MAX PLANCK INSTITUTE FOR SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY WORKING PAPERS

MAX-PLANCK-GESELLSCHAFT

PATRICK HEADY

GROWING TOGETHER
METHODOLOGICAL
ASPECTS OF
JOINT RESEARCH
IN THE PROPERTY
ABTEILUNG

Growing Together – Methodological Aspects of Joint Research in the Property Abteilung

Patrick Heady[1]

Introduction and overview

Over the last year the members of the Property Abteilung have spent quite a bit of time thinking about methodological issues. Formally speaking there were three initiatives:

- In April a workshop on *quantitative methods* was led by Barbara Cellarius and myself.
- In November we held a workshop on *qualitative methods*, led by Gordon Milligan and by Michael Fischer and Wenonah Lyon from the University of Kent.
- Following that seminar there was some further discussion about ways of keeping in touch with each other and coordinating the different aspects of our work: data-collection, coding and theory-building.

There has also, of course, been a good deal of informal discussion of our research objectives and what they imply for the methods we use. This paper is an attempt to summarise where we have got to, and at the same time to express my own views on some of the issues.

In these discussions our aim has been to reach a common view of objectives and methods by consensus, rather than by *fiat* from on high. Even if this has been an instance of guided rather than pure democracy, I think it has been real enough to justify the title *'Growing Together'*. This process of growing together is not yet complete (and we will probably never reach absolute consensus) and so this interim account of our methodology is bound to reflect my own particular perspective. Like every other member of the Property Abteilung, I already had a research project - with its own theoretical basis and with ideas about the methods I wanted to use – when I joined the organization. Participating in the shared work of the Abteilung does not stop any of us from pursuing these plans, but it does mean making some modifications to

meet the requirements and standards of other members of the team, and it also provides each of us with an opportunity of influencing our colleagues' research plans. In order to give an idea of how this may work, I thought it might be helpful to give some details of how the adjustment process looks from my own perspective – by first setting out my original plans, and then looking at how they may draw on, and be influenced by, the methodological ideas we have discussed. This format also gives me an excuse to present some methodological ideas of my own, while at the same time setting out some of the key points that emerged from the two workshops, and giving a rather tentative indication of the directions in which our methodological discussions now seem to be heading.

My original research plans

This section of the paper is based on the slightly amended text of a talk I gave about my original plans in a seminar in the Institute in February 2000. It attempts to link together (i) a theoretical agenda, (ii) plans for data collection, and (iii) ideas about the analysis and reporting of results, to form an integrated research design. Although it was written some time ago, I still stand by most of it.

I. Theoretical background – the neoclassical paradigm and its critics

The process of transformation in eastern Europe has been partly driven by a scientific paradigm: that of neo-classical economics – in a very crude form. The major contribution that anthropological studies of the transformation process have already made has been to show that things are not as the model predicts; that reality is more complicated; and that consequently the prescriptions of the neo-classicists do not work as expected 'on the ground'. Now we, as anthropologists, have a choice:

1. We can reject the neo-classical paradigm in favour of thick descriptions of each particular case, and leave it at that.

2. Or, following Kuhn's ideas about the way science develops, we can try to use the detailed falsifications of the simple neo-classical model as a stimulus for seeking a better paradigm – even though this too, at least to start with, will fail to allow for the full complexity of each particular case.

I want to explore the implications of taking this second option. This means focusing on how fieldwork can best contribute to the process of theory criticism and theory building. To plan appropriate fieldwork methods, we need to know what the neo-classical paradigm is – and also to be familiar with some of the standard criticisms that have been made of it by economists themselves, by anthropologists, and by others. Neo-classical economics is based on the theory of rational choice. In order to explain any aspect of behaviour (economic or otherwise), the theory of rational choice makes three fundamental assumptions:

1. that each person has a clear set of preferences

2. that each person is faced by a clearly defined set of circumstantial constraints (to do with available resources, possible forms of transaction, and so on)

3. that each person will act in an instrumentally rational way (i.e. that people will adapt to their circumstances in such a way as to satisfy their preferences as completely as possible).

Note that – when the theory is stated in general terms - there is no specification of what the preferences and circumstantial constraints actually are. This is left for empirical investigation. Much economic theory is concerned with working out the consequences of different combinations of preferences and circumstances. The choices in question do not necessarily relate simply to the production and exchange of goods and services. For instance Becker (1991) has attempted to apply economic theory to explain the choices that parents make about the number of children they want. All the same, neo-classicists usually proceed as though the only things that motivated people were desires for goods, services and monetary assets. This is the crude form in which the neo-classical paradigm was applied in transition countries.

