L'analyse QCA (Qualitative Comparative Analysis): principes, applications et potentiel en sciences sociales

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Menu

1. QCA / 'Configurational comparative methods' as a *research approach*
2. QCA as a set of techniques
3. Empirical applications & potential
4. Conclusions

1. QCA/ 'Configurational Comparative Methods' as a *research approach*

- A few words about *labels*
  - CCMs : all-encompassing
  - QCA :
    - approach ['set-theoretic methods' (Schneider & Wagemann)
    - & umbrella term for 3 techniques
  - 3 QCA techniques (*set-theoretic*)
    - csQCA (formerly « QCA ») : dichotomous
    - mvQCA : multi-value (categorical)
    - fsQCA : fuzzy sets → csQCA table
  - 2 main software : TOSMANA and FSQCA (+ R & STATA)
  - Specific terminology : conditions, outcome, configurations

- Basic preoccupations and goals
  - Foundations: *The Comparative Method* (Ragin 1987)
  - The comparative *method* as crude substitute for experimentation (Lijphart 1971)
  - Case-oriented research (« thick » evidence)
  - Small- and Intermediate-N research designs
  - Replicability (← → formalization)
  - Quest for parsimony
  - → allow systematic cross-case comparisons, while at the same time giving justice to within-case complexity

- Positioning (v/s 'quali' & 'quanti')
  - 'integrate the best features of the case-oriented approach with the best features of the variable-oriented approach" (Ragin, 1987:84)
  - [however, overall: more case-oriented ? – e.g. Curchod 2004; Rihoux & Lobe 2009; Marx, Cambré & Rihoux forthcoming, *RSO*)]
- Cases
  - Should be « comparable »
  - Each case as a « whole » (holistic perspective) → concept of *configuration*
  - Each case matters and is selected for a purpose
  - No « deviant » cases or « outliers »

- Causality, complexity, parsimony
  - Over-arching label : *multiple conjunctural causation*
    - most often, it is a combination of causally relevant conditions that generates the outcome (AB → Y)
    - several different combinations of conditions may produce the same outcome (AB + CD → Y)
    - depending on the context, a given outcome may result from a condition when it is present and also when it is absent (AB → Y but also aC → Y)
  - → different causal "paths" – each path being relevant, in a distinct way – may lead to the same outcome (= equifinality)

- Causality, complexity, parsimony (following)
  - → no search for « net effects » of conditions; no probabilistic reasoning; no 'covariational' thinking (Blatter & Blume 2008)
  - ! Many statistical assumptions *not* taken on board
  - → goal: achieve some form of "short" (parsimonious) explanation(s) of a certain phenomenon of interest, while still allowing for (causal) complexity
  - these explanations ("causal paths") consist of *core combinations of conditions*
  - allows one to systematize statements of necessity / sufficiency (Goertz)

2. QCA as a set of *techniques*

- 5 types of uses
  - Summarizing data / typology-building
  - Checking coherence of data

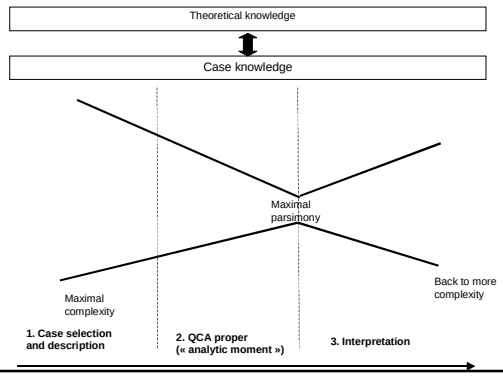
  - Checking/testing hypotheses &/or existing theories
  - Quick test of conjectures/propositions
  - Developing new theoretical arguments

- Data
  - Analytic strategy (outcome, conditions)
  - Both phenomena that:
    - Vary by kind ('qualitative')
    - Vary by degree ('quantitative')
    - [also 'subjective', perceptional data]
  - NB whether a phenomenon is considered 'qualitative' or 'quantitative' is largely debatable, theory-dependent and research-driven (outcome-driven)

- The full QCA protocol in a bird's eye view…
  [Rihoux & Lobe, in Byrne & Ragin (eds) (2009) *Handbook of Case-Based Methods*]

In a nutshell

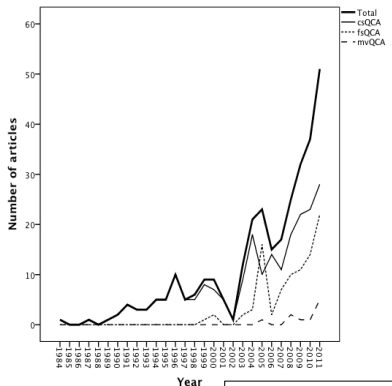
Figure 1 : QCA and the funnel of complexity



