

# Lieberman's mixed-method 'nested analysis' in action: "Better regulation in the EU"

Kaeding, Michael (2007) [\*"Better regulation in the European Union: lost in translation or full steam ahead? The transposition of EU transport directives across member states"\*](#) Leiden University Press.

(For a concise overview of the book, read pp. 13-22!)

## What is the research about?

- Explaining transposition delays of EU transport regulation in member states.
  - "Main question: Why do member states miss deadlines when transposing EU internal market directives?"

## Research design

- Three-step research design, each corresponding to one research sub-questions.
- "Triangulation of research techniques" to yield more robust findings.

### RQ1: "What **factors** determine delays when transposing EU directives?"

- Large-n analysis: quantitative analysis
- Looking for: correlations between IVs ('factors') and DV ('transposition delay')
- Hypotheses (i.e. potentially relevant factors) drawn from literature:
  - Transposition time constraints, Problem of discretion, Political priority, Election timing, Number of transposition actors, National transposition package, Transport related accidents
- Dataset with 367 instances of transpositions across 9 EU members states.
- Method: descriptive statistics + regression analysis
- Findings: Assumed general trends & hypotheses confirmed

### RQ2: "**How** do these factors influence the timeliness of the national transposition **processes**?"

- Small-n analysis: (qualitative) case studies
- Looking for: causal mechanisms & missed factors
- Method: causal process-tracing
- Two rationales:
  - Model-testing (confirming causal relations found in step 1)
    - Case selection: 2 most-different cases; both well-explained by step 1 model
  - Model-improving (detecting 'new' causal relations)
    - Case selection: 2 most-similar cases, both ill-explained by step 1 model
- Findings:
  - Factors found in step 1 confirmed.
  - 'Political prioritisation' detected as potential additional factor

### RQ3: “Under what **conditions** are transpositions of directives delayed?”

- Medium-n analysis: fuzzy-set QCA
  - Chosen over a second round of regression analysis because ‘political prioritisation’ not easily quantified in the original data set.
- Looking for: relative importance of factors (sufficient & necessary conditions)
- Data set of 35 cases (7 EU directives transposed across 5 countries)
  - extracted from the initial large-n dataset
  - all variables recalibrated to fuzzy-set
  - political prioritization measured for each case (media analysis + interviews)
- Findings: four independently necessary conditions, one sufficient combination of conditions

### Why did I choose this paper?

- It is a rare, full application of a systematic mixed-method framework, namely Lieberman’s ‘nested analysis’, with three complete iterations (large-n -> small-n -> medium-n).
- It is truly cumulative, meaning the steps (and methods) build on top of each other.
- With a total of three different methods employed, it showcases the methodological versatility of modern social scientists.
- It exemplifies how a mixed-method design can make a much more convincing argument than any single method could have.
- Illustrates how such mixed-method designs (inevitably?) are variable-oriented.

### How does the paper speak to or could inspire research at WIPCAD?

- Personally, I modeled my PhD proposal on Lieberman.
- Nested analysis offers a consistent and comprehensive framework for larger, multi-phase research projects.
- Nested analysis is time- and word-count-intensive, so the PhD is a rare opportunity to pursue this kind of research design.
- As the book is a PhD dissertation, it can be inspirational in terms of scope, style and structure.