II. Criticisms

It is useful to list the criticisms of this approach in order of their potential impact on the neo-classical scheme as a whole: starting with the criticisms which would require least adaptation of the basic framework and ending with those that would – if supported by suitable evidence – require fundamental changes to the paradigm. In table 1, I have grouped the criticisms under four main headings – referring to things which simple forms of the existing paradigm leave out. The table also lists some of the sources of the criticism.

_____

Table 1 Criticisms of the neo-classical scheme

1. *ignores many circumstantial constraints*: lack of banks, poor information, monopoly positions of transport and farm machinery specialists, role of local power holders, social security functions of collective enterprises etc (post-socialist ethnographies[2])

2. *ignores problem of solidarity*: i.e. that system will only work if people keep to mutually beneficial exchanges (Durkheim (1997), Banfield (1967), games theorists[3], Russia[4])

3. *makes unrealistic cognitive assumptions*:

   - unrealistically highlights rational choice and downplays *habitus* (Bourdieu 1977, Schlicht 1998)

   - ignores status dimension of preferences and so misses problem of envy (Foster (1965), rural ethnographies in southern and western Europe[5], Russia[6], Dunn on Polish factory[7])

   - misses the importance of ideas of equity and reciprocity
      - in providing a framework within which economic life makes sense (Weber (1990), Schneider (1990), Russia now, many agrarian societies)
      - in creating solidarity (Mauss 1974; Levi-Strauss1969) and building social capital (Bourdieu 1977)

4. *ignores embedding of property in kinship and symbolic systems*:

   - evidence of close connection between property and the sense of identity (ethnographies from all over the world)

   - some post-socialist ethnographies (e.g. discussion of emotional ties to family land)

   - there is scope for much more detailed investigation of the place of property in wider kinship and symbolic systems (for an example of what can be done see Stewart (1997) on Hungarian gypsies)

_____

This list suggests two possible ways in which a new paradigm might emerge out of the crude neo-classical model's failure to predict the course of events in the first decade of post-socialism.

_____

[2] E.g. Burawoy & Verdery (1999).

[3] Perhaps the games theorists should not really be seen as critics of neo-classicism, but their emphasis is different. The tradition of work that has built up in response to Hardin's (1968) article on 'The tragedy of the commons' shows that rational choice leads to sub-optimal outcomes in some institutional set-ups.

[4] E.g. Ledeneva (1998).

[5] E.g. Heady (1999).

[6] See Hivon (1998)

[7] In a paper presented by Elizabeth Dunn at the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology in early 2000.

A.   The framework of the rational choice model might be retained, but the set of circumstantial constraints could be expanded and made more relevant (incorporating the points in paragraph 1 above).

B.   The model could be revised to meet the more fundamental criticisms made in paragraphs 2 to 4.

The question now is how this fieldwork project can contribute to the development and assessment of these potential paradigms.

III. The study itself

The crucial point for the design of my specific project is that the information I gather regarding the basic concerns of the property Abteilung – i.e. the current property system, the processes which produced and sustain it, and its consequences for other aspects of social life – needs to be organised in such a way that it enables the research project to address the issues I have just outlined.

The kind of information one can collect also depends on the kind of community one is studying. In what follows I assume that I will be working in a village community in Russia where de-collectivisation has gone some way, but is not total. The research will draw on both quantitative and qualitative data – and I will now show several tables outlining the kinds of information involved.

Table 2 lists items of data relating to the village as a whole. The items in the first part of the table are simply obvious background data. The second half refers to various forms of collective property. This includes institutions such as the *kolkhoz* or its immediate successors – but also forms of collective property which may be newer or older.

_____

Table 2 Background data on village

General description

Amount of land by type and category of ownership.

Statistics on production.

Statistics on population structure.

Public transport facilities.

Public arrangements for health care, education and other social services.

'Cultural' and sports facilities.

Churches and religious organisations (if any).

Collective property

Describe membership rules, assets, production for

- *collectives*

- *joint stock companies*

- *cooperatives*

- *any other kind* of joint economic organisation (e.g. associations for managing common pastures)

_____

Table 3 sets out the quantifiable information that I hope to collect on virtually all individuals and families in the community (though for some items it may be sensible to make do with data from a properly drawn 'random' sample). This data will provide a framework for the whole analysis. This is not because it provides all the answers: in fact there are few, if any, theoretically interesting questions which can be answered using this data alone. But, equally, there are very few questions which can be answered *without* referring to quantifiable data. This is why information on these quantifiable measures – and on the way they are associated with each other – is central to the whole project.

