

**CAS 2.0 Webinar Series and Bookmaking Workshop**  
(programme as of 5 March 2021)

**4-5 March 2021: Kick-off sessions**

**Thu, 4 March, 5-7.15pm CET**

***Brief introduction to the workshop series***

**Ariel A. Ahram**, Virginia Tech, <https://www.arielahram.com/>, **Patrick Köllner**, German Institute for Global and Area Studies (GIGA) and Universität Hamburg, <https://www.giga-hamburg.de/en/team/köllner>, **Rudra Sil**, University of Pennsylvania, <https://www.polisci.upenn.edu/people/standing-faculty/rudra-sil>

***Analytical Issues***

Causal Explanation with Ideal Types: Opportunities for Comparative Area Studies  
**Ryan Saylor**, University of Tulsa, <https://faculty.utulsa.edu/faculty/ryan-saylor/>

Abstract

The comparative area studies initiative challenges researchers to undertake cross-regional research while remaining sensitive to context within and between world regions. This paper argues that this goal can best be met by using Weberian ideal types. This epistemic approach forces researchers to distill causal claims into ideal-typical statements while also identifying factors that are not part of the ideal type but which influenced the outcome in a particular case. Ideal-typical claims resemble what many of us think of as good theorizing. The determination of the factors pertinent to a case-specific outcome but extraneous to the ideal type prompts us to weigh and adjust for context. Using ideal types assists scholars wanting to elevate contextual considerations as fundamental features of cross-regional research. The paper advances this argument by (1) describing what ideal types are; (2) showing how ideal types are useful for achieving causal explanation; (3) providing practical guidance for building and using ideal types; and (4) illustrating their vitality through two seminal works in comparative politics that have had lasting influence on the field.

Crossing the Boundaries of Comparison: Comparative Area Studies and Comparative Historical Analysis

**Amel Ahmed**, University of Massachusetts Amherst, <https://polsci.umass.edu/people/amel-ahmed>

Abstract

The paper examines the relationship between comparative areas studies and comparative historical analysis. I trace both to a common lineage in the Annals school of historical thought and its emphasis on comparison, scope conditions, and mid-range theorizing as necessary conditions for causal explanation. The complementarity between the approaches can also be seen in more recent works in both traditions. Together, these approaches offer a powerful

tool for determining the conditions of valid comparison. Moreover, they serve as intellectual anchors for approaches that embrace a pragmatic hermeneutics and understand social scientific inquiry as the terrain of conceptual clarification and bounded explanation across different contexts.

**Fri, 5 March, 5-7pm CET**

Advancing Theory Development in Comparative Area Studies: Practical Recommendations for Testing the Generalizability of Causal Mechanisms

**Marissa Brookes**, University of California,

Riverside, <https://politicalscience.ucr.edu/people/faculty/brookes/> and **Jesse Dillon Savage**, Trinity College Dublin, [https://www.tcd.ie/Political\\_Science/people/dillonsj](https://www.tcd.ie/Political_Science/people/dillonsj)

Scholarship in comparative area studies (CAS) enhances theory development by allowing researchers to test whether or not causal explanations can “travel” outside a single geographic area through the comparative analysis of cases in different regions. Often such cross-regional analyses focus only on the congruence of variables – that is, whether or not the explanatory variable(s) X1 and the outcome of interest Y1 behave in same way for cases in different regions. Yet theory is fundamentally an explanation of causal mechanisms, the analysis of which requires the researcher not only to identify a non-spurious correlation between explanatory variables and the dependent variable but also to explicate how and why X1 actually causes Y1. Comparative area studies would therefore benefit from closer attention to the cross-regional analysis of causal mechanisms, not just variables. In other words, holding variables constant, does X1 cause Y1 in the same way in one region or area as it does in another? This chapter proposes a method for testing whether the same causal mechanisms explain cases in different regions that feature the same X1/Y1 relationship. In doing so it discusses potential complications for CAS scholars due to unclear conceptualization, confirmation bias in process tracing, and potential equifinality.

