



Workshop on Methodology for Comparative Analysis
Beijing, China, January 17 - 18, 2007

Global Development Network
New Delhi, India

Sponsored by
Economic and Social Research Council, UK

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1. BACKGROUND: GDN – BUILDING RESEARCH CAPACITY, GLOBALLY

THE GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT NETWORK

The Global Development Network (GDN) is a global network of research and policy institutes dedicated to building research capacity in the social sciences across the developing world. GDN works through eight regional network partners covering every region of the developing and transition world. GDN:

- **Supports multidisciplinary research** in the social sciences
- **Produces policy-relevant** knowledge on a global scale
- **Builds research capacity** to advance development and alleviate poverty
- **Facilitates knowledge sharing** among researchers
- **Disseminates knowledge** on development issues to the public and policymakers

GLOBAL RESEARCH PROJECTS

GDN has undertaken four Global Research Projects (GRPs) on *Explaining Growth, Understanding Reform, Building Research and Policy*, and *The Impact of Rich Countries' Policies on Poverty*. The first two are complete; the second two are ongoing. While details vary, the projects have certain common features. First, they typically involve researchers from 30 or so different countries analyzing a common issue. This has benefits in terms of cross-fertilization during the research. Second, the country studies are preceded by background papers (thematic papers or region-specific papers) designed to provide guidance for the country authors while not imposing a straight-jacket. In particular, an effort is made to allow for country-specific differences in both the design and the implementation of the research. And third, the technique of analytical narratives has been employed within the framework provided by the background papers. Continuing questions about the most appropriate methodology for conducting country case studies and the feasibility of drawing general lessons from relatively small samples motivate the workshop.

2. DEVELOPING A METHODOLOGY FOR COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

The purpose of the workshop is to bring a group of multidisciplinary experts together to discuss quantitative and qualitative approaches to comparative analysis with the objective of learning about the strengths and weaknesses of various approaches as an input into future comparative research.

QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE TECHNIQUES

Researchers have employed a variety of approaches to comparative analysis:

- **Patterns of Development.** Since the pioneering studies of Simon Kuznets in the 1950s, economists have sought patterns of development in large bodies of cross country data. This approach reached its peak in the 1970s with major contributions from Hollis Chenery and Moshe Syrquin and from Irma Adelman and Cynthia Taft Morris. Now more or less

superseded by multivariate statistical analysis, the visual identification of patterns may still play a useful descriptive function in comparative analysis.

- **Multivariate statistical analysis.** As an increasing supply of reasonably uniform data has become available for a range of variables, the economics literature has become inundated with cross-country regressions. Major exponents in this area include Robert Barro (Harvard University), David Dollar (World Bank), William Easterly (New York University) and Xavier Sala-i-Martin (Columbia University). The strengths of this approach include its ability to marshal and interpret large quantities of data and to conduct rigorous tests of statistical significance. That said, this approach has to confront questions regarding the comparability of data and tricky issues of endogeneity and causality. And by its nature reduces the richness of country-specific experience to a single, common equation. More fundamentally, regression analysis is not appropriate for the relatively small samples typically associated with country studies.
- **In-depth case studies.** Often undertaken by sociologists and political scientists the intensive study of one or a small number of countries is designed to place the individual richness of each country at the forefront of analysis. The benefits of small-sample case studies relative to the large cross-country statistical exercises have to be weighed against the inability to generalize from such small samples and to conduct tests of significance. Researchers using small samples include Robert Chambers (Sussex University), Stephan Haggard (University of California), and Robert Putnam (Harvard University).
- **Large-sample case studies.** Larger samples of case studies seek to retain the richness arising from country-specific investigation with the possibility of generalization. Research along these lines includes the famous Little-Scitovsky-Scott volume, a series of comparative studies conducted under the direction of Ann Krueger when she was Chief Economist at the World Bank, and, more recently, *Voices of the Poor* directed by Deepa Narayan (World Bank), *In Search of Prosperity* by Dani Rodrick (Princeton University) and GDN's Global Research Projects. The country studies in such projects typically employ the technique of analytical narrative and can be more or less constrained by the imposition of common frameworks or by the requirement for a common survey, focus group discussions, or open-ended interviews. Such exercises provide material for generalization, but the question still remains regarding how best to extract robust generalizations.
- **Qualitative Comparative Analysis.** Recently, small-to-medium size samples of case studies have been investigated more systematically using Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA). First introduced to the field of qualitative research methodology by Charles Ragin in 1987; it has now been extended through more advanced variants such as the Fuzzy-Set QCA (fsQCA) and the multi-value QCA (MVQCA). QCA, largely used by researchers in comparative politics, sociology and related fields, identifies commonalities across cases. Researchers working specifically in the area of QCA include Charles Ragin (University of Arizona), Gary Goertz (University of Arizona), David Byrne (Durham University), Benoit Dihoux (Universite Catholique de Louvain) and Wendy Olsen (University of Manchester).

Each of these various approaches has its strengths and weaknesses. The purpose of the workshop is to explore if there is some way of drawing on the different strengths of these different approaches to inform future research seeking to conduct country case studies and yet arrive at reasonably robust generalizations.

