

Application of Theories - 2013

Assignment 2:

The assignment is based on the reading material for the second week. The first part **Background**, is not a task. It is a guideline where you can find some aspects of Lecture 2 that will help you develop the assignment. Thus, it is only for you to read. The second part: **Task**, is your actual assignment. Make use of the information in the background as a guideline.

Background:

An explanation is divided into *explanandum* and *explanans*. An explanandum describes the phenomenon to be explained. The explanans are sentences which are adduced to account for the phenomenon. There are two classes of explanans: (i) antecedent conditions, and (ii) general laws.

Conditions of adequacy:

1. The explanandum must be a logical consequence of the explanans.
2. The explanans must contain general laws, and these must actually be required for the derivation of the explanandum.
3. The explanans must have empirical content (i.e., it must be capable, at least in principle, of test by experiment or observation).
4. The sentences constituting the explanans must be true.

Note: An explanation is not fully adequate unless its explanans, if taken account of in time, could have served as a basis for predicting the phenomenon under observation.

Task:

A typical adhoc-explanation of the revolution in East Germany is the following:

In 1954, there had already been a national uprising in the GDR which was put down by the Russian military. Eastern Germans later feared repression and did not continue the protest. However, in the 1980's many reforms liberated the political system in the Soviet Union ("glasnost" and "perestroika"). In addition, in his speech at the celebrations of the 40th anniversary of GDR Gorbatschow said "*Life punishes those who come too late*". Many eastern Germans interpreted this as an indication that the Russian army will not intervene in new protests and therefore started protesting.

1. Show that this is not an adequate explanation.
2. Even though this explanation is not adequate, its idea might actually be good. Thus, try to reformulate it in such a way that it is adequate.
3. How can one test empirically your theory. Sketch a research design.