The table refers to three kinds of data. The *key classifiers* are personal and household characteristics which are likely to be related to both economic and social life. The so-called *accountancy data* refers to the sort of information that most neo-classical economists would recognise as relevant to the decisions people make when they are acting rationally. Most of

the criticisms of the neo-classical paradigm refer in one way or another to social relationships, and so the third kind of quantifiable data – that relating to *social networks* – is likely to be central to any attempt to build an alternative paradigm.

_____

Table 3   Background data on households and individuals

Key classifiers:
       Households: composition; life-stage of household head
       Individuals: age, sex, marital status, years of schooling, occupation, born in village or moved in

Accountancy data:
       Direct property holdings: land, housing, key producer goods, key consumer goods
       Indirect property holdings: shares in kolkhoz and cooperative assets, rights to social and medical services, insurance etc.
       Income: main sources of income in cash and kind, and the amounts involved
       Expenditure: rough division between major categories: consumption /investment /social
       Time use: division between major categories of work and leisure

Network data:
       Spatial: position of dwelling
       Social: kinship links, god-kinship, shared participation in sports, social, religious activities
       Work: exchange of labour, members of same production unit, work in same cooperative.
_____

IV. Inheritance

The historical and ethnographic literature on the rest of Europe (and on Eastern Europe before the advent of communism) emphasises the different economic and social consequences of the various possible ways in which private property can be inherited. However, despite the intensity of the recent debates over land privatisation, there seems to have been a relative lack of interest in the specific forms of inheritance regime that are likely to emerge as a result. This has led to an information gap, which needs to be filled for both practical and theoretical reasons. The table sets out some of the ways in which inheritance systems can differ, and briefly mentions the data that I will try to collect.

_____

Table 4   Inheritance

Remember that it can take place at various stages

At death: the main variants in European societies are primogeniture or partition; inheritance by sons only, or inheritance by sons and daughters – but there are many other possibilities

At retirement of parents or at maturity of children: as above

Gradually: Payment for education or other gifts

At marriage: in the form of dowry, or other marriage payments

The outcome – in terms of the eventual distribution of property – is also affected by marriage patterns and child-bearing (directly in the case of marriage payments, indirectly in the other cases).

I will collect data by asking for ideas about custom and ordinary current practice – but also trace the sequence of inheritance (and expected inheritance) in a number of family groups.

_____

V. Major themes for qualitative (i.e. non-countable, or hard to count) data

The next two tables relate to qualitative data. Table 5 above lists kinds of data that would be interesting to rational choice theorists, and some of it is in fact *quantitative*. The reason why I label it *qualitative* is that I am unlikely to be able to access the underlying quantitative data – on such things as the potential yields of alternative economic actions – directly. Apart from that, the main thing to say about Table 5 is that the second part widens the focus to include information on the kinds of negative interaction that might be of interest to games theorists – the economists' more cynical companions in the rational choice camp.

_____

Table 5 Property in action

Economic opportunities and constraints

As much evidence as possible about what these realistically are (might involve seeking 'expert' opinions)

Information on official rules, and how these are administered locally

How property reform was organised locally

Property biographies of some individuals and families

Problem of solidarity:

Evidence of
- conflict
- theft
- vandalism
- swindling
- 'corruption'
with as much information as possible about who was involved and why.

_____

The final table lists kinds of data which are qualitative in the most straightforward sense – including opinions, revealing aspects of the way people do things, symbolism and ritual. Most of the items refer directly to property and economic life. For a few, the connection is less direct – but they too are relevant to one or other of the criticisms that have been made of the rational choice paradigm.

_____

Table 6   Property and ideas

Explicit ideas about property and its connection with social life

What people say (and whether they say anything much at all) about
- practical economic opportunities.
- equality and inequality.
- fair prices, fair pay etc.
- reciprocity (and hospitality, gift-giving).
- kin and gender roles in relation to work and property.
- status.
- envy.
- why they do or don't like or respect individual people (and whether it has anything to do with property, work or reciprocity).
- ditto for other social and ethnic groups.
- how they talk about particular kinds of property.
- religious ideas about property (e.g. notions of self-sacrifice).

