

Amsterdam Business Research Institute

# Process Research Methods

Course Manual

Academic Year 2023 - 2024



## Faculty

Prof.dr.ir. Hans Berends [i.j.berends@vu.nl](mailto:i.j.berends@vu.nl) Course coordinator & lecturer  
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## Target groups

The course *Process Research Methods* is open to PhD candidates, research master students, postdocs, and junior faculty. This is an advanced course that assumes prior knowledge on qualitative research methods (e.g. the ABRI course *Qualitative Research Methods*). The course workload represents 5 ECTS.

## Course Content

Most of the phenomena investigated by management and organization scholars evolve over time. This includes processes at various levels, such as team development, innovation, organizational change, interorganizational collaboration, and institutionalization. Process research methods have been developed to capture the dynamics of how such phenomena unfold over time, without reducing them to dependent or independent variables. This course offers an introduction to these process research methods. It provides the philosophical and theoretical background to process thinking, methods for collecting process data, and qualitative and quantitative methods for analyzing process data.

## Learning Objectives

After finishing this course, participants have developed their:

- Understanding of process theorizing and different approaches to process research in management and organization studies
- Ability to make and justify choices in the design of process research
- Ability to apply qualitative and quantitative methods of process analysis
- Insight in reporting and publishing process studies.

## Course Design

The course is centered around a three-day module on campus in Amsterdam, with online session before and after. Each session is dedicated to one aspect of process research methods, and will consist of interactive lectures as well active engagement in exercises, and discussion process research methods in relation to participants' own work. Participants are expected to come well prepared to these sessions. The three-day module on campus will be organized to facilitate informal interactions, including a mini-conference with participant presentations, a seminars by another researcher, and a joint dinner.

## Assignment

The main assignment for the course is to develop a research design and methodological choices for a process study on your topic. You may focus on ontological assumptions of your study, research design choices, and / or data collection and data analysis strategies. We value depth over breadth: we prefer that you discuss a few assumptions, choices, or strategies in-depth rather than discuss a broad range of issues superficially. You can focus on a study that you could undertake in the future, but also a study that you are already engaged in already. Some introduction of the topic of study is needed, but the report should be written as a stand-alone paper focused on process research methods.

This assignment needs to be documented in a ~ 3,000 word report. Moreover, every participant has to present during one of the on-campus sessions. In those sessions, there will be ample opportunity for discussion and feedback that may be incorporated in the final report. The deadline for submission of the written report is April 8, 2024. In the week after, we will organize individual feedback meetings to discuss the report.

Criteria for evaluation include:

- *Depth*: Do you show understanding of intricacies of process research? You do not have to be complete in covering all methodological aspects of your study; rather focus on a few salient or important assumptions or choices.
- *Specificity*: Are research design choices and methods described in sufficient detail to make them actionable?
- *Justification*: Are research design and methods choices explained and supported by argument and references? A substantial number of readings from the course should be used and cited.
- *Coherence*: Do methodological choices fit together and fit with the topic of study?

## Grading

Attendance and active participation in the sessions is mandatory to pass this course. The requested readings are assumed to have been read prior to class. Participants receive two grades: one grade for class participation (including a presentation) (50%) and one grade for the final individual assignment (50%). The final score is the weighted average of these two grades.

### Workload and credits

The estimated time participants spend on study activities is:

Attending Lectures and Interactive Assignment Sessions	36 hours
Studying Literature	70 hours
Completing the Individual Assignments	<u>60 hours</u>

*Total* *140 hours (5 ECTS)*

### Venue

The on-campus module will take place at the campus of the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, which is at walking distance from Amsterdam Zuid train station and short train ride from Amsterdam Schiphol Airport. More information: <https://vu.nl/en/about-vu/more-about/route-description>. If accommodation is needed, Volkshotel (<https://www.volkshotel.nl/en/>) is an interesting and affordable option.

### Tuition Fee

Tuition fee (5 ECTS Course)	€1250
20% discount on early bird registration	€1000

### Registration

Registration for the course: <https://vu.nl/en/education/phd-courses/process-research-methods>.

## Session overview

<b>MODULE A (online) March 13</b>			
<i>Sessions</i>	<i>Content</i>	<i>Readings</i>	<i>Preparation</i>
<b>Session 1</b> Thursday March 14 10.00-12.00 (Zoom)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>introduction to process research methods</li> <li>preparation for on-campus module</li> </ul>	Langley (1999). Gehman et al. (2018)	Read literature

