

COMPARATIVE RESEARCH



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Brandon University established the Rural Development Institute in 1989 as an academic research centre and a leading source of information on issues affecting rural communities in Western Canada and elsewhere.

RDI functions as a not-for-profit research and development organization designed to promote, facilitate, coordinate, initiate and conduct multi-disciplinary academic and applied research on rural issues. The Institute provides an interface between academic research efforts and the community by acting as a conduit of rural research information and by facilitating community involvement in rural development. RDI projects are characterized by cooperative and collaborative efforts of multi-stakeholders.

The Institute has diverse research affiliations, and multiple community and government linkages related to its rural development mandate. RDI disseminates information to a variety of constituents and stakeholders and makes research information and results widely available to the public either in printed form or by means of public lectures, seminars, workshops and conferences.

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Introduction

According to Pickvance (2005), comparative analysis is conducted mainly to explain and gain a better understanding of the causal processes involved in the creation of an event, feature or relationship usually by bringing together variations in the explanatory variable or variables. Comparative research can be traced to a long history that has gained much attention in current research due to globalization, technological advances, etc. on cross-national platforms (Azarian, 2011). Conventionally, comparative analysis emphasized on the “explanation of differences, and the explanation of similarities” (p.2). This helps to establish relationships between two or more phenomena and provide valid reasons. Comparisons are now carried out on various levels being regional, national or wider geographical boundaries based on specific subject or area of interest.

This report seeks to provide an overview of the methods of comparative research, institutions doing comparative research, comparative research papers (including those with rural focus) and journals with comparative research focus. This will serve as a fundamental resource to enlighten students and other users with interest in undertaking comparative studies. The list provided in the report is not a comprehensive one and additional views or comments are greatly welcome in building this piece.

Finally, a special thanks to graduate student Michael Adiyia, Masters student in the Rural Development program at Brandon University for his efforts to conceptualize this report and complete the necessary research.

Types of Comparative Research

There are several methods of doing comparative analysis and Tilly (1984) distinguishes four types of comparative analysis namely: individualizing, universalizing, variation-finding and encompassing (p.82). Adding to the types of comparative analysis, May (1993, as cited in Azarian 2011, p. 117) offers a four-folded typology, including the import-mirror view, the difference view, the theory-development view and, finally, the prediction view. These types are similar to that suggested by Tilly (1984) which are elaborated below.

- a. Individualizing comparison contrasts 'a small number of cases in order to grasp the peculiarities of each case' (1984, p. 82). This basically involves describing fully the characteristics or features each of the cases being studied. This helps to broaden our knowledge and gives insight to see cases in-depth. This method cannot be said to be truly comparative but makes use of comparison in a small aspect of the research (Fredrickson, 1997).
- b. Universalizing comparison 'aims to establish that every instance of a phenomenon follows essentially the same rule' (1984, p. 82). This involves the use of comparison to develop fundamental theories with significant generality and relevance; goes to further to provide theories which explain the cases being studied. E.g. development of theories of industrialism, social revolutions etc.
- c. Variation-finding comparison seeks to 'establish a principle of variation in the character or intensity of a phenomenon by examining systematic differences between instances' (1984, p. 82). That is, comparing numerous forms of a single phenomenon to discover logical differences among instances and establish a standard of variation in the character or intensity of that phenomenon. E.g. Green (1997) study of the modern Jewish Diaspora and Moore (1966) study on Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy.
- d. Encompassing comparison 'places different instances at various locations within the same system, on the way to explaining their characteristics as a function of their varying relationships to the system as a whole' (1984, p. 83). E.g. explaining the difference between two children's behavior by their orders of birth, attributing the characteristics of rural communities to their varying connections with a nearby city or urban area.

Institutions Doing Comparative Research and Areas of Focus

Comparative International Development & Development Education Centre (CIDEDEC) mandate is to promote excellence, collaboration, and innovation in comparative and international educational research at OISE. The CIDEDEC community includes over 50 faculty members, adjunct faculty, and visiting scholars. More than 120 graduate student researchers with an interest in international issues and comparative methodologies in the field of education are affiliated with the Centre. Research projects include a comparative study of the professional working knowledge of teachers in the Nigerian States of Kwara, Lagos, Kano, Kaduna and Jigawa (ESSPIN, DFID) and the professional working knowledge of teachers in India (Core Projects and Technologies).

