

THE OBJECTIVE OF THE PROJECT

Failure seems to have gained the status of a process that is bound to happen, that has the tendency to reproduce, and that actors even anticipate that it will take place (though may neglect and mitigate this fact). This perspective on failure is deterministic and linear. It seems to have been favored by theories such as risk society, and to have been strengthened by the last decades crises (financial, economic, ecological, migratory etc.). These episodes were accompanied by the (more or less explicit) critical interpretation that they could have been anticipated, and taken action against, if only there were the will and interest to talk about the prospect of failure in the first place.

Such normalization of failure leads to depicting this process in a rather deterministic and linear fashion. *Failure is here, it is bound to happen and one can either ignore it, or learn from it.* In this context that underlines persistency and reproduction, it is not so often that notions such as “possibility”, “opportunity”, “chance” etc. are encountered in a direct and articulated manner. These issues are tackled with, that is for sure. But this happens indirectly, dispersedly, and rarely straightforwardly. In this context, it is the aim of this project to integrate all these approaches. To advance a more unified perspective on the *possibility, contingency and chance* of failure at the level of public policy, and social sciences generally.

The project brings illustrations from three areas in Poland: (1) disability policy, (2) permissibility of abortion policy [*polityka dotycząca dopuszczalności aborcji; polityka dotycząca dopuszczalności przerywania ciąży*], and (3) migration policy. These three case studies indicate the conditions in which failure comes to manifest and reveal a whole terrain of indeterminacy and unexpectedness as far as this is concerned.

THE RESEARCH TO BE CARRIED OUT

The research to be carried out is both theoretical and empirical. In a first instance, the efforts will be directed towards tracing (more or less explicit) perspectives on failure which underline indeterminacy, range of possibility and chance of manifestation. These approaches will be integrated in a more encompassing framework that goes beyond public policy. Following, different instances in the Polish context of public policies targeting disability, permissibility of abortion policy, and migration will be discussed. The focus will be on the manner in which failure has the chance to emerge, whether it does/or does not manifest, and why.

REASONS FOR CHOOSING THE RESEARCH TOPIC

The aim to articulate an encompassing view on failure comes on the background of several years of experience with related notions such as: unintended and unexpected consequences, and ignorance. Studying the state of the art on these processes led to the conclusion that, over the last years, the general view in social sciences turned to be more infused with the idea of possibility, indeterminacy, and even chance. Although this view is pretty implicit, there are reasons to believe that something similar is taking place in the case of failure in public policy as well. To render this stream more explicit is essential in the context in which the dominant view on failure rather conflates this substantive issue with notions such as persistence, reproduction, neglected anticipation etc. Furthermore, it is also relevant to integrate the current approaches on failure and possibility in public policy with similar undertakings in social sciences. The project will not only render the indeterminate line of research more visible, but it will also contribute to cumulative knowledge on failure as a research undertaken in social sciences, and not in the framework of particular disciplines solely.