somehow finding twenty times more money for social protection policies than is currently available.

Case 4. Rethinking development studies

DS = an arena for debate over development (progress and regress)

Three threads

(a) **normative** (how things *should be*)

(b) **historical** (how things *actually are*)

(c) **practical** (how things *could be changed*)

Discourse operates at multiple levels and within multiple time frames.

To illustrate (crudely) contrast modernization and decolonial mental models of development as follows. Note also the chasm between them.

	Modernization	Decolonial
Normative	Shared prosperity	Human emancipation
Historical	Scientific progress, economic growth and wealth creation	Reproduction of inequality and injustice
Practice	Facilitate voluntary diffusion of wealth and ideas	Political struggle between the privileged and the oppressed

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With this fourth case study I return to my own academic field. The Centre of Development Studies at Bath turns 50 this year, and this has prompted some reflection. Is this long enough? Is it time to close it down, or for a radical makeover? It is in the nature of development studies as an academic field to constantly question its identity and purpose, and in doing so it has long ceased to focus solely on aid or on development policy and practice. Rather, it has become forum for exploring interwoven threads of thinking about what development means as an ideal or aspiration, and as an actual historical process, and for whom. To illustrate (and this is hugely simplified) contrast ‘the modernization’ and ‘decolonial perspectives’ on development shown in the slide. An aspiration for development studies itself is to be a safe space in which these and many other visions of development can be explained, explored and imagined.

Anticipatory evaluative practice

Development studies itself needs to be decolonised, given its historical association with Western dominated ideas, interests and activities. This includes promoting **epistemic justice** through the struggle for resources and voice of oppressed and marginalised people.

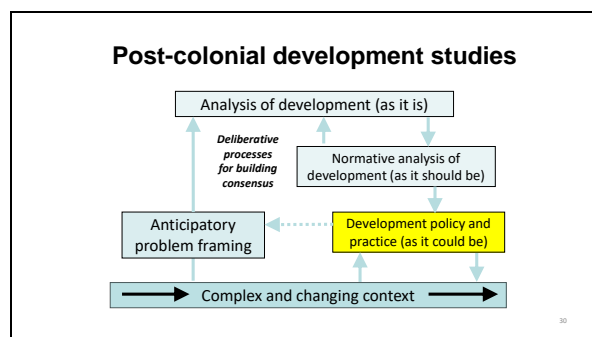
An anticipatory approach to this starts by **prefiguring** what a decolonised development studies should look like.

It then works back to the messy political economy analysis of possible causal processes for promoting it – including the ongoing struggle to decolonise the discipline.

29

Those who hold the decolonial view tend to argue that development studies in reality nevertheless remains tainted by historical association with Western dominated ideas, interests and activities. This is perhaps likely to remain so, you might think, for as long as influential voices within the field belong to people like me. And clearly intergenerationally reproduced discrimination over the opportunities (and resources) to pursue an academic career is an issue.

But in addition to engaging in the struggle to decolonise our minds and institutions there is also a role for dreaming or prefiguring what a post-colonial or decolonised version of development studies might look like. This is another example of using imagination to initiate an anticipatory and backcasting evaluation.



SKIP

Normative principles for post-colonial development studies

1. To embrace plurality in conceptualization of development
2. To embrace plurality in research methods
3. To employ research processes that minimize harm
4. To seek socially just and emancipatory research outcomes
5. To promote equitable opportunities for autonomous research



Wellington held out some beads and other trinkets, but the islanders had sent their fiercest lawyers—some of whom were chanting, "Sue him! Sue him!"

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This debate has been gathering pace for several years within the UK Development Studies Association, with a twin track strategy of moving forward from where we are with decolonising critiques, and backward from discussion of criteria for what a decolonised or post-colonial DS might look like. The wish list above is my own, and just one illustrative input into this discussion.

Internal consistency entails that criteria for a post-colonial development studies is continuous scrutiny, assessment and revision. More challenging is debate over how to promote the inclusivity and equality of opportunity to participate in this deliberative and consensus building process.

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Analysis

Consistency requires that any post-colonial vision be fully open to scrutiny and assessment against alternative positions.

This entails

- **Problem framing** – contesting and modifying these principles as the anticipated outcome.
- **Causal analysis** – forward and backward mapping of causal pathways to building a stronger consensus.
- **Evaluative judgement** – calling out epistemic injustices
- **Decision making** – political struggle for more equitable participation in building the consensus.

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SKIP

Conclusions

- There is scope for more forward-looking evaluative practice. Thinking about **anticipated outcomes** can strengthen the influence of evaluation on public action. ✓
- Making **imaginative** or **abductive leaps** to anticipated outcomes are key to forward-looking problem framing. ✓
- Backcasting** can help to focus analysis, inspire more radical action, and complement scenario planning. Its feasibility increases with consensus over the need for radical change. ✓
- Inclusive deliberation is integral to more forward-looking evaluative practice. **Causal mapping**, as a form of **visualisation** can facilitate this. ✓

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So here to finish here are four overall conclusions.

The measure of a successful imaginative leap to an imagine future is that it spurs and stimulates debate over the causal process through which it might come about.