

COMPASSS Memorandum of Understanding

As of 10 July 2017

Preamble

COMPASSS (COMPARative Methods for Systematic cross-caSe analySis) is a worldwide network bringing together scholars and practitioners who share a common interest in theoretical, methodological and practical advancements in a systematic comparative case approach to research which stresses the use of a configurational logic, the existence of multiple causality and the importance of a careful construction of research populations. It was launched in 2003, and its management was re-organized in 2008, 2012 and 2016 to better accommodate the growing needs in the field.

The goals and purposes of COMPASSS are:

- a) to further develop systematic comparative case analysis as a genuine and established research strategy to study many different and diverse phenomena, and develop an overall approach for systematic comparative case analysis;
- b) to foster the further development and application of "configurational comparative" and set-theoretical methods (Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) in its different variants, Coincidence Analysis, explanatory typologies, and linked methods and techniques); as well as combination and integration with other approaches.
- c) to act as a locus for the integration of qualitative (case-oriented) and quantitative (variable-oriented) methods and the further development and application of original approaches, methods and techniques;
- d) to be a place of exchange, dialogue and fruitful confrontation between scholars from a broad range of disciplines.

to embrace values of inclusiveness, pluralism, coverage and diversity in its activities.

Article 1: Formal structure

COMPASSS (COMPARative Methods for Systematic cross-caSe analySis) is installed as a *de facto* association.

- 1.1. Its current seat (physical mailing address) is that of Benoît Rihoux's research centre (CESPOL) at UCLouvain (Place Montesquieu, 1 Bte 02/08/07, 1348 Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium. E-mail address: benoit.rihoux@uclouvain.be).
- 1.2. The provisional formal representative of COMPASSS is Benoît Rihoux. He performs an overall animation/facilitation role within COMPASSS, and guarantees the ownership of the compasss.org domain name.
- 1.3. COMPASSS comprises three main bodies: an Advisory Board, a Steering Committee and a Management Team. The members of these bodies are referred to, below, as 'active members'.
- 1.4. COMPASSS maintains a mailing list. The recipients of the COMPASSS mailing list not mentioned in article 1.3 are called 'other members'. Persons interested in becoming other members can submit a request for being added to the mailing list via the COMPASSS website and it is opened to anyone interested in the method. In addition, participants of COMPASSS-related events are notified prior to the event that they will be added to the mailing list and become 'other COMPASSS members' unless they opt out. By subscribing to the mailing list, a code of conduct outlined in article 6.3 of this

Memorandum of Understanding will be applied. Other members may request, any time, to be erased from the mailing list. The full list can only be used for the purpose of COMPASSS- linked communication.

Article 2: Mission and main activities

- 2.1 In order to achieve its goals and purposes, the mission of COMPASSS is:
 - 2.1.1 to bring together, at the global level, scholars and practitioners interested in QCA, STMs (Set-Theoretic Methods) and CCMs (Configurational Comparative Methods), broadly defined;
 - 2.1.2 to contribute to the further development and dissemination of these methods;
 - 2.1.3 to make various resources related to these methods available to the broader community;
 - 2.1.4 to facilitate synergies and collaborative efforts and projects in that field;
 - 2.1.5 to promote good relationships between the active and other QCA members;
 - 2.1.6 to facilitate the development of COMPASSS.
- 2.2 Under this mission, the main activities of COMPASSS include but are not limited to:
 - 2.2.1 Maintaining a website at the domain COMPASSSS.org;
 - 2.2.2 Maintaining a mailing list of active and other members;
 - 2.2.3 Holding a yearly COMPASSS business meeting.

Article 3: The Advisory Board

3.1 Mission and tasks

- 3.1.1 The Advisory Board acts as a ‘sounding board’. It is consulted, whenever felt useful, by the Steering Committee and Management Team.
- 3.1.2 Individual members of the Advisory Board are required, at the minimum, to disseminate COMPASSS information in their networks and communities, to forward useful information that may feed the COMPASSS pages, and to be responsive to consultations by the Steering Committee and Management Team
- 3.1.3 Its members are invited to join a yearly COMPASSS business meeting, which they attend with a consultative role (and to which they may contribute in writing, if not physically present)
- 3.1.4 It confirms the mandate of the Management Team and the Memorandum of Understanding, through an electronic vote.

3.2 Composition

- 3.2.1 The Advisory Board is composed of a broad set (up to ca. 50; indicative) of scholars and practitioners with some level of expertise in QCA/STMs/CCMs. It ensures a maximal coverage/diversity in terms of substantive fields of specialization, disciplines, geographical location, gender, generation, etc.
- 3.2.2 The first Advisory Board composition (2016) is prepared by the current Management Team, following extensive consultations, so as to best meet the above-mentioned coverage and diversity criteria.
- 3.2.3 The composition of the Advisory Board is re-examined on a yearly basis by the Steering Committee and Management Team. New members of the Advisory Board are usually recruited if old members drop out.