<b>MODULE B (on campus) March 19, 20 &amp; 21</b>			
<i>Session</i>	<i>Content</i>	<i>Readings</i>	<i>Preparation</i>
<b>Session 2a</b> Tuesday March 19 10.00-13.00 NU-3B05	<b>Process theorizing</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>process philosophy</li> <li>process theorizing in organization and management research</li> </ul>	Van de Ven & Poole (1995) Tsoukas & Chia (2002) Bakken & Hernes (2007) Cloutier & Langley (2020)	Read literature  Reflect on ontological assumptions of your own research (e.g. what is the nature of processes in your study)
13.00-14.00	Lunch break		
<b>Session 2b</b> Tuesday March 19 14.00-17.00 NU-3B05	<b>Design of process research</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>process oriented research questions</li> <li>issues in the design of process research</li> <li>alternative strategies for doing process research</li> </ul>	Garud, Berends, Tuertscher (2018) Van de Ven (2007).	Read literature  Find a process research publication in your field and reflect on research design choices in that study.
19.00-22.00	Joint dinner		
<b>Session 3a</b> Wednesday March 20 10.00-13.00 IN-3B44	<b>Qualitative analysis of process data</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>different strategies for process analysis</li> <li>identifying events and creating event sequences</li> <li>coding events</li> <li>developing process theory</li> </ul>	Jarzabkowski, Le & Spee (2017). Kouamé & Langley (2018). Poole et al. (2017)	Read literature

<i>13.00-14.00</i>	<i>Lunch seminar (guest to be announced)</i>		
<b>Session 3b</b> Wednesday March 20 14.00-17.00 IN-3B44	<b>Mini-conference</b> with participant presentations		Prepare 10-minute presentation (instructions will follow)
<b>Session 4a</b> Thursday March 21 9.00-12.00 HG-11A36	<b>Qualitative analysis of process data (2)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• process tracing</li> <li>• using visuals in data analysis</li> <li>• working with own materials</li> <li>• styles of process theorizing</li> </ul>	Beach & Pedersen (2019) Langley & Ravasi (2019) Feldman, M. (2017) Cornelissen & Kaandorp (2022)	Read literature  Bring some own data (if available)
<i>12.00-13.00</i>	<i>Lunch break</i>		
<b>Session 4b</b> Thursday March 21 13.00-16.00 HG-11A36	<b>Mini-conference</b> with participant presentations		Prepare 10-minute presentation (instructions will follow)

<b>MODULE C (online) March 27 &amp; 28</b>			
<i>Sessions</i>	<i>Content</i>	<i>Readings</i>	<i>Preparation</i>
<b>Session 5</b> Wednesday March 27 13.00-16.00 (Zoom)	<b>Quantitative methods for analyzing event sequences</b> (By Brian Pentland) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• conceptualizing occurrences, events and states (review)</li> <li>• n-grams &amp; pattern recognition</li> <li>• narrative networks</li> <li>• synchronic and diachronic comparison</li> </ul>	Barley (1990) Pentland, Hærem, & Hillison (2010) Pentland, Recker & Wyner (2017) Pentland, Vaast, Ryan Wolf (2021). Hansson, Hærem & Pentland (2022)	Read literature

<b>Session 6</b> Thursday March 28 13.00-15.00 (Zoom)	<b>Reporting of process research</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• reporting qualitative process studies</li> <li>• publishing process research</li> <li>• presentation of examples of process studies</li> </ul>	Berends & Deken (2021)	Find a process research publication in your field and reflect on the presentation of findings in that study.  Prepare questions on assignment (if any)
<i>Monday April 8, 17.00</i>	<i>Deadline individual assignment</i>		
Wednesday April 13, 12.00-17.00 Thursday April 14, 12.00-17.00 (Zoom)	<b>Individual feedback sessions</b>		Select a 20-minute slot from the Google docs list.

## Readings

### Session 1: Introduction

#### Requested readings

- Langley, A. (1999). Strategies for theorizing from process data. *Academy of Management Review*, 24(4), 691–710.
- Gehman, J., Glaser, V. L., Eisenhardt, K. M., Gioia, D., Langley, A., & Corley, K. G. (2018). Finding theory-method fit: A comparison of three qualitative approaches to theory building. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 27(3) 284–300.  
See also: <https://youtu.be/JdOSCzSpMc>

### Session 2a: Process theorizing

#### Requested readings

- Cloutier, C., & Langley, A. (2020). What makes a process theoretical contribution?. *Organization Theory*, 1(1), 1-32.
- Van de Ven, A. H., & Poole, M. S. (1995). Explaining development and change in organizations. *Academy of Management Review*, 20(3), 510–540.
- Tsoukas, H., & Chia, R. (2002). On organizational becoming: Rethinking organizational change. *Organization Science*, 13(5), 567–582.
- Bakken, T., & Hernes, T. (2006). Organizing is both a verb and a noun: Weick meets Whitehead. *Organization Studies*, 27(11), 1599–1616.

#### Optional readings

- Garud, R., Jarzabkowski, P., Langley, A., Tsoukas, H., Van de Ven, A., & Lê, J. (2020). Process research methods: A conversation among leading scholars. In *Advancing Methodological Thought and Practice*. Emerald Publishing Limited.
- Langley, A. (2007). Process thinking in strategic organization. *Strategic Organization*, 5(3), 271–282.
- Langley, A. & Tsoukas, H. (2017). Introduction. In: Langley, A. & Tsoukas, H. (eds.). *The Sage handbook of process organization studies*. London: Sage.
- Van de Ven, A.H. (2007). Chapter 5: Variance and process models. In: *Engaged scholarship*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Mohr, L.B. (1982), *Explaining organizational behavior: The limits and possibilities of theory and research*. San Francisco,CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Hernes, T. (2014). *A process theory of organization*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

### Session 2b: Designing process research

#### Requested readings

- Garud, R., Berends, H., Tuertscher, P. (2018). Qualitative approaches for studying innovation as process. In Jain, S. and Mir, R. (eds.) *Routledge Companion to Qualitative Research in Organization Studies*. London: Routledge.
- Van de Ven, A.H. (2007). Chapter 7: Designing process studies. In: *Engaged scholarship*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.



