

Comparative Candidate Study (CCS)
Second Plenary Conference
Business meetings Saturday afternoon and Sunday morning,
26 and 27 of January 2012

Minutes: Sebastian Popa and Hermann Schmitt

The issues discussed at the *Saturday afternoon* meeting revolved around the conclusions that can be drawn from the first round of CCS. More exactly, the points considered were related to micro data delivery and documentation, micro data integration and macro data collection (national and constituency level). The meeting started with an overview of the project presented by Hermann Schmitt and continued with a short opinion expressed by every participant.

A series of issues were brought up by the participants that can be sorted into six categories: questionnaire related issues, data collection, anonymity of respondents, data access, creation of a bibliography database, and comparative analyses.

(1) Questionnaire. The variety of themes covered by the questionnaire of the first round of surveys was viewed as a big plus, but the length of the questionnaire was considered a problem as it depresses return rates and leaves little room for addressing country specific issues. Several participants mentioned the need to delete some of the questions (especially those which can be collected from the macro data such as demographics) and add some other questions.

When the questionnaire for the second round will be compiled the selection of questions should be an open process. This would lead to better questions and show the rationale of decisions to the national team (theoretical reason would become clear).

The need to restrict the questionnaire to the “core purpose” of the study was felt to be important by some in the process of elaborating a new core questionnaire. However, others argued that the CCS is a multi-purpose study and restricting it to one core purpose alone would diminish its attractiveness and wide usage.

(2) Data. One of the main aims of the project is to build one data set which integrates the multitude of individual studies, much in the tradition of the CSES model. This has not been achieved yet, and the papers given at the conference were reflecting this somewhat unfortunate

state of affairs. To get there will require some modest external funding, and a working group has been set up to achieve this (see below).

CCS is more than a survey among parliamentary candidates which generates micro data. In order to understand individual candidates' attitudes and behaviours, context information on the constituency and the country level is also being collected. Many of these context data have not yet been made available, and the data integration effort needs to take that up.

In addition, the linking of candidate data and voter data will obviously add value, e.g. in the perspective of political representation studies. A closer co-operation with the CSES has been suggested for the future. In addition, candidate surveys can be linked to one of the voter surveys of the respective National Election Study if there is such a possibility.

Issues of data collection were also discussed, in particular the problems associated with single-mode online surveys. Problems here include the self-selection of the respondents, the representativeness of the sample, and high non-response rates. At the same time it was pointed out that internet surveys represent a cheap and easy option. A possible solution here are multi-mode surveys, more precisely the use of different modes if the initial contact over email failed (mail, phone, face to face). It was agreed that the data collection protocol – the technical report – should always additionally include response rates and it was also suggested that the entire data sets, not only the core questionnaire, should be shared between members of the project.

(3) Anonymity. Ensuring the anonymity of respondents is an important issue. Principal investigators need to pay special attention so that respondents cannot be identified. This is not least relevant if it comes to data exchange. Here, precautions need to be taken, e.g. in the form of written commitments, so that researchers do not disclose the identity of respondents. The issue of identification is magnified when macro data – in particular, constituency level data – are added to the micro-level survey data. A solution could be found in the PIREDEU model which is based on German data protection law.

(4) Data access. Several participants reported problems regarding data access. Although they shared data they could not access the data of other studies.

(5) Publications. Participants identified a need to create a central depository – if possible web-based – of all publications using the candidate survey that can be used by scholars interested in the field and also serve as a learning tool for new members of the project. It was also proposed that an as complete as possible bibliography of what has been done should be a high priority.

(6) Comparative analyses. The principal goal of the study and at the same time the main strength of the survey is cross country comparison. Yet most of the papers that were presented at the conference were single country studies. This points to an obvious need to go on with data integration. In addition, several questions seem not to work well across countries, especially campaign issues. Translation was also an issue, there is a felt need to publish field questionnaires on the website. Participants also asked for justification of individual questions which however starts from the fatal assumption that national teams can pick the questions they like and leave others out. This has been done in places and will produce a less than perfectly comparable data set in the end – because of more or less missing cases. Clearer rules (and sanctions) need to be established here for the second round of data collection.

The purpose of the *Sunday morning* meeting was to discuss the future of the CCS. More in particular, a new governing structure was agreed on and a number of committees were formed which will ensure the well-functioning of the project in the future.¹ The development of a new questionnaire, the possibility of future publications and issues regarding data sharing were also discussed.