3. Applications & potential

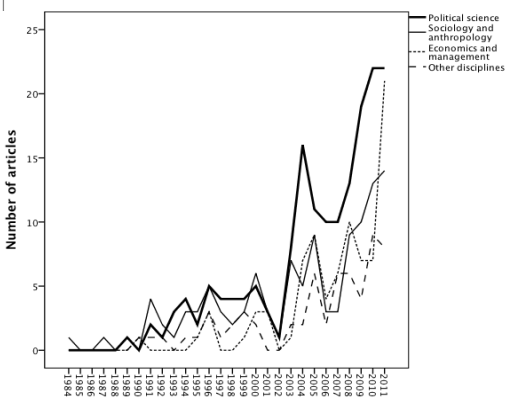
- A selection of applications (incl CH)
  - Environmental impact assessments (Befani et al 2007)
  - Policy impact of NSMs (Giugni & Yamasaki 2009)
  - Recognition of religious communities in cantons (Christmann 2010)
  - Policy coordination in urban areas (Sager 2011)
  - Policy networks in CH (Fischer 2011)
- A review of applications (Rihoux et al forthcoming, *Political Research Quarterly*)
  - Peer-reviewed journal articles
  - N = 303

Type of technique



Under embargo

Discipline



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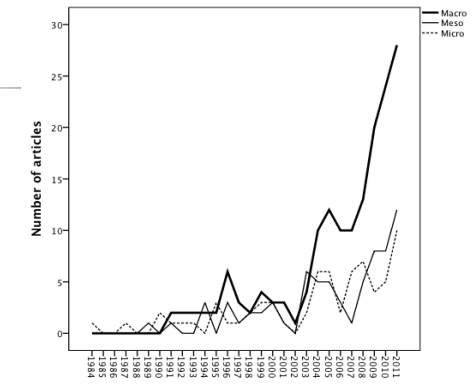
Level of analysis



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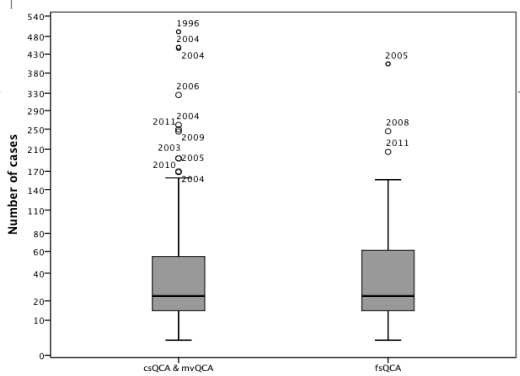
Nr of cases



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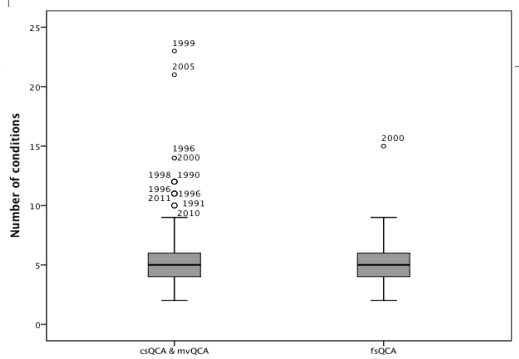
Nr of conditions



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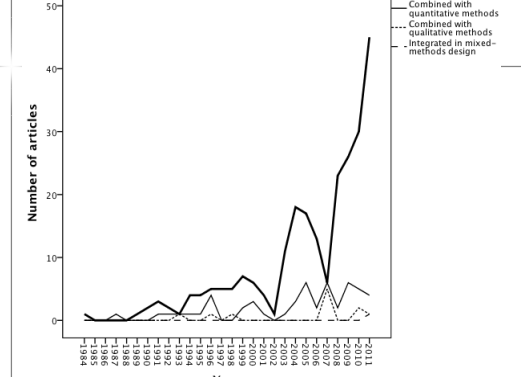
Combination with other method(s)?



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Conclusion

- Broad potential for further applications
  - As main tool
  - As complement
- Many ongoing innovations
  - Technical features & steps: calibration/measurement/ software/visualization/coefficients/benchmarks
  - Triangulation/MMDs
  - Including time/sequence/process
- Limitations

Resources

- Through http://www.compasss.org
- Textbooks
  - Rihoux & Ragin (eds) 2009
  - Schneider & Wagemann forthc. 2012
- Training