

circumscribed normative goals. We agree with Ragin that "this knowledge provides the key to understanding, explaining, and interpreting diverse theoretical outcomes and processes and their significance for current institutional arrangements",²² but with the exception that policy planners are not to be understood as true comparativists: their methodologies may be as objective in their application as the comparativists but their interior motives are inherently subjective, thus generally dissociated from theory-building considerations.

14. The danger for the policy planner is to confuse observational from explanatory units. To avoid such a confusion, he has to be clear as to what pattern of results he is investigating and assure himself of the presence - or absence thereof - of such a pattern in the macrosocial units under comparison. Anyhow, his explanatory propositions concerning, for instance, interdependence or fragmentation phenomena will likely be limited due to empirical constraints (scarcity of information or time restriction for example). It is at such a junction that the political scientist will take over.

15. Focusing more specifically on methods, Ragin distinguishes three: the case-oriented comparative method, the variable-oriented approach, and the synthetic comparative strategy. The case-oriented comparative method is similar in scope to the traditional

²² Ragin, The Comparative Method [...], page 6.