

“Process tracing methods – an introduction”

Description

This seminar aims to introduce process tracing methods. The seminar will discuss differences between variance based and case-based methods and will give answers to the questions of what we are actually tracing. Issues related to making inferences without variation as well as case selection and nesting will also be addressed. The seminar includes several groupwork sessions on mechanisms, causal mechanisms, and causal inferences and evidence where students will have the chance to discuss amongst others the following questions: how to develop a plausible causal explanation, how to develop a causal mechanism linking a cause and outcome from their own research, and how to develop tests from their own research.

Note to participants:

- there are readings that you are expected to read IN ADVANCE of the course.
- for **those of you who will be taking part in the second day sessions, you are asked to:**
 - o send me a 2-3 page description of your research, including any questions and challenges you are facing in using case studies. Send to derek@ps.au.dk
 - o prepare the group work exercises in advance for day 2 (see below).

Schedule

June 1

10.00 – 11.00 Session 1 – Introduction to Process-tracing

Is there a difference between variance-based and case-based methods? What is process tracing actually tracing?

- Beach and Pedersen (2016) Causal Case Studies. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan. chapters 1 and 9.

11.00 – 11.15 Coffee Break

11.15 – 12.15 Session 2 – What are we actually tracing?

Key terms: causal theories, causal mechanisms, probabilistic theories, deterministic theories, counterfactuals, manipulation and mechanistic accounts of causality, asymmetric causation.

- Beach and Pedersen (2016) Causal Case Studies. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan. Chapters 2, 3.

12.15 - 13.30 Lunch

13.30 – 14.30 Session 3 – Group work on mechanisms

The groupwork will be based on the following questions

1. Develop a plausible causal explanation that can explain why economic development (cause) results in democratization (outcome) in terms of C -> O.
2. Translate this C -> O causal theory into a multi-part causal mechanism.

14.30 – 15.30 Session 4 – Making inferences without variation – Bayesian logic

Key terms: cross-case inferences, within-case inferences, frequentist logic of inference, comparative logic of elimination, Bayesian logic of inference, prior, Bayesian updating, empirical tests.

- Beach and Pedersen (2016) Causal Case Studies. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan. Chapter 6.
- Tannenwald (1999) 'The Nuclear Taboo: The United States and the Normative Basis of Nuclear Non-Use', International Organization, 53(3): 433-468. (read pp. 433 – 451 in particular, but skip Hiroshima case)

15.30 – 15.45 Coffee Break

15.45 – 17.00 Session 5 – Case selection and nesting

Key terms: typical case, deviant case, crucial case, nested analysis, variance-based analysis, case-based designs, scope of inference.

- Lieberman (2005) 'Nested Analysis as a Mixed-Method Strategy for Comparative Research.', American Political Science Review, Vol. 99, No. 3, pp. 435-451.

- Beach and Pedersen (2016) 'Selecting Appropriate Cases when Tracing Causal Mechanisms.', Sociological Methods and Research, Online first.

June 2

10.00 – 11.00 Session 6 – Groupwork on causal mechanisms

Groupwork - Session 6 - Causal mechanisms

1. Develop a causal mechanism linking a cause and outcome from your own research, separating it into parts composed of entities engaging in activities.

11.00 - 11.15 Coffee break

11.15 - 12.30 Session 7 - Groupwork on causal inferences and evidence

Groupwork - Session 7 – inferences and updating

1. Develop an empirical test from your own research in terms of a piece of evidence that might be left by the operation of a part of a causal mechanism.
2. Describe the priors, the theoretical certainty and uniqueness. Describe in particular theoretical uniqueness, with justifications for why finding e is not probable with any plausible alternative explanation for the evidence.

12.30 – 13.30 Lunch Break

13.30 – 16.00 Session 8 – Presentation of research projects

Each participant will be asked to present:

- their causal mechanism
- a prediction about a piece of evidence that might be left in a case
- what case (or cases) will your project look at and why? Provide justifications for limiting the 'contrast space' (bounding the population).

About the lecturer

Derek Beach is a professor of Political Science at the University of Aarhus, Denmark, where he teaches international relations, European integration and case study methodology. He has authored articles, chapters, and books on research methodology, international negotiations, referendums, and European integration, and co-authored the books *Process-tracing Methods: Foundations and Guidelines* (2013) and *Causal Case Study Methods: Comparing, Matching and Tracing* (2016) (both with the University of Michigan Press). He has taught qualitative case study methods at ECPR and IPSA summer and winter schools, held short courses at the APSA annual meeting on Process-tracing, ICPSR (Michigan), and numerous workshops and seminars on qualitative methods throughout the world. He is an academic co-convenor of the ECPR Methods Schools.