

## Research design and qualitative methods

By

Rainer Bauböck, Donatella della Porta, Fritz Kratochwil, Pascal Vennesson

Winter term 2008

Mondays, 3-5pm

Seminar room 2

(Register with [eva.breivik@eui.eu](mailto:eva.breivik@eui.eu) )

This seminar aims at presenting and discussing different steps in the planning of research using qualitative methods. We shall cover research using case study and comparative analysis as well as work in normative theory. Although the conception of a “research design” developed especially for research projects using quantitative methods, also the planning of research with qualitative methodologies requires important choices on similar steps—from conceptualization to case selection. Moreover, some epistemological and methodological concerns—from theory building to ethical issues—acquire a particular relevance in qualitative analysis. These steps and concerns will be discussed on the basis of general literature that reflects on methodological choices in qualitative research, illustrative examples of research in the social and political science, as well as the research projects of participants in the seminar. Participants are expected to give short presentations, linking the methodological discussion with their own research projects.

One week before the beginning of the class we ask that you circulate a **one page** abstract of your research project as it is now (not your initial proposal). You should feel free to mention as well what you see as your main challenges, difficulties and questions at this stage of your work.

### Session 1. – 7 January 08

#### Conceptual analysis and “explanations” (Fritz Kratochwil)

In this session, the issues of “reference” versus “use”, the semantic fields of concepts, taxonomies versus prototype, “fuzzy” boundaries will be discussed.

#### *Background readings:*

Davis, James, *Terms of Inquiry*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, chaps 2 and 3.

Sartori, Giovanni (1970), 'Concept Misformation in Comparative Politics', *The American Political Science Review*, 64 (4), 1033-53

Searle, John (1999) *Mind Language and Society*, London: Phoenix, chap. 5.

### Session 2. – 14 January 08

#### “Explanations” and theory building (Fritz Kratochwil)

In this session, different conception of “explanation” and theory building of explanations will be compared and discussed.

### *Background readings:*

Connolly, W. E. (1983), *The terms of political discourse*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2nd edn, chap. L (Essentially Contested Concepts).

Tully, James (1988), “The pen is a mighty sword: Quentin Skinner’s analysis of Politics” in James Tully (ed.), *Context and Meaning*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, chap 1.

Kratochwil, Friedrich (2007), “Evidence Inference, and Truth as Problems of Theory Building in the Social Sciences” in Richard Ned Lebow, Mark Lichbach (eds.), *Theory and Evidence in Comparative Politics and International Relations*, New York: Palgrave/Macmillan, chap 2.

### **Session 3. 21 January 08**

#### **Can normative theory be supported by empirical evidence? (Rainer Baubock)**

Using illustrative examples as background reading we will discuss in this unit different modes of doing normative political theory, which may be called analytical, interpretive, and contextual styles. The second focus will be on how qualitative research may be used in normative theory for illustrative purposes, for inductive generalization, or for specifying policy prescriptions.

#### **Background Reading:**

Goodin, Robert (2007) Enfranchising All Affected Interests, and Its Alternatives, *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 35, No. 1: 40 - 68.

Pettit, Philippe (1997) Before Negative and Positive Liberty, in: *Republicanism. A Theory of Freedom and Government*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, chapter 1, pp. 17-50.

Carens, Joseph (2001) Democracy and Respect for Difference: The Case of Fiji, in: J. Carens: *Culture, Citizenship, and Community*, Oxford University Press, Oxford: 200-264.

### **Session 4. 28 January 08**

#### **When and how to introduce normative arguments in empirical research (Rainer Baubock)**

In this second unit we will discuss empirically oriented research projects and their implicit or explicit uses of normative arguments. How can one avoid normative bias and make normative arguments coherent? Should normative reflection aim at prescription or critical distance? This unit will be strongly focused on the researchers’ projects.

### **Session 5: 4 February 08**

#### **Contexts of social science research (Pascal Vennesson)**

We do not do social science research in a vacuum. Social scientists’ ideas, methods, theories, intellectual styles are affected by national intellectual traditions, the transnational diffusion of ideas, the history of the disciplines, cognitive limits on information processing, normative beliefs, etc. The goal of this session is to encourage researchers to become more aware of, and self-reflective about, some of the influences that are, directly and indirectly, shaping their own work. This will also help



researchers to think about strategies to make the most of these influences when they are beneficial, but also to protect themselves from unwanted biases and limits.

*Background readings:*

Galtung, Johan, "Structure, culture, and intellectual style: An essay comparing saxonic, teutonic, gallic and niponic approaches," *Social Science Information*, 20 (6) (1981), 817-856.

Amos Tversky, Daniel Kahneman, "Judgment under uncertainty: Heuristics and biases", pp 3-20 in: David Kahneman, Paul Slovic, Amos Tversky, eds., *Judgment under Uncertainty: Heuristics and Biases*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982.