ORGANIZATION OF THE WORKSHOP

Prior to the workshop, three papers will be prepared to provide background for the discussion. One paper will assess the relative merits of qualitative and quantitative techniques in the conduct of country case studies. A second would survey the recent experience with large samples of country case studies. The paper would discuss various options – presentation of a common set of key variables, use of background papers, preparation of a prescribed format, etc – for increasing the prospects of identifying general tendencies. And the third paper will assess the potential value of QCA as applied to medium-size samples of case studies.

The workshop itself will be a two-day event and will be attended by 15 researchers with skills and/or experience in different approaches to comparative analysis. It will involve presentations by the authors of the three background papers followed by discussions and presentations by breakout groups. A preliminary program is attached as Annex I. A preliminary list of participants is attached as Annex II.

The outcome of the workshop will be a report that sets out what has been learned about the alternative approaches for conducting country studies and arriving at reasonably robust cross-country generalizations based on the background papers and the group presentations. Following the workshop, a first version of the report will be prepared for circulation and comment among all workshop participants. The final version will be delivered to ESRC. It will be expected to consider:

- Conducting country studies: Size of sample; format, and degree to which it should be uniform; role of background papers; role of within-country surveys, either quantitative or qualitative; data requirements for each study; reliance on analytic narratives; other;
- Drawing generalizations: Contribution of QCA and other techniques to the identification and extraction of general lessons;
- Combining and tailoring techniques: Key points will be the exploration of possible ways of using a combination of techniques to inform the research strategy and/or strengthen the robustness of results, and the identification of where particular combinations are likely to be of greatest use.

The presumption is that country studies (qualitative and/or quantitative) should be used in tandem with some method of extracting general lessons. The third bullet – combining and tailoring techniques – is therefore likely to be crucial. The key point is to look for ways to combine the individual strengths of the various approaches to create a more convincing analysis given the question to be researched.

LOGISTICS

The workshop will be held in conjunction with the next GDN annual conference to be held in Beijing, China from January 14 – 16, 2006. The conference will have as its theme, *Shaping a New Global Reality: The Rise of Asia and its Implications*. It will be hosted by the Municipality of Beijing and the University of Peking. Participants to the workshop will be invited to attend the conference.

Annex I: Draft Program

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS: METHODOLOGICAL WORKSHOP

JANUARY 17-18, 2007

FRIENDSHIP HOTEL, BEIJING

Program

Wednesday, January 17

9.30—10.30 AM	Session I: <i>Welcome and Goals of Workshop</i> Chair: Lyn Squire, Global Development Network Speaker: Jose Fanelli, University of Buenos Aires
10.30-11.00 AM	Coffee Break
11.00 AM-12.30 PM	Session II: <i>Qualitative and Quantitative Methods for Country Case Studies</i> Chair: Arjun Bedi, Institute of Social Studies Speaker: TBD Discussant: Deepa Narayan, World Bank Discussant: Julia Brannen, University of London
12.30-2.00 PM	Lunch
2.00-3.30 PM	Session III: <i>Global Research Projects</i> Chair: Djavad Salehi-Isfahani, Virginia Tech Speaker: Jose Fanelli, University of Buenos Aires Discussant: Vladimir Popov, New Economic School Discussant: Linda Hantrais, University of Loughborough
3.30-4.00 PM	Coffee Break
4.00-5.30 PM	Session IV: <i>Qualitative Comparative Analysis</i> Chair: Binayak Sen, Bangladesh Institute for Development Studies Speaker: Benoit Rihoux, Universite Catholique de Louvain Discussant: Gary McMahon, Global Development Network Discussant: Wendy Olsen, University of Manchester
7.00 PM	Dinner

Thursday, January 18

9.30 AM-11.00 AM	Session V: <i>Break-out groups</i> Each group will comprise resource persons with different backgrounds. Each group will produce a two-page brief on possible approaches to comparative analysis
11.00-11.30 AM	Coffee break
11.30 AM-1.00 PM	Session V cont:
1.00-2.30 PM	Lunch
2.30-4.00 PM	Session VI: <i>Presentations by breakout groups and Discussion</i> Chair: Chalongphob Sussangkarn, Thai Development Research Institute
4.00-4.30 PM	Coffee break
4.30-5.00 PM	Session VII: Summary and Follow-up to Meeting Chair: Lyn Squire, Global Development Network Speakers: Jose Fanelli, University of Buenos Aires Ros Rouse, Economic and Social Research Council Summary and brief discussion of report to be prepared for ESRC.

Annex II: Preliminary List of Workshop Participants

Name	Affiliation	Session
Chairs		
Lyn Squire	Global Development Network, India	I and VII
Arjun Bedi	Institute for Social Studies, Netherlands	II
Djavad Salehi-Isfahani	Virginia Tech, USA	III
Binayak Sen	Bangladesh Institute for Development Studies, Bangladesh	VI
Chalongphob Sussangkarn	Thai Development Research Institute	VI
Speakers		
Ros Rouse	Economic and Social Research Council, UK	I and VII
TBD		II
Jose Fanelli	University of Buenos Aires, Argentina	I, III and VII
Benoit Rihoux	Universite Catholique de Louvain, Belgium	IV
Discussants		
Julia Brannen	University of London, UK	II
Deepa Narayan	World Bank, India	II
Vladimir Popov	New Economic School, Russia	III
Linda Hantrais	University of Loughborough, UK	III
Gary McMahon	Global Development Network, USA	IV
Wendy Olsen	University of Manchester, UK	IV
Rapporteur		
Namrata Chindarkar	Global Development Network, India	