

# T10P05 / Methodological Advances in Policy Studies and Comparative Public Policy

**Topic :** T10 / Methodologies

**Chair :** Christine Rothmayr Allison (Université de Montréal)

**Second Chair :** Isabelle Engeli (University of Exeter)

**Third Chair :** Eric Montpetit (Université de Montréal)

## GENERAL OBJECTIVES, RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND SCIENTIFIC RELEVANCE

Globalisation and regional integration have increased complexity and interdependence, waves of democratization and the growing number of emerging countries have enlarged possibilities of comparison. Parallel to these developments, the debate on methods in public policy analysis has evolved too.

- First of all, case studies have occupied a prominent place in comparative policy studies. Instead of considering case studies as a 'by default' comparison when research resources for a large-N are lacking, process tracing offers a meaningful tool to enhance theory building and, to a certain extent, theory testing in policy studies. Comparative research designs have also integrated innovations such as compound research designs. Compound research designs, proposed by Levi-Faur (2004, 2006), aim at maximizing the explanatory capacity of qualitative comparative analysis. As the number of available 'real' cases is limited, comparative policy analysis may take advantage of combining two or more comparative lines of inquiry in order to strengthen the generalization capacity of their explanation: cross-country comparison, comparison across policy domains and comparison across time.
- From single and small-N comparisons, comparative policy studies have moved on to the issue of intermediate-N comparison with the developing of qualitative comparative analysis and fuzzy sets (QCA, Ragin 1978, 2008, Rihoux et al. 2013) in order to benefit from the complexity of each case while enhancing the generalization across cases. Based on algorithms derived from Boolean algebra, QCA simplifies the interaction of explanatory factors in order to identify configurations of causality valid across cases. Thus it allows for the development of parsimonious qualitative explanations with a strong capacity for middle-range generalization.
- With the increased availability and accessibility of policy-relevant quantitative data, large-N studies are also becoming more prominent in comparative policy analysis. Quantitative comparison aims at explaining and predicting patterns of policy-making processes and policy outcomes across cases and attempts to broaden the generalization of research findings.

This panel aims at discussing the current state of development in comparative policy studies from a methodological point of view by focusing on these and other recent methodological innovations and their application to policy studies, and in particular in comparative policy studies. All these methods are confronted with a number of challenges specific to comparative public policy, such as case selection, the definition of the dependent variable, the availability of data, concept stretching and comparability of available, often aggregate, data. The paper in this panel will identify the challenges specific to recent methodological advances for comparative policy studies and offer an assessment of the current state of application of recent methodological innovations in the field. Furthermore, the panel aims at discussing how to address these challenges and contribute to further strengthen research designs in policy studies and in comparative public policy.

## CALL FOR PAPERS

This panel aims at discussing the current state of development in policy studies -- in particular in comparative public policy -- from a methodological point of view by focusing on recent methodological innovations and their application in policy studies and comparative policy studies. Globalisation and regional integration have increased complexity and interdependence, waves of democratization and the growing number of emerging countries have enlarged possibilities of comparison. Parallel to these developments, the debate on methods in public policy analysis has evolved too. First of all, case studies have occupied a prominent place in comparative policy studies. Instead of considering case studies as a 'by default' comparison when research resources for a large-N are lacking, process tracing offers a meaningful tool to

enhance theory building and, to a certain extent, theory testing in policy studies. From single and small-N comparisons, comparative policy studies have moved on to the issue of intermediate-N comparison with the development of qualitative comparative analysis and fuzzy sets in order to benefit from the complexity of each case while enhancing the generalization across cases. With the increased availability and accessibility of policy-relevant quantitative data, large-N studies are also becoming more prominent in comparative policy analysis. All these methods are confronted with a number of challenges specific to policy studies and comparative public policy, such as case selection, the definition of the dependent variable, the availability of data, concept stretching and comparability of available, often aggregate, data. The paper in this panel will identify the challenges specific to recent methodological advances for policy studies and comparative policy analysis and offer an assessment of the current state of application of recent methodological advances in the field. Furthermore, the panel aims at discussing how to address these challenges and intends to contribute to further strengthening research designs in comparative public policy.

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## Session 1

Thursday, June 29th 10:30 to 12:30 (Block B 2 - 2 )

### **Discussants**

Isabelle Engeli (University of Exeter)

Christine Rothmayr Allison (Université de Montréal)

### **The Comparative Method and Comparartive Public Policy**

B. Guy Peters (University of Pittsburgh)

### **Comparative Public Policy at Forty: Taking the (preliminary) Stock**

Christine Rothmayr Allison (Université de Montréal)

Isabelle Engeli (University of Exeter)

Eric Montpetit (Université de Montréal)

### **A New Approach to Case Selection: Conceptualizing Positive, Instrumental Case Studies for Qualitative Public Policy Research**

Philipp Pechmann (Department of Political Science, Aarhus University)

### **Does policy design predict a policy mix's future outlook? A new approach to analyzing path-dependency**

Blair Bateson (ETH Zurich)

Tobias Schmidt (ETH Zurich)

Sebastian Sewerin (Delft University of Technology)