Designs: Analytic Narratives

- The logic of inference may entail a dilemma

- Cases are seen to be mere areas of observed data that generate units of analysis with which we test hypotheses.

- In fact, we normally select cases that provide us with puzzles.

- „In effect, our cases selected us, rather than the other way round“. Bates et al. (1998: 13)

The analytic narratives approach (1/2)

- Basically an inductive perspective, developed in the 1990s

- Cases are chosen out of interest, not primarily to test hypotheses or generalizations, but to analyze specific events.

- Combines narrative, ideographic, historical, case-oriented research & rational choice (often through game theory)

- Explanation of macro processes/outcomes by micro motives of actors

- „disciplined“ in order to arrive at parsimonious, systematic and elegant explanations.

The analytic narratives approach (2/2)

- Idea: „to develop systematic explanations based on case studies" (Bates et al. 2000: 696).

- Similar to „process-tracing" (Alexander George and others) but more ambitious in aiming at generalized explanations.

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Distinction between analytical narratives and the usual history approach

Analytical narratives	classical narratives
specific events	grand events and long chains of events
actor theory	macro theory
focus on micro	focus on macro

Criteria for model testing

- Do the model assumptions fit our historical knowledge?

- Do the model outcomes fit the historical evidence? (Discrepancies between historical findings and model need not necessarily reject the model)

- How does our model perform compared to other plausible explanations?

- Can we generalize our explanatory model to other cases or narratives? (Not our prime aim but a welcome value-added)

Advantages

- In case studies it is often easier to reconstruct the motives of actors and to explain why specific outcomes occur.

- Technically: Case studies are better at explaining which equilibrium solution is reached in games where there are multiple equilibrium solutions.

- Often easier than in quantitative designs to determine the causal direction.

- Quantitative designs are inferior when deterministic relationships are studied (e.g. multicausal constellations with necessary and sufficient conditions)

- Case study designs are superior in threshold models (Quantitative designs have problems when the assumed function is non-monotonic)