The Institute for Comparative Studies in Literature, Art and Culture (ICSLAC) (Carleton University) is a haven for intellectually rebellious researchers; a home for those who seek independence as well as a sense of belonging. Starting from a place of deep disciplinary knowledge and theoretical rigour, the institute set the stage for productive academic discomfort. Inside and outside the classroom, create an intellectual community that leads to greater engagement and understanding. Our research areas include: cultural theory, memory studies, Indigenous studies, digital culture, transnational studies, gender studies, and critical museology.

The Ohio State University - The Department of Comparative Studies is committed to interdisciplinary and cross-cultural inquiry and exchange. Their research and teaching focus on the rigorous comparative study of human experiences and ground our engagement with issues of social justice. Comparative Studies students are encouraged to develop their critical and analytical skills and to become effective global citizens, guided by an ethos of mutual respect and persistent questioning, and recognition of the value and pleasures of critical intellectual work.

Duke University – International Comparative Studies ICS majors share a common foundation of class experiences and knowledge in critical transnationalism derived from their participation in the interdisciplinary core courses; Comparative Approaches to Global Issues and Capstone Global Studies Seminar. ICS provides knowledge in the culture(s), history, politics, and language relevant to one geographic area of the world or region concentration.

Comparative Studies in Society and History (CSSH) is an international forum for new research and interpretation concerning problems of recurrent patterning and change in human societies through time and in the contemporary world. CSSH sets up a working alliance among specialists in all branches of the social sciences and humanities as a way of bringing together multidisciplinary research, cultural studies, and theory, especially in anthropology, history, political science, and sociology

The Comparative Studies in Literature and Culture department offers students the opportunity to design, in consultation with department faculty, a fully interdisciplinary major that engages at least one specific literature and language, and one specialized external discipline of their own choosing. To develop the student's capacity for pluralized understanding, each major take at least two courses within the department in literatures and cultures outside their area of specialization, as well as an introductory methods course on contemporary trends in literary and cultural studies.

Centre for Comparative Construction Research CCCR currently occupies a niche position by specializing in research on performance and productivity issues of the global construction industry, and other matters relating to comparative construction, such as project management effectiveness, building quality, building refurbishment and retrofit, bidding theory, green building design, environmental impact and infrastructure procurement and finance.

World Values Survey is a global network of social scientists studying changing values and their impact on social and political life, led by an international team of scholars. The WVS seeks to help scientists and policy makers understand changes in the beliefs, values and motivations of people throughout the world by using the most rigorous, high-quality research designs in each country. Data has been used by government officials, journalists, students, political scientists, sociologists, anthropologists and economists to analyze such topics as economic development, democratization, religion, gender equality, social capital, and subjective well-being.

Comparative Papers



Pagani, M., Johnson, T. G., & Vittuari, M. (2017).

Energy input in conventional and organic paddy rice production in Missouri and Italy: A comparative case study. *Journal of Environmental Management*, 188, 173-182.

The expected decline in availability of fossil fuels over the next several decades, either because of resource depletion or because of limits on carbon emissions, is leading to a keen interest in finding more sustainable energy sources. For this reason, it is useful to assess the energy footprint of alternative agricultural systems for crops and animal production and to identify potential transition scenarios to systems largely based on renewable energy. The present work aims to assess for the first time a comparative analysis of energy inputs in rice production systems in Southern Europe (Piemonte, Italy) and in North America (Missouri, USA). A total of twelve rice farms, either conventional or organic, were selected, collecting detailed data on direct (fuel and electricity) and indirect (machinery, fertilizers, pesticides, and seeds) energy inputs. While energy input of conventional farms ranged from 3.5 to 7 MJ/kg paddy rice, organic farming could reduce inputs by more than 50% with only 8% yield decrease. A significant reduction in fuel or electricity use can be achieved also with no till and surface irrigation. The use of renewable energy sources, as already practiced by some farms, could more than cover their electrical energy requirements.



Pagani, M., Vittuari, M., Johnson, T. G., & De Menna, F. (2016).

An assessment of the energy footprint of dairy farms in Missouri and Emilia-Romagna. *Agricultural Systems*, 145, 116-126.

The strong dependence of the livestock sector on fossil fuel could be challenged in a matter of decades or sooner, either by rising fossil fuels prices or by the commitments foreseen under carbon emission reduction protocols. In this context, this paper assesses the energy footprint of animal products and identifies potential strategies for the transition towards a greater reliance on renewable energy.



