Leonardo Morlino, *Comparison: a Methodological Introduction for the Social Sciences*. Opladen, Berlin, Toronto: Barbara Budrich Publishers 2018, pp. 128

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The ability to properly formulate methodological assumptions is seen as a key skill for every social sciences researcher. The use of research methods and techniques that are applicable to research problems not only forms the basis of each study, but also serves as its inherent element that often decides about the success of the undertaken project. Delivering the high quality of methodological education for young scholars is one of the biggest challenges for the system of graduate schools around the world. Being able to write papers for peer-reviewed scientific journals requires thorough knowledge that cannot be derived only from classic methodological textbooks (leaving the substantive issues aside), often devoid of the practical context of the phenomena and processes described. A book entitled *Comparison: A Methodological In-*

troduction for the Social Sciences, written by Leonardo Morlino, serves as a perfect example of a modern methodological textbook that satisfies all the standards imposed by contemporary social sciences.

The reviewed publication has been divided into nine chapters preceded by a short preface. The first chapter of the work serves as an introduction, where the author specifies the main objectives of every research conducted within the discipline of social sciences. Morlino also presents his attitude towards methodology, conscious analysis of which he calls “[a] preliminary part of any research purporting to be ‘scientific,’ even in a broad sense” (p. 9).

Implied by the preface, the main aim of the work is to deliver a simple introduction about the comparative method, dedicated mostly to students interested in understanding its characteristics and practical use (p. 7). The arrangement of subsequent chapters reflects the abovementioned purpose.

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By dividing the book into somewhat short parts devoted to practicality, the author refers to the convention of the textbook. Rather than a detail-oriented and descriptive form, associated with a classic academic textbook, Morlino's project adopts practical dimension. Perhaps the greatest strength of the book is the manner in which it presents issues perceived as difficult and complex. Unlike many other methodological textbooks, *Comparison...* is written in accessible language, its structure is logical and consistent. The titles and order of the chapters allow the reader to find requested aspects of the use of comparative method in social sciences quickly. Starting particular titles of the chapter with key words for every scientific discipline, such as: "why" (p. 20), "what" (pp. 35, 46), and "how" (pp. 61, 86), creates a causative sequence desired by the reader. Highlighting the most important issues by putting them into boxes (e.g., pp. 14, 40, 66, 99), placing control questions at the end of every chapter, as well as the use of tables (e.g., pp. 40, 53, 75, 94) and figures (e.g., pp. 41, 58, 74, 100) not only helps the reader to acquire the presented knowledge, but also enables them to summarize and easily analyze the presented content. Moreover, what accounts for the uniqueness of Morlino's work is replacing purely theoretical argument with numerous examples and case studies (e.g., pp. 10, 39, 70). However, it does not mean that the author refrains from explaining theoretical concepts useful in proper adoption of the comparative method. On the contrary, the description of

theories such as, for example, "the Ogden and Richards' triangle" (p. 61), or the "Tree of Porphyry" (p. 69), is followed by the information of its practical adoption, what – partially due to the use of contemporary examples – makes the theory more applicable and easier to process. The author's focus on the practical aspects did not lead to a complete elimination of historical references. Morlino provides a brief historical background in particular subsections where he finds it necessary and beneficial for the reader. The sections which include a relatively long reference are divided into subsections numbered "2.2", etc. (pp. 14–18), where the author discusses the most significant theorists who contributed to the understanding of comparison as a scientific method. At the same time, the lack of footnotes and Morlino's concern not to distract the reader from the content deserve the highest recognition. The only references made by the author are placed in-text, redirecting the reader to the bibliography, containing well-known books from the canon, as well as the latest works published by methodological authorities from all over the world.

The fact that the analyzed book is practical and concise, which was pointed out as its main strength, may also be perceived as its main weakness. The structure of the work, shaping it as a guidebook or even a manual, allows for questioning the scientific character of *Comparison...* It is hard to resist the impression that the author could have provided more basic knowledge

about the comparative method and increase the reader's understanding of the issues being subject of the analysis (e.g., by indicating interesting facts in footnotes). Moreover, if the author wanted to create an easily accessible introduction about the comparative method dedicated mostly for students (which he explicitly confirms), he could have considered adding an additional section at the end of every chapter in which he would mention a few books whose reading – in his opinion – would increase students' knowledge about the notion of comparison. Furthermore, choosing a “guidebook” formula instead of the classic one should be reflected in its graphical layer. Morlino's work might benefit from being re-edited, from having the layout of the text changed, and from additional graphic elements added. That would help the reader to acquire knowledge and it would make the process of reading significantly more pleasant and effective. Those remarks, however, do not affect the unambiguously positive reception of the monograph.

Taking everything into consideration, the book *Comparison: A Methodological*

Introduction for the Social Sciences written by Leonardo Morlino is undoubtedly worth reading. The reviewed work is a valuable and current source of information on the use of comparative method for social sciences. The structure of the book is logical and compact, and the division into chapters and subsections is clear. What makes Morlino's book unique and important are: the manner of presenting issues generally perceived as difficult and complex, accessible language, reader-friendly graphic layout, and – most importantly – focus on practical aspects and providing references to well-selected works included in bibliography. Since *Comparison...* is a valuable publication that fully fulfills its role and fills an important gap in the literature on the subject, I definitely recommend reading it, not only to students interested in the use of comparative method in social sciences. Hopefully, more books will be written in a similar practical mode, contributing to the knowledge and development of the practical skills of young scholars around the world.