3.2.4 To recruit new members of the Advisory board, two procedures are possible. On the one hand, new invitations are sent out by the Management Team upon consultation with the Steering Committee. On the other hand, anyone can request membership using a membership request form on the COMPASSS website. In these request forms, applicants are asked to indicate their expertise and research interests that could make them eligible for membership in the Advisory Board.

Article 4: The Steering Committee

4.1 Mission and tasks

4.1.1 The Steering Committee monitors the development of the QCA/STMs/CCMs field and the development of the COMPASSS pages and related resources.

4.1.2 On that basis, it proposes priorities to the Management Team – at least on an annual basis; more frequently if felt useful.

4.1.3 It also makes practical proposals to the Management Team, so as to ensure a sound management of the COMPASSS pages.

4.1.4 It may be consulted by the Management Team if particular difficulties emerge (e.g., conflict regarding some web page content; dispute between colleagues involved in COMPASSS)

4.1.5 It reexamines, on a yearly basis, the composition of the Advisory Board, and makes proposals in this regard to the Management Team

4.1.6 Together with the Management Team, it produces a concise yearly report, to be discussed at the yearly COMPASSS business meeting (see article 5.3.5).

4.2 Composition

4.2.1 For a first three-year term (or a shorter term if COMPASSS decides to adopt a legal form before the end of the three-year term), the Steering Committee is composed of 8 members selected within the Advisory Board. Members of the Steering Committee are no longer simultaneously members of the Advisory Board. Members of the Management Team are not simultaneously members of the Steering Committee.

4.2.2 After this first term, the Steering Committee will have an uneven number of members; their precise number is to be examined, also depending on how many are interested to join.

4.2.3 The Steering Committee is renewed every three years.

4.2.4 In order to select the members of the Steering Committee, an open call is sent to all members of the Advisory Board; a list of applicants is then submitted for an electronic vote of all members of the Advisory Board.

4.2.5 It is expected that the Steering Committee displays significant diversity in terms of disciplinary profile and geographical location of its members.

4.3 Operation

4.3.1 The members of the Steering Committee commit to communicating regularly among themselves and between them and the Management Team.

4.3.2 It meets (virtually, via skype or the like, also through electronic consultation) on a not-too-frequent basis, depending on the needs arising.

4.3.3 It discusses ‘top-down’ and ‘bottom-up’ proposals for the development of COMPASSS:

4.3.3.1 ‘Top-down’: the Management Team members and the Steering Committee members propose directions for the development of the pages, and for linked projects.

4.3.3.2 ‘Bottom-up’: the Steering Committee members rely suggestions from the other Advisory Board

members on new items, updates, functionalities etc. for the COMPASSS pages, and for linked projects.

4.3.4 It determines itself its mode of operation. It may for instance decide to designate, among its members, a convenor/chair/co-ordinator, or a tandem of two members with complementary profiles (e.g., one more senior, one more junior).

4.3.5 It strives to operate on a consensus/collegial basis, as much as can be.

4.3.6 If consensus cannot be found on a given topic, the Steering Committee may proceed to a formal vote; if there is a broad majority in favor, this stands as an approval by the Steering Committee.

4.3.7 It establishes, together with the Management Team, a flexible procedure (e.g. e-mail exchanges + forum + skype meetings whenever necessary) to keep a fluid flow of communication with all members of the Management Team.

Article 5: The Management Team

5.1 Mission

5.1.1.1 The Management Team is in charge of all the daily practical operations for the management and development of the COMPASSS web pages and related resources. This includes (non-exhaustive list):

5.1.1.2 Updating the respective pages;

5.1.1.2 Updating/improving the functionalities of the respective pages;

5.1.1.3 Enriching the structure of the web site (e.g. new pages etc.);

5.1.1.4 Maintaining a safety archive (in case of viral attack etc.);

5.2 Composition

5.2.1 For a first three-year term (or a shorter term if COMPASSS decides to adopt a legal form before the three-year term), it is composed of, at least, those who currently manage/feed the main sections of the web pages (as of July 2016: Benoît Rihoux, Claude Rubinson, Samuel Defacqz, Elin Monstad and Priscilla Alamos) – their first mandate is confirmed by electronic vote by the Advisory Board.

5.2.2 Insofar as needed, and following discussions with the Steering Committee, it may also add other members, with specific tasks related to one or more web pages. The work in the Management Team is a voluntary service to the COMPASSS community; its composition can be reassessed on a flexible basis.

5.2.3 The respective roles of its members are clearly laid out on the 'who is who' page of the web site. At least two clear functions must be allocated:

5.2.3.1 COMPASSS formal representative, whose task is, among others, to animate the Management Team as a *primus inter pares*, pushing for consensus and pragmatic arrangements, and to ensure smooth communication with the Steering Committee.