The Economic Impacts of Local Food Production and Sales (PDF Download Available).

Rossi, J., Johnson, T. G., Hendrickson, R. & Scott, J. (2014).

The Economic Impacts of Local Food Production and Sales, presented at Rural Sociological Society Annual Meeting, San Antonio, TX

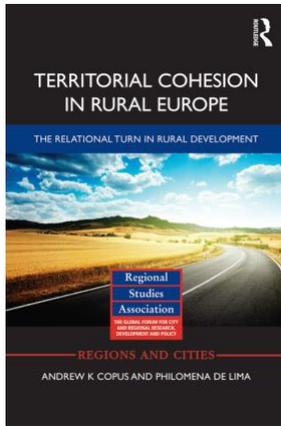
The goals of this analysis are to examine the economic impacts of local food production and sales versus the economic impacts of conventional agricultural production and conventional food sales. By examining the economic impacts accruing from local food production and sales in relation to the economic impacts from conventional agricultural production and sales, there is the opportunity to examine how each of these activities affects a regional economy. Primary data on local food production are necessary owing to potential differences between regional production technologies and the national production function implicitly assumed by IMPLAN. These differences can arise from a variety of factors such as differences in technology and technology adoption, differences in resource prices and availability, aggregation bias resulting from many industries being included in a single IMPLAN sector, etc.



**Rossi, J., Johnson, T. G., Hendrickson, M., Cantrell, R. & Scott, J. (2014).
Economic Impacts of Local Food Systems in the Rural Midwest:
Evidence from Missouri and Nebraska, poster presented at Rural Sociological Society
Annual Meeting, New Orleans, LA.**

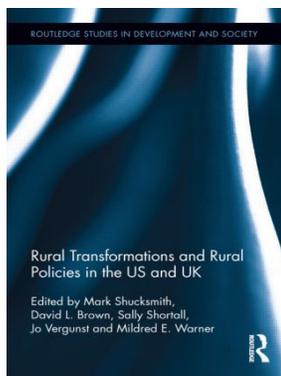
Local food systems (LFS) are often viewed as a promising entrepreneurial solution for rural development by enhancing the prosperity of at-risk small and medium sized farms. LFS are often claimed to have greater economic impacts on communities than conventional agriculture because of their backward and forward economic linkages. In our bi-state regional project we collected primary data in three different regions in Missouri and Nebraska from farmers who were oriented toward local food production. The authors use the IMpact Modeling for PLANning (IMPLAN) program to estimate the economic impacts of both local foods production and traditional agriculture. The authors report the impacts accruing from these shocks using three metrics: 1) regional sales; 2) number of jobs created; and 3) the contribution to gross domestic product. The findings indicate that additional employment created through the indirect and induced effects are larger in local foods production while value-added is higher in traditional agricultural production. However, a greater share of the monies stays in-region in the case of local foods production. Also, total value-added generated from traditional agricultural production is greater than that of local foods production. Finally, value of total sales (or output) is much greater in the case of local foods production than traditional agriculture representing a stronger network of local linkages. Farmers oriented toward local food production are often less profitable than conventional farms but still generate larger income and employment effects in their communities.

Comparative Rural Policy Papers



Copus, A. K., & De Lima, P. (2014). *Territorial cohesion in rural Europe: the relational turn in rural development.* Routledge.

This book reflects on how the economies, social characteristics, ways of life and global relationships of rural areas of Europe have changed in recent years. This reveals a need to refresh the concepts we use to understand, measure and describe rural communities and their development potential. This book argues that Europe has 'outgrown' many of the stereotypes usually associated with it, with substantial implications for European Rural Policy. This book argues that rural/regional policy needs to evolve in order to address the current complex reality, partially reformulating territorial or place-based approaches, and the New Rural Paradigm, following a set of principles termed 'Rural Cohesion Policy'.



Shucksmith, M., Brown, D. L., Shortall, S., Vergunst, J., & Warner, M. E. (Eds.). (2012). *Rural transformations and rural policies in the US and UK.* Routledge.

