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Process Tracing and Practice Analytics

Overview

This three-day, four-part workshop provides an in-depth overview of process analytics. Students of the European Union do process – say, to explain the Union's response to climate change; political economists do it – to chart the rise of central bank independence; international relations scholars use it – to track the emergence of social practices that structure relations among states; conflict studies does it - to capture the dynamics of rebel group mobilization in civil wars; sociologists and political ethnographers utilize it – to observe the daily practices that shape identity. As these examples suggest, the convergence on process is occurring not only in subfields and disciplines, but at a deeper, philosophical level as well. For positivists and critical realists, the study of causal effects is now supplemented with a processual understanding of cause as causal mechanisms, while many interpretive scholars adopt a relational ontology that necessitates a turn to process and practice.

Process is thus cool and hot - and more and more scholars are doing it. The challenge for us is to keep it cool while learning how to use it in an epistemologically plural, rigorous, transparent and ethically aware manner.

The workshop begins – Part I – with foundations. Meta-theoretically and conceptually, we examine the ways in which scholars from different disciplines think about process, from causal mechanisms to social mechanisms and social practices. In Part II, we zero in on process tracing as a key method for measuring process, one that comes in different epistemological flavours: critical realist / mainstream; Bayesian; and interpretive / practice-tracing. For each of these, we explore how the data collection and data analysis work. Part III is the workshop's core. Over three sessions, we consider different applications of process tracing / practice tracing, using the arguments-standards-concepts from the first two parts to assess how good a job people are doing with the method. We then use this assessment exercise - in session #6 – to set a research agenda for process tracing in the years ahead.

We conclude – Part IV – with collective brainstorming, where students workshop their own efforts at utilizing process analytics in their theses. This last session helps to make real and operational what we read, debate and assess in the first three parts of the workshop.

Format

The workshop will be run as a seminar, where the emphasis is on debate and discussion – and collective learning. Written discussion questions will serve as the starting point for Parts I, II and III (sessions #1 - #6), with all students preparing 2-3 questions for each of these sessions. These should be based on the readings and distributed to all workshop participants prior to our first session on 4 May. Your questions and comments will reflect a critical engagement with and assessment of the readings. What are their strong and weak points? Their meta-theoretical, theoretical, methodological, ethical, or empirical contributions-omissions?

In Part IV, we shift gears and look at your work that uses process analytics, with the goal being to give you practical advice on how to use the method. This part of the workshop will work as

follows. By 5 May at the latest, please circulate (by e-mail) to all workshop participants a 2-3 page (double-spaced) overview of your thesis, the role you see process tracing / practice tracing playing in it, and issues you are encountering in operationalizing the method – data collection, data analysis, data quality, data access, transparency, ethics and the like. We will devote 15 minutes to each student's work. She/he gets 1-2 minutes at the beginning to highlight issues and problems encountered with the practice tracing / process tracing; the remainder of the 15 minutes is devoted to feedback and suggestions from the rest of the group.

Workshop Readings

- <u>Books, Articles</u>: Nearly all books should be available as e-books through the FU Library / Berlin Library System. Articles are easily available electronically through those same outlets.

- <u>Difficult-to-Access Materials</u>: Checkel will make available to workshop participants pdfs of the following – Bakke (2013); Bennett and Checkel (2015); and Fairfield and Charman (2022).

Requirements

- <u>Workshop Reading and Participation</u>: You are required to do the reading ahead of time, and your active participation throughout the workshop is expected. No 'consumers' please!

- <u>Discussion Questions</u>: Preparation of written discussion questions for Parts I – III (sessions #1 - #6), which should be circulated prior to our first session on May 4.

- <u>Process Tracing & You (Part IV)</u>: All participants should prepare a 2-3 page (double-spaced) overview of how they plan to use process analytics in their thesis; it should be circulated on May 5 at the latest.

Workshop Schedule & Readings

Wednesday, 4 May

Part I: The Priors – Philosophical and Conceptual

Session #1 (0900 - 1100): Process Tracing and Practice Analytics – Nut & Bolts

Gerring, John, "Review Article: The Mechanismic Worldview – Thinking Inside the Box," *British Journal of Political Science* 38/1 (2007): 161-79.

