2.17 Advanced Qualitative Comparative Analysis

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ECTS:		1	Activity type:	One-day workshop
Semester/Dates:		Winter semester. 06 February 2019, 10-16h	Room:	Campus Belval, TBA

Course Description:

This 1-day workshop introduces advanced topics of configurational research with Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA)—the most prominent configurational comparative method of causal discovery. Participants are therefore expected to have at least an intermediate knowledge of QCA. It will be shown, for example, why the vast majority of past QCA studies have run the risk of failing to find the underlying causal model and how to solve this problem, why the so-called "conservative solution" is everything but conservative, what to do when data are beset by model ambiguities, and how to perform sensitivity tests. In replicating published studies, participants will also learn how to make the most of the QCApro package for the R environment. All necessary reading material will be provided in advance of the workshop.

Detailed Structure:

Session 1: In this session, we will revisit the most important algebraic and philosophical fundamentals of QCA. This is essential as considerable confusion as to what the ultimate goal of QCA is, what its underlying theory of causation is, what the purpose of applying minimization algorithms is, and how QCA solutions are correctly interpreted is still widespread in methodological and applied literature.

Session 2: In this session, we will see why the vast majority of existing QCA studies have run the risk of failing to find the underlying causal model even in ideal research contexts. The reason has been the setting of an ill-suited search target for optimization algorithms such as Quine-McCluskey. We will learn how to solve this problem and avoid that risk in empirical QCA studies.

Session 3: In this session, we will see why the so-called "parsimonious solution" is the only solution type that should be used for empirical data analysis, and why the so-called "conservative solution" is anything but conservative. In addition, we will see why prior tests for necessary conditions are futile in the context of causal inference with QCA.

Session 4: In this session, it will be demonstrated how to make the most of the QCApro software package for the R environment, including sensitivity and robustness tests. To this end, data from published studies will be reanalyzed. The material prepared in this session will also be useful when participants later design their own high-quality QCA studies.

Learning Outcomes:	At the end of this workshop, participants should be well equipped to implement methodologically sophisticated high-quality QCA studies in their respective areas of research.
Workload:	25 hours
Admission criteria/Remarks:	Participants should have at least an intermediate knowledge of Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA), and, ideally yet not necessarily, programming in R.