antwerp management school

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Introductory level

Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA)

Introduction

In this introductory course you will learn about the logic and basics of case-oriented and configurational methods, QCA as method and approach, and how to perform a QCA analysis in the technical environment (TOSMANA software) with real empirical data for replication. It will give you a basic understanding of the analytic underpinnings and steps of QCA and enable you to independently perform a basic crisp-set or multi-value QCA, and to envisage the pro's and con's of all three main QCA options (csQCA, mvQCA and fsQCA).

We will look at the origins, analytic aims, and variants of QCA, as well as the techniques and practices of set calibration, visualization of data, truth table and minimization process. QCA as a technique is also illustrated based on an empirical example study which we replicate in class. We will then cover the presentation and interpretation of QCA results. Hands-on exercises provide opportunities for practice and engagement.

Tasks for ECTS Credits

3 credits (pass/fail grade): Attendance at least at the 90% of the course hours, participation in in-class activities, doing necessary reading and/or other work prior to, and after, class. A take-home paper will need to be prepared (2500–4000 words, excluding title page, references and appendices), which will consist of a replication of a published QCA study (with the TOSMANA software) or a QCA analysis based on own data.

More information about assignments will be provided in class.

Long Course Outline

This introductory course introduces you to the logic and basics of case-oriented and configurational methods, QCA as method and approach, and a hands-on session with real empirical data for replication.

By the end of the course, you will:

- Understand the basic logical notions and analytical goals of case-oriented and set-theoretic methodology.
- Apply basic notions of set-theory and set calibration
- Be able to differentiate between sets and variables
- Understand the notion of set calibration
- Understand the meaning of set relations (sufficiency, necessity)
- Be able to construct and logically minimize a truth table
- Be able to identify and address the nuts and bolts of QCA.
- Be able to perform a full QCA analysis with TOSMANA
- Locate QCA in the method space and its combination with other methods
- Conduct and visualize QCA
- Be able to format a QCA paper for submitting to a journal.

The course has both an introductory and preparatory focus and a specific methods skills-orientation.

Prerequisite Knowledge

No prior knowledge is required. However, basic knowledge of research design is desirable to follow the course. If in doubt, contact the instructors before registering.

Timetable Intermediate level QCA course

10 hours over two days (including the two special sessions).

22 may 2019		
9:00	Welcome	
9:30	Training session 1: Basics Foundations of QCA and Case-Oriented Thinking and Methodology	
10:45	Coffee break	
11:15	Training session 2: Understanding the technique: Introduction to crisp-set, multi-value and fuzzy-set QCA	
12:30	Lunch	
13:30	Training session 3: The nuts and bolts of QCA: Addressing the critiques of QCA with practical guidance	
14:45	Coffee break	
15:15	Special session: "visualization options in QCA: overview and pro's and con's" by Claude Rubinson	Special session
16:30	End course day 1	
19:00	[Dinner]	
23 May 2019		
9:30	Training session 4: QCA hands-on session with TOSMANA (1)	
10:45	Coffee break	
11:15	Training session 5: QCA hands-on session with TOSMANA (2)	
12:30	Lunch	
13:30	Training session 6: QCA beyond borders: Combining QCA with other methods	
14:45	Coffee break	
15:15	Special session: "formatting of a QCA paper for submission to a journal (tips & good practices)" by dr. Valérie Pattyn & dr. Priscilla Álamos-Concha	Special session
16:30	End course day 2	

Session details

Session 1 - lecture

Basics Foundations of QCA and Case-Oriented Thinking and Methodology

We start by reflecting on what a configurational approach means, the epistemological foundations, the type of research questions required when applying this approach, the different types of research goals, the selection of a phenomenon to be investigated, and the nature of the causation – as part of QCA research design.

The first session follows with the basics of set-theory, assumption of QCA, uses and variants. We will introduce the QCA perspective on causation (deterministic and asymmetric, and causal complexity), the logic of necessary and sufficient conditions – as part of a QCA as an approach.

- Epistemological foundations, assumptions of QCA, dissemination, uses and variants of QCA
- Research design with QCA
  QCA as an approach

Session 2 - lecture

Understanding the technique: Introduction to crisp-set, multi-value and fuzzy-set Qualitative Comparative Analysis

You will learn about the basic understanding of QCA (mainly in its crisp-set and multi-value QCA variants – along with the similarities and contrasts with fuzzy-set QCA), its analytic aims, techniques and practices of set calibration, how to identify and deal with contradictions, how to construct a truth table from raw data, how to visualize the truth table and the minimization process as the 'analytical moment'.