Tetlock, Philip E., *Expert Political Judgment. How Good Is It? How Can We Know?* Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2005. skim pp 1-24 (to get a sense of Tetlock's objectives), pp 67-120.

*Other suggested readings:*

James N. Rosenau, "Puzzlement in foreign policy" (1<sup>st</sup>. ed. 1971) in: James Rosenau, *The Scientific Study of Foreign Policy*. London: Pinter, 1980, 231-239.

Nelson W. Polsby, "Where Do You Get Your Ideas?" *PS: Political Science and Politics*, 26 (1) (March 1993), 83-87.

Robert K. Merton, Elinor Barber, *The Travels and Adventures of Serendipity. A Study in Sociological Semantics and the Sociology of Science*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2004.

**Session 6: 14 February 08 – NB! Thursday !! 15-17 h!**  
**Process-tracing in case study research (Pascal Vennesson)**

How can case studies be performed empirically using process tracing, a research procedure intended to explore the processes by which initial conditions are translated into outcomes? The goal of the session is to explore the ways in which process tracing can actually be done, the things to keep in mind, the kinds of empirical sources that can be exploited, as well as the limits. It will be a good opportunity to explore the ways in which process tracing can be done in different epistemological traditions.

*Background readings:*

George, Alexander L., "Case Studies and Theory Development: The Method of Structured, Focused Comparison", 43-68, in: Paul Gordon Lauren, ed., *Diplomacy. New Approaches in History, Theory, and Policy*, New York: The Free Press, 1979.

Vaughan, Diane, *The Challenger Launch Decision. Risky Technology, Culture, and Deviance at NASA*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996, pp: xi-xv (preface), 72-76 and 334-386 – Available in Library's electronic resources.

Other suggested readings:

Mark Beissinger, *Nationalist Mobilization and the Collapse of the Soviet State* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 147-199.

Trachtenberg, Marc, *The Craft of International History. A Guide to Method*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2006.

George, Alexander L., Bennett, Andrew, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*. Cambridge, Mass: The MIT Press, 2005.

Gerring, John, *Case Study Research: Principles and Practices*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

Mahoney, James, and Rueschemeyer, Dietrich, eds. *Comparative Historical Research*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; 2003.

Ragin, Charles and Becker, Howard, eds., *What is a Case? Exploring the Foundations of Social Inquiry*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.

### **Session 7. 18 February 08**

#### **Designing research when using in-depth interviews (Donatella della Porta)**

Interviewing is one of the most widespread methods for collecting data in social sciences. In this session, we shall focus on some main choices in the use of in-depth interviews, discussing for different types of interviews (including life histories and focus groups) the role of the interviewer, the selection of interviewees, the phrasing of questions, etc..

#### *Background readings:*

Blee, Kathleen M. and Verta Taylor, "Semi-Structured Interviewing in Social Movement Research", in Bert Klandermans and Suzanne Staggenborg (eds), *Methods of Social Movement Research*, Minneapolis, the University of Minnesota Press, 2002, pp. 92-117.

Donatella della Porta, *Social Movements, Political Violence and the State*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1995, chapters 1, 6-7.

### **Session 8. – 25 February 08**

#### **Designing Research when using Discourse Analysis**

Texts are a basic source of information for social science research. This session focuses on the various (quantitative and qualitative) strategies to analyze documents through different forms of content, discourse, claim analysis.

#### *Background readings:*

Franzosi, Roberto, 2004, *Content Analysis*, in Alan Bryman and Melissa Hardy (eds.), *Handbook of Data Analysis*, Beverly Hills, Sage, pp. 547-566.

Francesca Polletta, 2006, *It was like a fever. Storytelling in Protest and Politics*, Chicago, The University of Chicago press, preface and chapters 1, 4.

### **Session 9. – 3 March 08**

#### **Group norms and participant observation**

Participant observation is a main technique for the analysis of group norms and organizational practices. This session focuses on participant observation and ethnographic research.

#### *Background readings:*

Lichterhan, Paul, 2002, *Seeing Structure Happen: Theory-Driven Participant Observation*, in Bert Klandermans and Suzanne Staggenborg (eds), *Methods of Social Movement Research*, Minneapolis, the University of Minnesota Press, 2002, pp. 118-145.

Eliasoph, Nina, 1998, *Avoiding Politics: How American Produce Apathy in Everyday Life*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998, chapters 1, 7, and appendix 2.

### **Session 10. – 10 March 08**

#### **Concluding round table: Ethical problems in social science research**

The final roundtable will address ethical issues ranging from the relations with the research object (privacy, “proximity”, etc.) to the relationship with third actors (e.g. research funding, consultancy, etc.).

#### *Background materials:*

Bourdieu: *La sociologie est un sport de combat*, movie.

Punch, M., 1994, Politics and Ethics in Qualitative Research, in N.K. Denzin and Y.S. Lincoln (eds), *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, London, Sage.