Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) and Fuzzy Sets

Workshop, 3rd term 2015-2016

11 and 13 May 2016
Seminar Room 3, Badia Fiesolana

Organised by Professor Claudius Wagemann, PhD, Goethe University Frankfurt / European University Institute (EUI) and Professor Jennifer Welsh (EUI)

Please register online.

Contact: Jennifer.Dari@eui.eu

Description

This workshop gives an overview of Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) as a research design and as an analytical technique. Originally introduced by Charles C. Ragin in 1987, QCA has been modified various times and can today be seen as one of the most frequently applied methods in comparative case study research. It has often been portrayed as a good strategy when case numbers are ‘mid-sized’; while this is certainly true, the really important methodological contribution of QCA is that it makes use of set theory which is implicit in much of comparative thinking. As such, attending this workshop on QCA will also result in knowledge about the logic of comparative research in general.

The workshop presents the epistemological and methodological foundation of QCA in set theory and introduces the currently applied ‘fuzzy set truth table algorithm’ as the main proceeding. It will start from a more general overview of the contributions of set theory to social science questions; subsequently, the central notions of sufficiency and necessity are discussed and connected to the notion of causal complexity; a next part of the course will apply QCA to real-world research situations with all their pitfalls; and, finally, some extensions and problems of QCA will be discussed. Although the plan is to give a short introduction into the use of software packages at the end, please note that this is not a software course, but that the emphasis will be on the underlying concepts and the resulting algorithm.

Schedule:

11 May 2016 10:00 – 13:00 and 14:00 – 16:00
13 May 2016 10:00 – 13:00 and 14:00 – 16:00

Introductory readings:

Wagemann, Claudius and Carsten Q. Schneider (2010). “Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) and Fuzzy-Sets: Agenda for a Research Approach and a Data Analysis Technique.”*Comparative Sociology* 9, 3: 376-96.