Implicit ideas about property and social life

Things people do which may reveal attitudes to property, identity and social life. Not just what they do, but how they do it.
- striking deals.
- mutual assistance – with work, machinery, help in a crisis.
- hospitality.
- marking boundaries.
- work that is done well enough, and work that is done conspicuously well.
- decoration of property.

Rituals that do any of the following things

- involve property or status.
- define identities, groups and relationships (even if they are not explicitly economic).
- refer to the overall pattern of life.

_____

VI. Analysis and reporting

It is now time to describe the way that I hope to analyse this data – so as to meet both the common objectives of the property Abteilung, and to throw light on the theoretical questions raised earlier.

After an initial scene-setting description, the first serious piece of analysis would be a descriptive account of the distribution of property – between types of ownership, between rich and poor, and between households and people with different background characteristics. This would be followed by a similarly descriptive summary of the data on social networks. This would also be related to the background variables recorded for each person. Both these descriptive analyses would be based on the quantitative data set out in Table 3.

The analysis would then switch from description to explanation. I would try to account for the distribution of property – not necessarily in very theoretical terms, but drawing on different theoretical perspectives where appropriate. The analysis would involve both quantitative and qualitative data. A hypothetical example may give an idea of how this might work.

> Suppose that the quantitative data showed that older and less educated people were the most likely to have remained members of the collective farm. In the search for an explanation, one might first take a neo-classical approach, and look for evidence that continued membership was more advantageous for such people. They would certainly have views on this themselves. It might be worth checking these views against quantitative information on their assets, income and expenditure, and seeing whether they differed from those for younger and better-educated members of the community.

> One might also wonder if older and less educated people differed from other villagers in terms of their social networks. Suppose – again hypothetically – that their social networks turned out to be more concentrated in the village. Might this be an indication of a greater sense of local solidarity, associated with a preference for collective action? Or might the reason for their apparent loyalty to the *kolkhoz* be that their lack of contacts outside the village meant that they were poorly placed to gather information about alternative ways of making a living? Qualitative data might help to decide this issue.

In the third stage of the analysis, I would move *from* using theory to help explain the local property distribution *to* using the local data to investigate issues of theoretical interest. In part this would involve the same analyses as before, set in a different framework. But the scope of the analysis would be wider – looking beyond the composition and distribution of property holdings to questions about ways of understanding property, and the involvement of property in other aspects of social life. A few examples may give an idea of the range of analyses that might be possible – and the way the analyses will combine quantitative and qualitative data.

Rational choice: Previous analyses will have helped to show whether people's decisions were in line with what neo-classical analysts might expect. Qualitative data – for instance on the way people talked about economic life – might give further insight into whether or not they were engaged in the constant search for relevant information about opportunities and costs that the rational choice model implicitly imagines.

Envy: To see how important a factor envy was, the analysis could refer to things people said. It would also be possible to carry out a quantitative analysis of the way wealth differentials related to social networks. An analysis of known acts of sabotage in relation to the wealth of their victims might also produce interesting results.

Strategies for seeking social capital: The analysis of envy might be placed in relation to an analysis of activities designed to gain social capital. This could involve information about expenditure on socialising, as well as things people say about why they do or don't participate in various social activities. It would be interesting to correlate data on god-parent relationships with data on the relative economic position of those involved. I also hope to replicate Hivon's (1998) analysis of the relation between individuals' wealth, the amount they spend on social capital (in the form of charitable contributions and so on), and their exposure to various forms of harassment.

The possibility of a relationship between shared property and shared kinship identity could be tested either in relation to inheritance or to forms of common ownership. In the case of inheritance it would involve comparing quantitative data on the direction of inheritance – as between sons and daughters, or the oldest son and the rest - with other indications that the favoured beneficiary will carry on the family identity. If inheritance favoured sons, this indication might simply be a statement such as 'sons

carry on the family name'. Another possibility might be greater celebration of the birth of a son than of a daughter. Or there might be no symbolic difference between sons and daughters at all. In that case (which would be rather surprising) one would conclude that inheritance was being treated as a practical or legal matter without any implications for identity.

Similarly with collective property. If members of some property association had close kinship ties, that might indicate that this instance of property sharing also involved a sense of shared kinship identity – but it would not be sufficient to make the case. It would be important to check that the property sharers were really more closely related than other members of the village. It would also be useful to see whether there was any indication that they marked their shared kinship identity in some way – and whether this was in line with earlier traditions

An instance in which all these conditions would be fulfilled is the Chinese lineage (Brandtstädter 2000). Although the models relating kinship, affinity and locality in peasant Europe (including Russia) were different, there are fairly clear indications that the members of villages with shared common land did also see themselves as potential kin – indeed as preferred marriage partners (Heady 1999). If continued *kolkhoz* membership lacks these kinship associations, it would make it harder to argue that attachment to the *kolkhoz* is truly a continuation of the traditional collectivism of the Russian peasantry.