5.2.3.2 The COMPASSS webmaster, whose main task is to co-ordinate/oversee the technical management of the web pages – delegating, if felt needed by the Steering Committee, the management of some sections of the pages to some other persons, while still ensuring the overall coherence of the layout.

5.3 Operation

5.3.1 The members of the Management Team maintain a fluid and continuous (as much as needed) flow of information, so as to operate and update the pages on a regular basis.

5.3.2 The Management Team operates on a consensus/collegial and pragmatic basis, as much as can

be.

- 5.3.3 Should a difficulty/bottleneck arise, it informs/consults the Steering Committee, in the view of finding pragmatic solutions.
- 5.3.4 It establishes, together with the Steering Committee, a flexible procedure (e.g. e-mail exchanges + forum + skype meetings whenever necessary) to keep a fluid flow of communication with all members of the Steering Committee.
- 5.3.5 Once a year, it writes up a concise 'internal report' documenting the yearly COMPASSS activities together with the Steering Committee, to be sent to the members of the Advisory Board.

Article 6: Code of conduct and e-mail protocol

6.1 In order to facilitate the development of COMPASSS and to promote good relationships between its active members and the broader community, each member of the COMPASSS Management Team, Steering Committee and Advisory Board is asked to confirm, by e-mail, his/her agreement on the Code of conduct and e-mail protocol here below. Becoming a member of the COMPASSS mailing list implies commitment to the e-mail protocol.

6.2 Code of conduct:

"As an active member of COMPASSS I agree to:

- 6.2.1 *Show respect for the plurality of conceptions and methodological views within COMPASSS;*
- 6.2.2 *Treat other COMPASSS members, supporters and members of the public with respect at all times;*
- 6.2.3 *Avoid bringing COMPASSS into disrepute;*
- 6.2.4 *Welcome diversity in COMPASSS and strive to accommodate the different needs of members wherever possible;*
- 6.2.5 *Show appreciation to other members who give their time and talents to support COMPASSS."*

6.3 E-mail protocol:

- 6.3.1 Conversations on email should always stay polite and unemotional, conforming to the regular standards of workplace code of conduct (<http://www.mccc.edu/~virtcoll/Netiquette>).
- 6.3.2 COMPASSS-related e-mail communication between active COMPASSS members (Management Team, Steering Committee and Advisory Board) should not be quoted anywhere outside of this group without the express permission of the initial author of the email.
- 6.3.3 If a member is quoting a previous post they should shorten it to the relevant part, but take care not to change the sense or to lose the correct attribution.
- 6.3.4 Given the ease of spread of email (whether accidental or deliberate), members should take care to ensure that they do not write anything that would cause serious embarrassment to themselves or the COMPASSS if it were circulated more widely.
- 6.3.5 If emails on a list become a conversation between two members, it may be more appropriate to continue it off-list. If a member who receives an email states that he or she feels that the email is inappropriate, the sender should immediately stop this form of contact.

Article 7: Dispute settlement

- 7.1 This article outlines procedures for dealing with disagreements or conflicts that arise between active COMPASSS members in concrete relation to COMPASSS activities. It does not apply to any situation that does not involve active COMPASSS members and where the disagreement or conflict does not concern COMPASSS activities.
- 7.2 Should any active member consider that another active member has not followed the code of

conduct and/or e-mail protocol, he/she should first notify the COMPASSS formal representative and/or the Chair of the Steering Committee

- 7.3 Should two or more active members be involved in a COMPASSS-related dispute that they cannot solve by mutual agreement, they should first notify the COMPASSS formal representative and/or the Chair of the Steering Committee
- 7.4 In the two above-mentioned cases, the COMPASSS formal representative and the Chair of the Steering Committee consult the members of the Management Team and of the Steering Committee, in the view of proposing a mutually agreeable solution. They may require a formal vote from the Management Team and the Steering Committee on a proposed solution, but should privilege, as much as can be, a consensus-based solution.
- 7.5 If the COMPASSS formal representative or the Chair of the Steering Committee are targeted by a notification (as of article 7.2) or involved in a dispute (as of article 7.3), other members of the Management Team and Steering Committee take over the procedure (as of article 7.4).

Article 8: Sunset clause

- 8.1 By default, this Memorandum of Understanding is valid for the next three years. Its accuracy in the view of new developments is discussed each year at the COMPASSS business meeting. A formal renewal takes place every three years, but is possible at any time upon demand.
- 8.2 The Memorandum of Understanding is renewed in a two-step procedure. Possible modifications are first elaborated and agreed upon by the Steering Committee and Management Team. A proposal is then presented to the Advisory Board, Management Team and Steering Committee for approval through an electronic vote.
- 8.3 The result of this vote is binding for all active and other COMPASSS members.