



Research Methods in International Relations

Christopher Lamont

2015. London: Sage. 189 páginas.

ISBN: 9781446286050



Pablo Biderbost

Departamento de Relaciones Internacionales
Universidad Pontificia Comillas ICAI-ICAIDE

Guillermo Boscán

Profesor del Área de Ciencia Política y de la Administración
Universidad de Salamanca

It is not easy to find good handbooks about methodology in International Relations (IR). Among those produced after the turn of the century, some editorial efforts could be considered as part of the “high quality” cluster of handbooks (Harvey and Brecher, 2002; Sprinz and Wolinsky, 2004; Klotz and Prakash, 2008). The text of Christopher Lamont clearly deserves being included into this group.

Different features make of this book a resource not only for undergraduate and graduate students but also for professors who are in charge of subjects related to the application of research methods and techniques in this area. Firstly, the author places the discipline in the broader context of Social Sciences. It rigorously explains how International Relations incorporates tools initially taken from other areas of knowledge. A second merit of the text is to focus, in the different chapters, in the “*dueling epistemologies*” in IR. Empiricism and Interpretivism are perfectly contextualised, described and exemplified.

A third added value of this handbook relies in its combination of theoretical contents with practical examples coming from real research activities. In fourth place, the author warns about the deontological elements that any research process in IR must contemplate. Last but not least, the text includes information about phases of the research cycle not generally covered by this type of efforts. The needs for writing satisfactory literature reviews, for doing fieldwork and for the redaction of findings are adequately treated in independent chapters.

The structure of the book itself contributes to the understanding of the logic of social research for novice readers. After contextualising social methodologies in the discipline, the text introduces useful strategies for choosing a research question and for writing a research proposal. In the chapter about Ethics applied to this discipline, the author analyses both: typical problems of this nature such as plagiarism and academic dishonesty and the relevance of recent innovations in this arena (the creation of codes of conduct and ethical committees). Next, scholars learn how to engage their research proposals to the existing literature for producing good reviews.

Qualitative and quantitative methods have independent chapters in which the different stages of data collection and analysis are correctly described. Content analysis and discourse analysis are detailed among qualitative techniques. Statistical and formal methods occupy a central part among quantitative techniques. Furthermore, the author introduces readers about the increasing use of triangulation strategies through which scholars analyse the international reality combining qualitative and quantitative tools.

Later, case studies are fully described. In this chapter, process-tracing methods are commented. Advantages and disadvantages of different case studies styles (exploratory, evaluative and explanatory) are categorised. The following chapter classifies the needs that scholars have while researching in fragile political environments. Smart solu-

tions are suggested for each of them. A final chapter gives elements for generating high quality research outputs such as essays, theses and journal articles.

If there is one element forgotten by the handbook is the one related to the inclusion of information about techniques of data visualisation applied to this discipline.

Despite of this minor lack, the reading of the volume of Christopher Lamont is highly recommended. Junior scholars and senior trainers in the area of IR Research Methodology will undoubtedly find this text as extremely worthwhile.