So far, these analysis plans could be characterised as involving descriptive analysis and criticism of existing theory. I would be rather disappointed if things stopped there. The great strength of the fieldwork method is that our informants often provide us with new perspectives that we had not even expected. If we are to move from theory criticism to theory building we may need new insights of this kind. But of course fieldwork offers no guarantee of theoretical inspiration. The underlying aim of this research design is to ensure that – if new insights *do* come – I will have a solid base of data with which to evaluate them.

Integrating personal research plans with the shared methodology

Re-reading the above, I now realise that it was informed by some important but unstated assumptions – which need to be made explicit before I can usefully discuss its potential

relation to the three methodological initiatives mentioned at the start of this paper. These concern the project's underlying objective of producing valid and insightful theory. Viewed from this perspective, data - though it can be analysed in many different ways - has two fundamental roles: as a basis for evaluating existing theory, and as a source of inspiration for the development of new and better theory. There is of course no inductive procedure that leads directly from facts to theory. The role of methodology is more modest: namely to identify ways of collecting and arranging data so that it will bear most effectively on theoretically important issues. This is true whether the data in question is quantitative or qualitative.

I. Quantitative analysis

Quantitative data plays a major role in all three stages of the analysis plans set out in part VI of the last section. Its role is particularly important in the first, descriptive, stage of the analysis – as a way of stating clearly how the various aspects of property ownership are distributed within the community. By itself quantitative data will rarely be enough for the subsequent analytical tasks of developing explanations and evaluating theories – but it will usually provide a significant part of the evidence at these stages too. So it will be very important to apply quantitative methods in a valid way.

Quantitative analysis is about certain ways of describing your data: looking at the distribution of particular characteristics (for instance wealth, membership of a collective farm) amongst the population, and showing how these characteristics are related to other characteristics of the people involved. Quantitative analysis does not say anything about why these relationships exist - which is a job for *scientific* theory – but, within these limits, it has its own well developed corpus of *statistical* theory which underlies both the ways in which results should be presented, and the procedures one should go through – at both the data collection and analysis stage – in order to be clear about how representative the results are likely to be.

The aim of the quantitative methods workshop was to familiarise people with some of the most important ideas and issues – and with how to set out and interpret various kinds of tables, graphs and charts - rather than to study statistical theory as such. We spent most time in the workshop analysing some test data sets, and discussing our conclusions. We found that it was possible to get a good deal out of the data using simple techniques such as tables, bar-charts, and scatter plots. Most statistical packages enable you to do far more sophisticated things than this – but on the whole it is better not to use more complex procedures unless you

have a good reason to do so. The book on *Exploring Data* by Catherine Marsh contains nearly all the techniques we are likely to need, and explains the underlying statistical ideas in an intuitively clear way.

One particular point that Catherine Marsh emphasises is the importance of remembering – and showing – the extent of variation in the data. Anthropologists often fear that using quantitative methods will force them to talk about "average people" with all their real characteristics squeezed out of them. This is something that can happen, but it mostly happens when people misunderstand the techniques. Used properly, quantitative techniques do just the opposite: they not only show average values, and simple relationships – they also enable us to see how much the real situation diverges from over-simplified models.

