Introduction to process-tracing methods

The aim of this three-day course is to provide participants with a good working understanding of the core elements of process-tracing as a distinct social science case study method, enabling you to utilize it in your own research. The course will develop its relative strengths and limitations, and how it can be combined productively with other methods in multi-method designs. The course will combine lectures and discussions with group work on exercises.

The course develops the two core elements of process-tracing, focusing first on the theory-side by assessing what we are actually 'tracing' using process-tracing methods (causal mechanisms), and second, how we are able to make evidence-based causal inferences using within-case, 'mechanistic' evidence. The final session deals with how process-tracing can be combined with other case-based designs like small-n comparative methods.

Course prerequisites: Participants should have encountered the basics of qualitative, case study research methods (e.g. Goertz and Mahoney (2012) A Tale of Two Cultures is a good starting point).

Day 1
Session 1 - an introduction to recent developments in case-based research

Session 2 - working with theories of causal mechanisms

Day 2
Session 3 - making inferences with mechanistic, within-case evidence
- Doyle, Arthur Connan (1894) Silver Blaze can be downloaded free at: http://www.wesjones.com/doyle1.htm
Session 4 - improving empirical tests


Day 3
Session 5 - Process-tracing designs


Session 6 - Combining process-tracing with other methods


About the instructor:

Derek Beach is a professor of Political Science at the University of Aarhus, Denmark, where he teaches case study methodology, international relations, and European integration. 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* and *Causal Case Studies* (both with 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 and case-based research, and numerous workshops and seminars on qualitative methods throughout the world. He is also an academic co-convenor of the ECPR Methods Schools.