



# Workshop: Process Tracing in Field Research

**3rd Term, Academic Year 2019-2020**

**Monday, 11 May 2020 & Tuesday, 12 May 2020**  
**Seminar Room 2, Badia Fiesolana / Zoom**

Organiser and Instructor: [Jeffrey T. Checkel](#)

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Office Hours: Mondays, 10:00-12:00 (Please book a time through Adele Battistini.)

Registration: On-Line ([Here](#))

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## Description

This two-day workshop provides an in-depth overview of process tracing - a key method in much qualitative research. Students of the European Union use it - to explain the Union's response to climate change; comparativists utilize it - to chart the rise of central bank independence; international relations scholars use it - to study the emergence of social practices that structure relations among states; students of civil wars employ it - to capture the dynamics of rebel group mobilization; and political ethnographers utilize it - to observe the daily practices that shape identity. Process tracing is thus cool, hot and sexy. The challenge for us is to keep it 'cool' while learning how to execute it in a rigorous, transparent and ethically aware manner.

We begin - Sessions I & II - with an introduction to process tracing: what it is, how to do it well, deductive and inductive variants. Here, we also look to the future, considering two cutting-edge issues - formalization and transparency - for process tracers. In Sessions III & IV, we take process tracing 'to the field,' exploring how scholars have used it in combination with interviews, ethnography and archival/document analysis to develop causal accounts in very different field settings. Session V features your work.

The workshop is worth 10 credits.

## Format

The workshop will be run as a seminar, where debate and discussion are the norm. Written discussion questions will serve as the starting point for sessions I - IV, with all students preparing 2-3 discussion questions and comments for each of these sessions. In addition, for these first four sessions, individual researchers will take turns leading the discussion.

The discussion questions should be based on the readings and must be uploaded to SharePoint before our first workshop session. Your questions and comments will reflect a critical assessment of the readings. What are their strong and weak points? Their meta-theoretical, theoretical, methodological, ethical, or empirical contributions-omissions?

In Session V, we shift gears and look at your work that uses process tracing. The goal is for the group to give you advice on issues of data (quality, access, transparency), ethics and operationalization.

Session V will work as follows. The day before the workshop begins, researchers must upload to SharePoint a 2-3 page (double-spaced) overview of their thesis, the role they see process tracing playing in it, and issues they are encountering in operationalizing the method. During the session, we will devote 15 minutes to each researcher's work. She/he gets 1-2 minutes at the beginning to highlight issues and problems encountered with the process tracing; the remainder of the 15 minutes is devoted to feedback and suggestions from the rest of the group.

Note: I do appreciate that most of you are still at an early point in thinking through the methodological nuts and bolts of your theses. Use this opportunity to specify what you think you will end up doing.

### Workshop Readings

- Books & Chapters in Books: Nearly all books are available electronically from the EUI Library. In the reading list, these are indicated by **(E-Book)**, with a direct link to the book.
- Difficult-to-Access Materials: This includes reports from web sites, chapters from books with no e-version, and unpublished articles. These materials will be uploaded to SharePoint three weeks before the workshop.

If you encounter any problems accessing workshop readings, please contact Adele Battistini.

### Requirements

- Workshop Participation: Your active participation is required. No 'consumers' please!
- Discussion Questions: Preparation of written discussion questions for sessions I – IV, which should be uploaded to SharePoint prior to our first meeting.
- Leading the Workshop Discussion: For sessions I - IV, individual researchers will take turns leading the discussion. Your job is to set an agenda for the session: what we need to clarify, what is missing, what should be debated, *etc.*
- Process Tracing & You: All participants are required to prepare a 2-3 page (double-spaced) overview of how they plan to use process tracing in their thesis. These overviews should be uploaded to SharePoint prior to the first workshop session.

### Workshop Schedule & Readings

#### *Day #1: Monday, 11 May*

##### **Session I (0900 - 1200): Process Tracing – Nut & Bolts**

Bennett, Andrew and Jeffrey T. Checkel, Editors, *Process Tracing: From Metaphor to Analytic Tool* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), Chapters 1-3, 6-8, 10. **(E-Book)**

##### **Session II (1200 – 1300, 1400 - 1530): Process Tracing – Deductive & Inductive Applications, Cutting-Edge Challenges**

### Deductive & Inductive Applications

Schimmelfennig, Frank, "Efficient Process Tracing: Analyzing the Causal Mechanisms of European Integration," in Andrew Bennett and Jeffrey T. Checkel, Editors, *Process Tracing: From*

*Metaphor to Analytic Tool* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), Chapter 4. ([E-Book](#))

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. ([E-Book](#))

Norman, Ludvig, *The Mechanisms of Institutional Conflict in the European Union* (London: Routledge, 2017), Chapters 1-4.

### **Cutting-Edge Challenges**

Zaks, Sherry, “Updating Bayesian(s): A Critical Evaluation of Bayesian Process Tracing,” *Political Analysis* (Forthcoming).

[Qualitative Transparency Deliberations](#), “Comparative Methods and Process Tracing: Final Report of QTD Working Group III.1 (January 2019).

### **Session III (1530 - 1800): Process 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, 4, 7-8. ([E-Book](#))

## ***Day #2: Tuesday, 12 May***

### **Session IV (0900 - 1130): Process Tracing in the Field – Archives & Documents**

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, 8, 10. ([E-Book](#))

### **Session V (1130 – 1300, 1400 - 1500): Process Tracing & Researchers’ Use of It – Brainstorming Workshop**