### Optional readings

- Abdallah, C., Lusiani, M. and Langley, A. (2019). Performing Process Research. In: *Standing on the Shoulders of Giants* (Research Methodology in Strategy and Management, Volume 11), pp. 91-113.
- Gioia, D., Corley, K., Eisenhardt, K., Feldman, M., Langley, A., Lê, J., ... & Welch, C. (2022). A Curated Debate: On Using "Templates" in Qualitative Research. *Journal of Management Inquiry* 31(3), 231-252.
- Thompson, M. (2011). Ontological shift or ontological drift? Reality claims, epistemological frameworks, and theory generation in organization studies. *Academy of Management Review*, 36(4), 754-773.
- Van de Ven, A. H., & Poole, M. S. (2005). Alternative approaches for studying organizational change. *Organization Studies*, 26(9), 1377-1404.
- Pettigrew, A. M. (1990). Longitudinal field research on change: theory and practice. *Organization Science*, 1(3), 267-292.

## **Session 3a: Qualitative analysis of process data (1)**

### Requested Readings

- Jarzabkowski, P., Le, J., Spee, P. (2017). Taking a strong process approach to analyzing qualitative process data. In: Langley, A. & Tsoukas, H. (eds.). *The Sage handbook of process organization studies*. London: Sage.
- Kouamé, S., & Langley, A. (2018). Relating microprocesses to macro-outcomes in qualitative strategy process and practice research. *Strategic Management Journal*, 39(3), 559-581.
- Poole, M.S., Lambert, N., Murase, T., Asencio, R., McDonald, J. (2017). Sequential analysis of processes. In: Langley, A. & Tsoukas, H. (eds.). *The Sage handbook of process organization studies*. London: Sage.

### Optional Readings

- Pentland, B. T. (1999). Building process theory with narrative: from description to explanation. *Academy of Management Review*, 24(4), 711-724.

## **Session 4a: Qualitative analysis of process data (2)**

### Requested Readings

- Beach, D. & Pedersen, R.B. (2019). *Process-tracing methods: Foundations and guidelines*. University of Michigan Press (Chapters 1 and 2; possibly 5).
- Langley, A., & Ravasi, D. (2019). Visual artifacts as tools for analysis and theorizing. In: *The Production of Managerial Knowledge and Organizational Theory: New Approaches to Writing, Producing and Consuming Theory*, 59, 173-199.
- Feldman, M. (2017). Making process visible: Alternatives to boxes and arrows. In: Langley, A. & Tsoukas, H. (eds.). *The Sage handbook of process organization studies*. London: Sage.
- Cornelissen, J. & Kaandorp, M. (2023). Towards stronger causal claims in management research: causal triangulation instead of causal identification. *Journal of Management Studies*, 60, 834-860.

### Optional Readings

Collier, D. (2011). Understanding process tracing. *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 44(04), 823–830.

## **Session 5: Quantitative methods for analyzing event sequences**

### Requested Readings

Barley, S. R. (1990). Images of imaging: Notes on doing longitudinal field work. *Organization science*, 1(3), 220-247.

Pentland, B. T., Hærem, T., & Hillison, D. (2010). Comparing organizational routines as recurrent patterns of action. *Organization Studies*, 31(7), 917- 940.

Pentland, B.T., Recker, J. and Wyner, G. (2017) Rediscovering handoffs. *Academy of Management Discoveries*, 3(3): 284-301.

Pentland, B.T., Vaast, E. and Ryan Wolf, J. (2021) Theorizing process dynamics with directed graphs: A diachronic analysis of digital trace data. *MIS Quarterly*, 45(2) 967-984.

Hansson, M., Hærem, T., and Pentland, B.T. (2022). The effect of repertoire, routinization and enacted complexity: Explaining task performance through patterns of action. *Organization Studies*, Advance online publication, doi 10.1177/01708406211069438.

### Optional Readings

Cornwell, B. (2015). *Social sequence analysis: Methods and applications*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Poole, M.S., Van de Ven, A.H., Dooley, K., Holmes, M.E. (2000). Chapter 7: Phasic analysis. In: *Organizational change and innovation processes: Theory and methods for research*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

## **Session 6: Reporting process research studies**

### Requested Readings

Berends, H. & Deken, F. (2019). Composing qualitative process research. *Strategic Organization*. Advance online publication: doi/10.1177/1476127018824838.

### Optional Readings

Smith, A. D. (2002). From process data to publication: a personal sensemaking. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 11(4), 383–406.

Helin, J. (2015). Writing process after reading bakhtin: from theorized plots to unfinalizable “living” events. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 24(2), 174– 185.

Cloutier, C., & Ravasi, D. (2021). Using tables to enhance trustworthiness in qualitative research. *Strategic Organization*, 19(1), 113-133.