We also discussed some practical issues. Data from questionnaires (or any other quantitative source) needs to be held in a suitable form before being used for analysis. This can be done using a spreadsheet package such as *Excel* which is installed as standard on all the Institute's computers. *Excel* can also be used for analysis, but it is rather cumbersome compared to specially designed analysis packages such as SPSS. We recommend people organise their data using *Excel*, but then transfer the resulting files to SPSS for analysis.
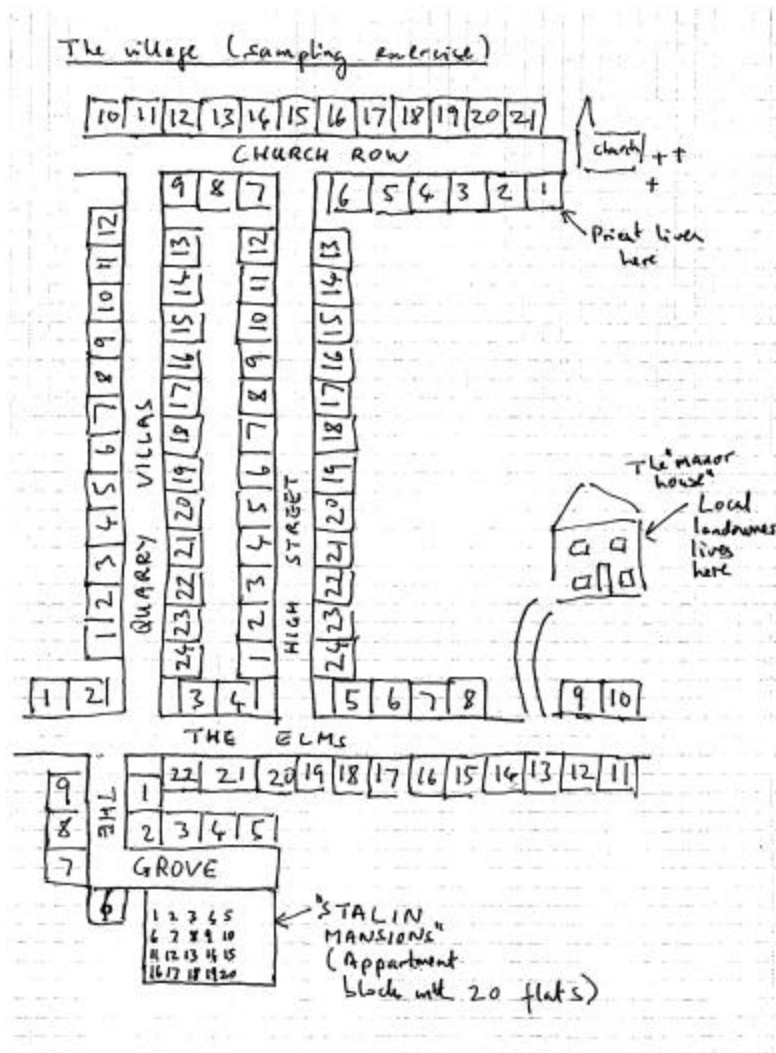
II. Sampling

Methods of quantitative analysis generally presuppose that the data being analysed is properly representative of the target group. So one of the key issues (unless the community one is studying is quite small) is how to select a representative sample of households and individuals. It is probably worth repeating the main points about sampling that were made at the quantitative methods workshop. (I am also including the picture of the imaginary village that we used for the sampling exercise, in case anyone wants to check their understanding by drawing an imaginary sample.)

The set-up we are concerned with is one in which, for reasons of time or expense, you can only afford to gather data on a limited number of units (persons, dwellings, families – or whatever), but want to do so in such a way that the quantitative information you collect is representative enough to be used for comparisons of different categories within your community, and for comparisons of your community with other communities. The best kind of sample is not really a sample at all, but a *census*, in which you collect data on every unit (person, dwelling, family – or whatever) in your community. But if the community is large,

this will not be possible, and you need to collect data on a *sample*. People often ask how large the sample should be, and the answer unfortunately is 'it depends'. As a rule of thumb, you should generally aim for samples of at least 100.

The village (sampling exercise)

CHURCH ROW — 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 — church + † † Priest lives here

QUARRY VILLAS / HIGH STREET

The "manor house" — Local landowner lives here

THE ELMS

THE GROVE

22 21 20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11

"STALIN MANSIONS" (Appartment block with 20 flats)

The basic procedure for random sampling (simple random sampling) consists of two steps:

1. list and number the things you want to sample;
2. use a list of "random numbers" to select the units from the list.

Note that "random numbers" are not chosen "at random" in the colloquial sense. They are selected in a systematic way which ensures that

(a) each number is equally likely;

(b) each combination of numbers is equally likely.

In this way they protect you against the risk that you have unconsciously biased the selection of cases to study, and they also protect against the risk of untypical combinations of cases. *Although other methods of sample selection (such as quota sampling) are often used, none of them offers as much protection against misleading results.* However there are a number of ways in which simple random sampling can be adapted so as to make the outcome a bit more predictable while keeping its basic advantage of unbiasedness. There are three adaptations which colleagues may well want to use.