The Best of Both Worlds? The Case for Multi-Methods Research in Comparative Area Studies

**Matthias Basedau**, GIGA and Universität Hamburg,

<https://www.giga-hamburg.de/en/team/basedau>, and **David Kuehn**, GIGA, <https://www.giga-hamburg.de/en/team/kuehn>

### Abstract

This paper argues that to provide added value, both in terms of academic relevance and policy impact, Comparative Area Studies (CAS) need to value both individualization and generalization and hence combine context-sensitive in-depth knowledge of traditional Area Studies with rigorous conceptual, methodological, and theoretical disciplinary scholarship. From this, we argue that multi-methods research (MMR) is a quasi-natural methodological expression of CAS. Only a combination of deductive and inductive as well as cross-case and within-case methods can ensure both rigorous theory-testing and, at the same time, necessary context sensitivity and empirical specificity. The paper starts by making the case for the added value of the “Best of Both Worlds” concept of CAS by comparing strengths and weaknesses of traditional Area Studies and classical Comparative Studies. We then move to outline how MMR in the CAS context can be carried out in practice, illustrated by two examples drawn

from real-world research. We close with a brief assessment of the potential pitfalls of MMR in CAS.

**Thu, 29 April 2021, 5-7pm CET**

***Capacity Building and Institutional Issues***

Comparative Area Studies: Programs, Department, Constraints, and Opportunities

**Tom Pepinsky**, Cornell University, Ithaca/New York, <https://government.cornell.edu/thomas-pepinsky>

Abstract

This paper studies comparative area studies by studying area studies comparatively across areas. Using Southeast Asian area studies as a case, I compare the academic organization, funding models, and institutional structure of Southeast Asian studies programs and departments in the United States, Singapore, Australia, Japan, the Netherlands, and Germany. Important dimensions of variation include (1) how governments provide financial support for area studies, (2) whether area studies units grant terminal degrees, (3) what constitutes the “area” in question. I show, further, that many “scholars of Southeast Asia” are deeply critical of the very premise of Southeast Asian area studies: area studies, in particular in the Asian context, is seen as colonial, racist, presumptuous, biased, and at best intellectually vacuous. Although this intellectual skepticism produces a novel crisis of area studies that threatens the promise of the “area knowledge” that CAS requires, it does open the door for more comparisons across countries that happen to be located in different world regions.

Making CAS Work: An Institutional and Organizational Perspective

**Ariel A. Ahram**, Virginia Tech, Arlington, <https://www.arielahram.com/>

Abstract

Area studies has long defied and challenged the predominant model of disciplinary learning and teaching in universities. Area studies centers stood out as nodes of cross-disciplinary contact in arenas in which disciplines predominated organizationally, fiscally, and intellectually. The advent of comparative area studies (CAS) compounds these challenges by requiring transverse linkages between area studies nodes as well as disciplinary units. While much of the discussion about CAS has so far focused on the how the individual scholar navigates to try to bridge disciplinary and area divides, not enough has been written about the institutional setting in which CAS can thrive as a collaborative venture. This paper discusses the incentive structures and organizational arrangements conducive to CAS’s success. It describes three main institutional models: a) private trespass models in which individual researchers traverse or cross disciplinary and area boundaries, b) command models in which research directors assign tasks to individual units based either in vertical or horizontal basis, and c) modular crowdsourcing models, based on more fluid and flexible calls that elicit responses from groups of individuals of varying knowledge, heterogeneity, and number.

**Fri, 11 June 2021, 5-7pm CET**

***Intra- and Cross-Regional Applications***

Regions as Constructs, Regions as Sites of Comparison

**Erik Martinez Kuhonta**, McGill University, Montreal,  
<https://www.mcgill.ca/politicalscience/erik-martinez-kuhonta>

Abstract

What constitutes a region? What is the conceptual meaning of a region? In this paper, I seek to examine the way in which regions are conceptualized and how they come to be understood in the popular mindset. I argue that regions are social constructs that result from a combination of real-world imperatives as well as academic theories. Regions are therefore neither fully real nor completely fictitious. With this in mind, I then assess the value of comparisons that take the region as, in essence, a contextual laboratory. I juxtapose works that have pursued intra-regional comparisons to research that makes comparisons across regions. I intend to show that both types of comparisons have value and that each one has particular advantages or disadvantages given the way in which regions have been conceptualized. I draw upon empirical work in sociology, anthropology, and political science, as well as in evolutionary biology.