- Foundations of csQCA, mvQCA and fsQCA, data table, truth table, calibration, contradictions, minimization process, logical remainders
- Calculating membership in sets
- Graphs (Venn Diagram)

Session 3 - lecture

The nuts and bolts of QCA: Addressing the critiques of QCA with practical guidance

Session 3 reviews some main critiques of QCA, mainly when referring to QCA as a technique. We will deal with the difficulties of case selection when engaging in a comparative study and how to address the challenge of getting causal homogeneity and generalization. It follows with the problem of 'case sensitivity' and how this affects the results. The difficulties of selection of conditions is also addressed, mainly when dealing with small or large N. We will also revise the critics of dichotomization of data and how to deal with contradictory configurations. Finally, we will introduce some strategies to better manage the use of logical remainders and to deal with contradictory simplifying assumptions.

- Case selection, causal homogeneity and generalization;
- Case sensitivity
- Selection of conditions difficulties, the dichotomization of data
- dealing with contradictory configurations
- the use of logical remainders, dealing with contradictory simplifying assumptions

Session 4 - Hands-on

QCA hands-on session with TOSMANA (1)

We will have a hands-on experience with real empirical data by using the TOSMANA package. We will perform a QCA analysis from A to Z: from raw data to dichotomization, calibration, getting the truth table, identifying contradictions, resolving contradictions, and preparing the truth table for the 'analytical moment'.

- QCA from A to Z: data table, calibration, truth table, identifying contradictions, resolving contradictions

Session 5 - Hands-on

QCA hands-on session with TOSMANA (2)

It follows with the minimization process from A to Z both of the presence and the absence of the outcome, causal complexity in QCA results, visualization of the data, truth table and results with Venn Diagrams, presentation of the results and standards of transparency.

- QCA from A to Z,
- Minimization process for the presence of the outcome,
- Minimization process for the absence of the outcome,
- Causal complexity in QCA results,
- Presentation of results and standards of transparency

Session 6 - lecture

QCA beyond borders: Combining QCA with other methods

We will address the 'black-box problem' in QCA and you will learn about the current state of combining QCA with other methods, i.e. qualitative and quantitative methods. We will explain that although QCA as monomethod is still in 'in vogue', its connection with other methods is being quite fashionable in the search not only of explanation but also in the understanding of a certain phenomenon.

- Connecting QCA techniques and other qualitative and quantitative techniques

Instructor Details

PROFESSOR BENOÎT RIHOUX
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http://www.compasss.org
Institution:Université catholique de Louvain

Instructor Bio

Benoît Rihoux is a full professor of political science, whose research interests include political parties, new social movements, organisational studies, political change, and policy processes.

He is manager of the COMPASSS international research group on comparative methods, in the development and refinement of which he plays a leading role, bringing together scholars from Europe, North America and Japan in particular.

Benoît is a convenor of international methods initiatives more generally, and has published Innovative Comparative Methods for Policy Analysis: Beyond the Quantitative-Qualitative Divide (Springer/ Kluwer, ed. with Heike Grimm 2006) and Configurational Comparative Methods: Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) and Related Techniques (Sage, ed. with Charles Ragin 2009).

He has published extensively on systematic comparative methods (QCA in particular) and their applications in diverse fields – especially policy- and management-related – with interdisciplinary teams.

DR. LASSE CRONQVIST
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Institution: University of Trier, Germany

Instructor Bio

Lasse Cronqvist is Professor in political science at the University of Trier, Germany. He is a specialist in comparative politics, political parties, Nordic countries and political science research methods. He has published extensively around QCA, both through applied and methodological pieces.

Lasse is the initiator and developer of the TOSMANA software that enables one to perform crisp-set QCA, multi-value QCA as well as (more recently) fuzzy-set QCA. TOSMANA is particularly recognized for its user-friendliness and visualization tools.

Software & Hardware Requirements

- You can find information and download the software TOSMANA (version 1.5.2; freeware) for QCA through http://www.tosmana.net.
- You can bring your own laptop – Mac and PC are ok.
- Tosmana is a windows program. To use it with a Mac, you can use a hardware visualization for windows to run TOSMANA.

Indicative Reading List

More precise indications will be provided in due time.
(*) Key sources for the whole course

(*) Goertz, G. (2006). **Structuring and theorizing concepts**. In: Goertz, G. (Ed.) Social Science Concepts. A User's Guide. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 27-69.