Hedstrom, Peter and Petri Ylikoski, "Causal Mechanisms in the Social Sciences," *Annual Review of Sociology* 36 (2010): 49–67.

Adler, Emanuel, "Practices, Background Knowledge, Communities of Practice, Social Orders," in Emanuel Adler, *World Ordering: A Social Theory of Cognitive Evolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019) – Chapter 4.

Adler, Emanuel and Vincent Pouliot, "International Practices," *International Theory* 3/1 (2011): 1-36.

Part II: Measuring Process – Epistemological Pluralism and Methodological Rigour

Session #2 (1100 – 1200, 1330 - 1600): Process Tracing, Bayesian Process Tracing, Interpretive Process Tracing, and Practice Tracing

Bennett, Andrew and Jeffrey T. Checkel, Editors, *Process Tracing: From Metaphor to Analytic Tool* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015) - Chapters 1, 10.

Fairfield, Tasha and Andrew Charman, "Introduction: Bayesian Reasoning for Qualitative Research," in Tasha Fairfield and Andrew Charman, *Social Inquiry and Bayesian Inference* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022) – Chapter 1.

Fairfield, Tasha and Andrew Charman, "Explicit Bayesian Analysis for Process Tracing: Guidelines, Opportunities, and Caveats," *Political Analysis* 25/3 (2017): 363-380.

Norman, Ludvig, "Rethinking Causal Explanation in Interpretive International Studies," *European Journal of International Relations* 27/3 (2021): 936 –959.

Pouliot, Vincent, "Practice Tracing," in Andrew Bennett and Jeffrey T. Checkel, Editors, *Process Tracing: From Metaphor to Analytic Tool* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015) – Chapter 9.

Pouliot, Vincent, *International Pecking Orders: The Politics and Practice of Multilateral Diplomacy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016) – Appendix.

Thursday, 5 May

Part III: The Method in Action

Session #3 (0900 - 1100): Process/Practice Tracing in the Field – Interviews & Ethnography

Wood, Elisabeth Jean, *Insurgent Collective Action and Civil War in El Salvador* (NY: Cambridge University Press, 2003) - Chapters 1, 2, 7-8.

Pouliot, Vincent, *International Pecking Orders: The Politics and Practice of Multilateral Diplomacy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016) – Introduction, Chapters 2, 6.

Session #4 (1100 – 1200, 1330 - 1430): Process/Practice Tracing in the Field – Archives & Documents I

Tannenwald, Nina, *The Nuclear Taboo: The United States and the Non-Use of Nuclear Weapons Since 1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) - Chapters 1, 2, 4, 5.

Session #5 (1430 - 1630): Process/Practice Tracing in the Field – Archives & Documents II

Schwartz, Rachel and Scott Straus, "What Drives Violence against Civilians in Civil War? Evidence from Guatemala's Conflict Archives," *Journal of Peace Research* 55/2 (2018): 222–235.

Cornut, Jeremie and Nicolas de Zamaroczy, "How Can Documents Speak about Practices? Practice Tracing, the Wikileaks Cables, and Diplomatic Culture," *Cooperation and Conflict* 56/3 (2021): 328-345.

Bakke, Kristin, "Copying and Learning from Outsiders? Assessing Diffusion from Transnational Insurgents in the Chechen Wars," in Jeffrey T. Checkel, Editor, *Transnational Dynamics of Civil War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013) - Chapter 2.

Friday, 6 May

Session #6 (0900 - 1100): Process Analytics – State of the Art & Where Next

Zaks, Sherry, "Updating Bayesian(s): A Critical Evaluation of Bayesian Process Tracing," *Political Analysis* 29/1 (2021): 58-74.

Checkel, Jeffrey T., "Process Tracing – Towards a New Research Agenda," Paper presented at the American Political Science Association Annual Convention (October 2021).

Part IV: What's in It for Me?

Session #7 (1100 – 1200, 1330 - 1530): Process Analytics & You – Brainstorming Workshop