Beyond Northeast and Southeast: Developmental Asia as a Region of Clusters

**Dan Slater**, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor,  
<https://lsa.umich.edu/polisci/people/faculty/dnsltr.html>

Abstract

This paper attempts a rethinking of Asian geography by making the case for “developmental Asia” as a region transcending the conventional divide between Northeast and Southeast Asia. Developmental Asia is defined by political economy, not just physical geography. Through the uneven spread of Japan’s developmental-state model along the Pacific Rim, as well as the collision of Japan-style developmentalism with a wide assortment of different polities – some dominated by British colonialists, others by highly politicized militaries, and others by long-lasting communist parties – developmental Asia assumed a clustered character. The upshot was not twelve cases that looked strikingly alike, but four distinctive developmental clusters containing three cases each. The value of this clustered approach is established by showing how developmental cluster – rather than overall levels of development – is perfectly correlated with whether or not authoritarian regimes have made democratic concessions in times of considerable regime strength. It is not level of economic development but type of institutional development that best explains developmental Asia’s uneven record of democratization.

**Fri, 2 July 2021, 5-7pm CET**

Developing and Testing Theory through Comparative Cases and Multilevel Analysis

**Roselyn Hsueh**, Temple University, Philadelphia,  
<https://liberalarts.temple.edu/academics/faculty/hsueh-roslyn>

Abstract

The paper highlights theory development and refinement, which combines comparative case studies at different levels of analysis. It argues for the analytical value and leverage of exploring theoretical generalizability through the systematic incorporation of comparative cross-regional, cross-country, and within country in-depth case studies. The paper

demonstrates this process through an account of the author's examination of the interacting political and institutional logics, which shape national and sector-specific variation in global economic integration. The explanatory framework is first advanced through within country, cross-time comparisons of the market governance of capital-intensive and labor-intensive sectors in China. The theoretical model is sharpened and the causal utility further teased out with the systematic incorporation of the same sectors in other developing countries (India and Russia) of comparable size, timing of economic liberalization, existing industrial bases, and geopolitical significance.

Legacies of Extraction: Natural Resources and Governance in Latin America in Comparative Perspective (tbc)

**Erica S. Simmons**, University of Wisconsin–Madison, <https://polisci.wisc.edu/staff/erica-simmons/>

### Abstract

In recent decades tensions have surfaced throughout Latin America as political elites have made commitments to plurinationalism — the recognition of the governance rights of more than one nationality within a political community—in the context of economies reliant on resource extraction. Political leaders in almost every Latin American state—irrespective of extractive legacies or the size of the indigenous population—have struggled to reconcile proclaimed commitments to indigenous autonomy with the language and structures of neoliberal, resource-reliant states. This paper argues that, to understand these emergent tensions in Latin American extractive and indigenous policies and practices, we must constantly tack back and forth between events and processes in Latin America and portable theories that take into account how similar sets of events and processes unfold in other times and places. Place-based phenomena in any given region can acquire a different, broader significance when situated in a broader global context; at the same time, theories claiming to provide more general understandings of phenomena must be able to account for regionally specific dynamics of those phenomena. Within the context of natural resource extraction and governance in Latin America, this paper asks several questions that bear on the central issues of Comparative Area Studies (CAS): does an area studies lens help us better understand the relationship between indigenous commitments and extractive practices? Does a focus on Latin America allow for insights that would not be possible through cross-regional analysis? How might locating our research in a particular place create opportunities for insights that can translate to other parts of the world? By exploring extractive projects and indigenous commitments in contemporary Latin America this paper helps to shed light on both the importance of place-based approaches to our understandings of global phenomena and to the critical role that a global lens plays in helping us better understand the most local of events and practices.

**September 2021, date tbd**

Presidential Term Limits: The Promises and Challenges of a Cross-Regional Comparison

**Mariana Llanos** <https://www.giga-hamburg.de/en/team/llanos>, GIGA, Hamburg

### Abstract

In this paper we share our experience with the implementation of a three-year project that undertakes a systematic cross-regional comparison of two regions, Latin America and sub-Saharan Africa (59 countries). These regions together include the majority of presidential and semi-presidential regimes in the world (about 55%), transitioned to democracy in the 1980s or 1990s, and adopted or reinstated presidential term limit provisions with such transitions. The idea of the cross-regional comparison was born from the observation that in both regions despite different legacies of democracy and term limit rules, the term limit provisions are frequently and sometimes recurrently modified, abolished or circumvented. We developed an empirical strategy to analyze about 60 reform processes in a systematic way. With this strategy we tried to keep the qualitative richness of the reforms, despite defining systematically the patterns of the comparison. We faced many challenges, but also learnt many useful lessons in the process, which we think can be useful for other researchers as well.