(a) Stratified random sampling: if your community is divided into sections with rather different characteristics (say a rich and poor part), you may want to ensure that you get enough respondents from each part (or 'stratum'). The basic idea is that you just divide the community up into the different strata – and select a random sample within each stratum. (You then need to ensure that you can combine the results in a way that represents the community as a whole. The simplest way of ensuring overall representation is to use the same proportionate sampling rate in each stratum. If you use different sampling proportions, you must correct for this by using special multiplying factors, known as *weights*, when you combine the data from the different strata.)

(b) Systematic sampling with a random start: this is another way of ensuring representation of different parts of the community. Supposing you had a community with 1500 addresses and you wanted a sample of just 100 addresses. Then you could achieve good coverage of each part of the community by simply selecting every 15th household. In order to protect yourself against all bias you should choose a random starting number between 1 and 15, include that in the sample, and then select every 15th address after that. If the random number turned out to be 11, this would mean that you selected the 11th, 26th (11+15), 41st(11+15+15) addresses, and so on.

(c) Two-stage random sampling, with 100 per cent selection at the second stage: you may find that you want to sample people, but that there is no list of all the people living in the community. The thing to do then is to sample addresses as a first stage

(using any of the methods just described) – and then collect data on *all* the individuals living at each selected address. Don't collect information on just one individual from each address, as that would be biased.

It is worth noting a couple more practical points before leaving the topic of sampling:

- If there are one or two very untypical cases (such as the priest's house and the "manor house" in our imaginary village), you might want to exclude them from the sample, and collect data on them separately. But you should decide this before starting the sample selection: you should *not* reject any cases once they have been chosen for the sample.

- *Apartment blocks*: if your community contains apartment blocks it is best not to treat the apartment block itself as an address, since (because of the assumptions underlying random sampling) this would mean you had to interview every household within any block which you selected – which would result in a very unbalanced sample. The right way to deal with apartment blocks is to treat each apartment as a separate address.

- *Non-response*: if you can't get answers from some people, note down the circumstances, and as much as you do know about them. You should not substitute the people living next door, or other people who appear to be similar (doing either of these things would violate the technical assumptions of random sampling).

- *Excel* – the spreadsheet package which we should all have on our Laptop computers - includes a facility for generating random numbers.

The problems of sampling *households* deserve special mention. The word can be used to refer to all the people living in the same house or flat – but social researchers often use it to refer to a group that has more specific social ties: for instance sharing meals, or budgeting from a common fund. These definitions can be problematic to apply in practice even in western societies – in which the problem tends to take the forms of more than one household occupying a common address, and of some people who belong in some sense to households in two different places (students with term–time and home addresses are the classic example). In non-western societies, such as Uzbekistan, the problem can take the even more awkward form (from the sampling point of view) in which consumption units and residential units cross-cut each other (Kandiyoti 1999).

There is no space here to discuss all the complexities of this issue, except to say that representative samples must be made up of clearly defined units, and follow rules in which each such unit has an *equal* (or at least *known*) chance of selection. For this reason it is usually best to follow the sampling rule described in paragraph (c) above: namely selecting a sample of addresses, and then collecting information about all the individuals at the address concerned (having decided what rules you are going to apply in the case of people who are sometimes there and sometimes not). We have already seen that this procedure gives a representative sample of individuals as well as addresses. If some addresses in the community contain more than one household, it also gives a representative sample of households – so long as no household occupies more than one address.

But if the problem is that some consumption-households are spread across two or more addresses this procedure will yield a biased sample of households. It would in fact be possible to devise sampling rules to deal with this situation as well; and colleagues faced with this problem on a non-trivial scale should seek advice before drawing a sample. An alternative approach might be to narrow the focus of the study to a smaller community (or part community) in which it is possible to collect information on all the residents and their multiple group memberships. Following this census-based strategy eliminates the risk of sampling bias in relation to the micro-community which you select to study intensively, but runs the risk that this micro-community may itself be untypical of the wider social unit (i.e. village or town) of which it is part.

III. Questionnaires

Although we did not discuss questionnaire design at the quantitative methods workshop, it is probably worth saying a couple of words about it here. Since the workshop, a couple of colleagues have tried using existing questionnaires that were devised for other purposes – and found that the results were rather problematic. This is not particularly surprising since questionnaires ought to reflect the specific concerns and circumstances of the research project concerned. Designing questionnaires is a bit of an art – but there is no need to be afraid of it, so long as you bear in mind some basic principles. The principles refer to the kind of structured questionnaire that one needs when gathering data for quantitative analysis.

