

Reading group, Spring 2020

Session 1: Introduction

Wednesday: 18 March: 14-16h, Livresse

Questions:

- What is a concept? How do different research traditions see and use concepts? What are the advantages/disadvantages that both perspectives bring?

Readings:

Goertz, Gary and James Mahoney (2012): A Tale of Two Cultures. Quantitative and Qualitative Research in the Social Sciences. Chapter 10 to 13.

III. Concepts and measurement

10. Concepts: Definitions, Indicators, and Error
11. Meaning and Measurement
12. Semantics, Statistics, and Data Transformations
13. Conceptual Opposites and Typologies

Session 2: Positivist reconstruction

Wednesday: 29 April, 14-16h, Recyclables

"In this part of the session you will learn a few fundamental tools of concept reconstruction: identifying and organizing the defining properties of a concept and situating that concept on a ladder of generality which includes its enclosing concept, contrasting concepts, and subtypes."

Readings:

- Gerring, John: What makes a concept good? A Criterial Framework for Understanding Concept Formation in the Social Sciences

Session 3: Interpretativist elucidation

Wednesday: 13 May, 14-16h, Livresse

"In this part of the session, you will learn about the basic aims of concept elucidation as well as two key elucidative strategies: "grounding" (examining how concepts are used in everyday language) and "exposing" (identifying how concepts are embedded in webs of power)."

Readings:

- Schaffer, Frederic: Elucidating Social Sciences. An interpretivist Guide

Session 4: Assessing concepts

Wednesday: 10 June, 14-16h, Recyclables

"Operating within a positivist framework, you will learn to apply the criteria of external differentiation, internal coherence, explanatory utility, and content validity. Operating within an

interpretivist framework you will learn to recognize problems of one-sidedness, universalism, and objectivism."