Critical Junctures in Encounters with Western Hegemony: A Tool for Comparative Area Studies  
**Nora Fisher Onar**, University of San Francisco, <https://www.usfca.edu/faculty/nora-fisher-onar>

#### Abstract

Students of non-Western politics and international relations have long grappled with the misfit between a mainstream analytical apparatus that reflects Western experiences and priorities, and the “actually lived” experiences of non-Western actors, not least across the Middle East, Eurasia, and East Asia. The danger is not only one of poorly representing these regions’ complex realities, but of authorizing misguided policies. This concern has become all the more salient in our era of incipient multipolarity when miscalculated foreign policy has heightened potential to cause conflict between Western actors and their counterparts in states like China, Russia, Turkey, or Iran. Under the tent of Comparative Area Studies (CAS), however, we have an opportunity to do justice to the complexities of non-Western trajectories whilst assimilating findings to a rubric compatible with mainstream political science, thus enabling wider audiences to grapple with the similarities and differences between and across the world’s most restive non-Western actors (and their policy implications).

To this end, this chapter will channel tools from complexity theory and historical sociology to probe the potential of critical junctures as a site for cross-case and cross-regional analysis. Critical junctures are defined as those moments in time “when heightened contingency in a system trajectory means that new possibility spaces are opened and radical transformation is possible.”[1] The critical junctures to be explored will be regime-defining moments in Chinese, Russian, Iranian, and Turkish political history. These moments are tentatively conceptualized as situated within “waves”: a late nineteenth/early twentieth century “first wave” of incremental reforms culminating in abandonment of imperial ancien regimes for constitutional monarchies; a twentieth-century “second wave” of reinvention as communist or capitalist nation-states; and a “third wave” of the late twentieth/early twenty-first century characterized by neoliberal restructuring of state and society. Critical junctures during each wave which demonstrably shaped the political system’s trajectory will be scrutinized toward identifying the necessary and sufficient conditions for outcomes of interest. It is hoped that insights thus generated will offer a preliminary sense of both patterns across and the distinctiveness of these four key actors across a contiguous geography – greater Eurasia – which has long been the locus of Western geocultural anxiety even as knowledge of its constituent parts are typically segmented across area studies. In so doing, moreover, the

hope is to generate an ecumenical tool with which to broker still further comparisons with states in Africa and South America, notably South Africa and Brazil.

### **October 2021, date tbd**

Breaking BRICS? Comparing Brazil, China, and India in a World of Weaponised Interdependence

**Amrita Narlikar**, GIGA and Universität Hamburg, <https://www.giga-hamburg.de/en/team/narlikar>

#### Abstract

The acronym of BRICS may have been a Goldman Sachs creation, but it was one that the rising powers came to own with pride over the first fifteen years of the new millennium. They worked together in coalitions in the WTO, held summits under the BRICS label, created a development bank, and pushed for a reform of the structures and processes of global governance. In this paper, I demonstrate that the BRICS, as a collective, may have served a useful purpose for its members and also systemically, in the first years of its life. But in some ways, the BRICS phenomenon was still very much a product of a liberal institutionalist order (even as the group tried to reform and revise this global order). Drawing on recent work by Henry Farrell and Abraham Newman, I argue that the emergence of Weaponized Interdependence has fundamentally altered the basis of the old order, and also the different coalitions that underwrote and implemented global grand bargains. I focus specifically on the strategies of Brazil, India, and China, globally and in their respective regions, as they harness and react to the increasing use of economic statecraft. The differences in the use of geo-economic strategy by the three countries are now more important than their previously shared concerns as members of the BRICS. The paper offers new insights into the different ways in which geo-economics is being played out cross-regionally and globally. These insights, in turn, suggest some interesting policy implications, most directly for the BRICS, but also for their negotiation partners.

### **November 2021, date tbd**

International perspectives on CAS

This webinar would see colleagues from Oxford – **Timothy Power**, <https://www.area-studies.ox.ac.uk/people/professor-timothy-j.-power>, Head of the Oxford School of Global and Area Studies, <https://www.area-studies.ox.ac.uk/>, will join us –, China, Russia or elsewhere engage with CAS. The contributions will not necessarily be transformed into chapters for the edited volume on CAS 2.0.

### **Spring 2022**

CAS 2.0 final bookmaking workshop  
GIGA, Hamburg