This book examines the transformations of rural society and economy in the UK and US during the last half-century, and explores the significance of these trends and changes for community sustainability, quality of life and the environment. While both the UK and US are highly urbanised, rural people and communities continue to contribute to national identity, economic development and social solidarity, as well as to environmental quality. Contributors explore the degree to which rural people exhibit agency and autonomy, rather than being merely passive in the face of exogenous forces of change in a globalised world. They also illuminate very different policy approaches to rural policy in two advanced capitalist societies often thought to be similar, and show how fundamental differences in rural policy approaches of the US and the UK are based on different social ideologies and values that shape policies relating to rural areas. This book will help to stimulate transatlantic dialogue on rural scholarship and rural policy analysis, while also contributing to theory and policy development. It will be of interest to researchers, students and everyone involved in the policy and practice of rural development.

Comparative Studies Journals

Comparative Economic Studies is a journal of the Association for Comparative Economic Studies. The Journal is devoted to the study of economic systems, those currently existing as well as systems that have existed in the past or that may exist only in theory. Economic systems consist of economic agents, institutions, incentives, information flows, culture, historical legacies and policies.

Comparative Political Studies (CPS) published fourteen times a year, offers scholarly work on comparative politics at both the cross-national and intra-national levels. Dedicated to relevant, in-depth analyses, CPS provides the timeliest methodology, theory, and research in the field of comparative politics. This journal is a member of the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE).

Comparative Critical Studies seeks to advance methodological (self) reflection on the nature of comparative literature as a discipline. The journal invites contributions providing innovative perspectives on the theory and practice of the study of comparative literature in all its aspects, including but not restricted to: theory and history of comparative literary studies; comparative studies of conventions, genres, themes and periods; reception studies; comparative gender studies; diasporas and the migration of culture from a literary perspective; and the theory and practice of literary translation and cultural transfer.

Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East explores the shared concerns and histories of these regions, offers stimulating perspectives on interdisciplinary debates, and challenges established analytic models. CSSAAME publishes articles from around the world, providing a distinctive link between scholars living and working in Africa, the Middle East, and Asia and their counterparts in Europe and the Americas.

Journal of Comparative Economics seeks to lead the new orientations of research in comparative economics. Before 1989, the core of comparative economics was the comparison of economic systems with in particular the economic analysis of socialism in its different forms. In the last fifteen years, the main focus of interest of comparative economists has been the transition from socialism to capitalism. In recent years, mostly as a result of the transition experience, a new orientation of comparative economics has emerged that focuses on the comparison of the economic effects of the various institutions of capitalism, be it in the legal sphere, in the political sphere or in the sphere of culture, social norms, etc

Comparative American Studies is an international journal that extends scholarly debates about American Studies beyond the geographical boundaries of the United States, repositioning

discussions about American culture within an international comparative framework. The main disciplines covered in the journal are: literature, film, popular culture, photography and the visual arts. Attention is also given to history, the social sciences and politics, particularly insofar as these fields impact on cultural texts.

Comparative Population Studies (CPS) is a peer reviewed interdisciplinary scientific journal on demography and population studies. The journal was founded in 1975 and renamed in 2010 on the occasion of the 35th volume. It is an open journal and published free of charge on a rolling publication model.

World Development is a multi-disciplinary monthly journal of development studies. It seeks to explore ways of improving standards of living, and the human condition generally, by examining potential solutions to problems such as: poverty, unemployment, malnutrition, disease, lack of shelter, environmental degradation, inadequate scientific and technological resources, trade and payments imbalances, international debt, gender and ethnic discrimination, militarism and civil conflict, and lack of popular participation in economic and political life. Contributions offer constructive ideas and analysis, and highlight the lessons to be learned from the experiences of different nations, societies, and economies.

Journal of Comparative Politics an international journal presenting scholarly articles devoted to the comparative analysis of political institutions and processes, communicates new ideas and research findings to social scientists, scholars, students, and public and NGO officials. The journal is essential to experts in universities, research organizations, foundations, embassies, and policymaking agencies throughout the world.

Compare publishes scholarly and critical analyses of educational discourse, policy and practice from early childhood to the end of adult life. All published articles include a comparative and/or international dimension. Comparatives here do not necessarily need to compare different countries or contexts, but may compare across time, cultures or between different groups or systems. The areas of focus include: commonalities and differences across education systems; the dynamics of education, human development and subjectivities; patterns of policy transfer between nations and regions; the relationship between education and intersecting inequalities in varying contexts; the role of international agencies and globalisation on learning and people's lives.

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