(7) Questionnaire development. The proposal of setting up a knowledge base where project members can enter and update information (wiki like) was discussed as a strategy. The need for a theory driven questionnaire construction was underlined. Some participants considered starting CCS II before finishing CCS I as a potential problem, as some issues might only emerge when the data from the first phase is integrated and analyzed. Nevertheless, the general aim was to agree on a wave II questionnaire by the end of 2012. The ESS modular approach as a potential alternative to the CSES model was dismissed, because it poses severe restrictions for overall comparability. It was stressed that only after the core is agreed on can country teams add country specific questions. Elaborating this core questionnaire is the job of the micro data committee, which will start out from the existing questionnaire. However, there was a broad agreement that CCS2 should be considerably shorter. Until this new questionnaire has been agreed on by the Steering Committee as a whole and the wider circle of project participants, the old questionnaire should be applied in upcoming elections. It was also agreed that whichever questionnaire – old or new – is run, it must be run in its entirety, while people felt less strongly

¹ A document describing this governing structure is attached to these minutes. The participants of the meeting formally approved this structure. The next step will be for the Steering Committee to elect a chair.

about the original question order. The question about continuity and change between CCS1 and CCS2 was raised. Participants felt that while continuity is indeed essential for diachronic analyses there must also be some changes and new questions will need to respond to new issues and developments (like the financial crisis and its consequences for democracy)

(8) Publications. The perspective of a common book was discussed in spite of the fact that the way of publishing research findings is changing and the new career requirement, particularly for early stage researchers, is not famous books but articles in famous journals. There might be ways to combine these two perspectives though. The perspective of using the ECPR Joint Sessions of Workshops of 2014 (i.e. the one after Mainz) was tentatively agreed – a time schedule which will also allow to build up and analyze an integrated data set in the meantime. Since the CCS is the first broad effort after decades to study party elites' attitudes, behaviours, and background a workshop proposal might focus on a similarly broad topic. Generally, research should focus on cross-national analyses rather than single country studies.

(9) Data access. The question of what happens after the main common publication has been published was discussed. Would the data then be free for all researchers? At the moment the rule for releasing the data to the scholarly community just says that this will not happen before that time. Thereafter, however, data should be made available to the scholarly community. A commitment not to try to identify the respondents should be made mandatory for all colleagues who will use the data in the future. And even when this declaration has been signed, the usage of the data will be always restricted to a certain degree and some variables will remain with the principal investigator only. Availability of replication datasets which are required by some journals is also an issue here, in which case we will have to grant general access to some excerpt of the original data matrix.

(10) The proposal was put forward that the CCS website should provide a link connecting to regional candidate studies (e.g. for Belgium and Spain).

Comparative Candidate Survey
Governing Structure as adopted at the 2nd Plenary Conference in Mannheim,
January 2012

The Steering Committee of CCS II consists of the members of the following sub-committees. The chair of this Steering Committee is Hermann Schmitt. He assumes responsibility for the overall co-ordination of the study. The Steering committee will meet once a year, in conjunction with one of the major political science conferences or, alternatively, by way of a tele-conference. It will discuss and decide upon the reports which are brought forward by its sub-committees.

These sub-committees are:

Micro Q development CCS II Cross, Enyedi, Gibson, Lutz, Zittel

This sub-committee develops a draft of the micro-questionnaire to be applied in CCSII surveys from 2013 onwards.

Macro Q development CCS II Marsh, Selb, Wessels

This sub-committee develops a draft of the macro-questionnaire for constituency information to be collected and associated with CCSII surveys from 2013 onwards.

Task Force Data Integration CCS I Freire, Rüdig, Zittel

This sub-committee develops a research grant proposal in order to fund data integration tasks left over in CCSI – mainly the association of constituency and country information with micro-data from the candidate surveys.

Meta-data Baudewyns (micro) & Andreadis (macro)

This sub-committee collects meta-data (e.g. return rate, completeness of the questionnaire, and item non-response on the micro, availability and comparability of indicators on the macro side). Andreadis will also serve as the IT officer of the CCS and assume responsibility for the website.

Arbitration Board de Winter, Narud, Schmitt

This sub-committee *decides* on questions arising with regard to the quality of data submitted by country teams.