Mahoney, J., and G. Goertz (2006). **A Tale of Two Cultures: Contrasting Quantitative and Qualitative Research.** Political Analysis 14(3): 227-249.

Ragin, C.C. (2004). **Turning the tables: how case-oriented research challenges variable-oriented research.** In: Brady, H.E. and Collier, D., (Eds.) Rethinking social inquiry: diverse tools, shared standards. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., pp. 123-138.

Schneider, C. Q., and C. Wagemann (2012). **Set-Theoretic Methods for the Social Sciences. A Guide to Qualitative Comparative Analysis.** New York: Cambridge University Press, pp. 23-34.

Baumgartner, M. (2009). **Inferring causal complexity.** Sociological Methods & Research 38(1): 71-101.

Blatter, J. and T. Blume (2008). **In Search of Co-variance, Causal Mechanisms or Congruence? Towards a Plural Understanding of Case Studies.** Swiss Political Science Review 14(2): 315-356.

Collier, D. and J. Mahoney (1993). **Conceptual 'Stretching' Revisited: Adapting Categories in Comparative Analysis.** American Political Science Review 87: 845–855.

Goertz, G. (1994). **Contexts of international politics.** Cambridge University Press, pp. 1-33.

Goertz, G. (2017). **Multimethod research, causal mechanisms, and case studies: An integrated approach.** Princeton University Press, pp. 29-57

Mahoney, J. (2008). **Toward a unified theory of causality.** Comparative Political Studies 41(4-5): 412-436.

Ragin, C. C. (2008a). **Measurement versus calibration: a set-theoretic approach".** In Box-Steffensmeier, J. M., Brady, H.E. and D. Collier. The Oxford Handbook of Political Methodology. Oxford Handbooks Online: 174-198.

Sartori, G. (1984). **Guidelines for Concept Analysis.** In: Social Science Concepts: A Systematic Analysis. Beverly Hills: Sage, 15-88.

Sartori, G. (1970). **Concept Misformation in Comparative Politics.** American Political Science Review 64: 1033–1053.

Toshkov, D. 2016. **Types of research and research questions.** In Research Design in Political Science. Basingstoke: Palgrave, 23-55.

(*) Berg-Schlosser, D., De Meur, G., Rihoux, B. and C. C. Ragin (2009) **Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) as an Approach.** In Rihoux, B. and C.C. Ragin. Configurational Comparative Methods. Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) and Related Techniques. Los Angeles, London, New Delhi and Singapore: Sage Publications, 1–18

Ragin, C. C. (2008) **Measurement versus calibration: a set-theoretic approach** In Box-Steffensmeier, J. M., Brady, H.E. and D. Collier. The Oxford Handbook of Political Methodology. Oxford Handbooks Online: 174–198

(*) Ragin, C.C. (2009) **Qualitative Comparative Analysis Using Fuzzy Sets (fsQCA)** In Rihoux, B. and C.C. Ragin. Configurational Comparative Methods. Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) and Related Techniques. Los Angeles, London, New Delhi and Singapore: Sage Publications, 87–121

(*) Rihoux, B. and B. Lobe (2009) **The case for qualitative comparative analysis (QCA): Adding leverage for thick cross-case comparison** The Sage Handbook of Case-Based Methods, pp. 222–242

(*) Rihoux, B. and G. De Meur (2009) **Crisp-Set Qualitative Comparative Analysis (csQCA)** In Rihoux, B. and C.C. Ragin. Configurational Comparative Methods. Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) and Related Techniques. Los Angeles, London, New Delhi and Singapore: Sage Publications, 33–68

(*) Schneider, C.Q. and C. Wagemann (2012) **Set-Theoretic Methods for the Social Sciences.** A Guide to Qualitative Comparative Analysis New York: Cambridge University Press, pp. 117–150 (parameters of fit)

Schneider, C.Q. and C. Wagemann (2010) **Standards of Good Practice in Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) and Fuzzy Sets Comparative Sociology** 9(3): 397–418

Thomann, E. and M. Maggetti (2017) **Designing Research with Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA): Approaches, Challenges, and Tools Sociological Methods & Research**, DOI: 10.1177/0049124117729700.

Thomann, E. Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) as a tool for street-level bureaucracy research In: **Research Handbook on Street-Level Bureaucracy: The Ground Floor of Government in Context.** Edward Elgar, Public Policy Series (Editor Peter Hupe)