1. Keep the questionnaire as short as possible – and try to think how you would use the information from each question in the final analysis. Beginners

typically ask several times more questions than they eventually use in the analysis. This wastes their time, and the time of their informants.

2. Try to make every question absolutely clear. Of course this is an impossible ideal, but you can avoid certain common problems, such as

    (a) *asking about events* (such as illnesses or purchases) *without referring to the time period that you have in mind.* It is not usually much use knowing that someone spent a 100 marks on potatoes, if you don't know whether this happened in the last week, in the last month, or in the last year.

    (b) *ambiguity about whether the question refers to the person you are speaking to, or whether it refers to the whole household or family*. It can often be helpful to decide which of your questions refer to the household as a whole, and which refer to the members of the household as individuals – and then use two different questionnaires, one for the household as a whole and one for each individual.

    (c) Quantitative analysis works best when the questions concerned have a limited range of possible answers - e.g. "yes/no", "car, bus, train, other transport", or a quantity of some kind (e.g. kilograms of apples, or a sum of money). However some questions simply cannot be compressed into a set of pre-defined answers. In that case it is best to leave the question open – so long as you realise that the resulting answers cannot then be used for quantitative analysis, unless it proves possible to code them into a few simple categories *post hoc*.

3. Try the questionnaire out a few times before deciding on its final form. This enables you to allow for obvious answers that you hadn't thought of in advance, and also to correct some misunderstandings.

4. Before you design a structured questionnaire it can be useful to do a few free-format interviews on the same topic. This will help to identify some of the main points to ask about, and (if you tape the interview) it will provide you with examples of the expressions local people themselves use when talking about the topic. It might be useful to use the same expressions in your structured questionnaire.

5. Finally, there is no harm at all in looking at examples of existing questionnaires to get ideas about layout and possible questions. The important thing is not to be over-influenced: use the ideas, but make them part of your own questionnaire design.

IV. The analysis of qualitative data – theoretical questions and the practicalities of data indexing

The main question discussed in the second workshop was how to analyse the qualitative data contained in our field notes. This is the kind of data which is unique to anthropology and, as part VI of the previous section shows, it is likely to be crucially important in assessing even such apparently "hard-headed" approaches as rational choice theory. Despite its importance, there is (so far as I know) no body of theory about how to handle *qualitative* data that could play a role equivalent to that of statistical theory in the case of *quantitative* data. When it comes to qualitative data, you have the information and you have the theory it is being used to assess – but not much systematic guidance about how to relate them to each other. In the qualitative analysis workshop we did not really go very far into the deeper implications of this situation, but concentrated more on pragmatic aspects of data organisation.

The key problem was how to assemble all the evidence one had gathered relating to any particular issue or – to put the same point another way – how to construct the best possible index. To do this, one has to read the text, and assign appropriate key words to describe the content of each passage. Qualitative analysis packages do not pick the key words for you, but they do provide useful ways of recording these key words beside the text, searching the text for passages with the same combination of keywords, and so on. They make it easy to revise and extend the list of keywords as the analyst asks ever more searching questions of the data.

The choice of software for this purpose is still under review. More important than the particular package is the underlying programming language on which it is based. It is likely that at least some of the work will be done using XML, a meta-description language that can handle both text and multi-media data.

V. Analysing kinship and social networks

As anthropologists we are particularly interested in kinship and social networks, which creates a need for software that enables us to present and analyse data of this type. For some purposes

the functionality we need relates to the description of particular social networks – for instance packages that will draw a family tree if we put in the appropriate information about each member's primary kin ties. For other problems rather more is required. For instance one aspect of the analysis of the potential relationship between shared property and shared kinship identity, proposed earlier in this paper, was a comparison of the degree of kinship distance between members of property-sharing groups with the average kinship distance between all members of the community. As well as needing careful definition of the concept of kinship distance, this would call for such extensive calculation that it would be virtually impossible to do by hand.

As in the case of data indexing, our choice of software is still under review, and it is possible that we will draw on the differing strengths of a combination of packages. Mike Fischer has provided us with his *Kinship Editor* and we are also looking at another package for kinship analysis called *Kindemcon*. We will also need to consider packages for more general forms of network analysis.

VI. Communication and co-ordination

A danger of discussing the various methodological issues in relation to my own project is that I may create the impression that the set of ideas outlined in this note is bound to form the core of the shared agenda. This is definitely not the case. Several colleagues have outlined alternative approaches and offered important comments which are available in the shared space on the Institute's computer network. Work is proceeding on an internal internet discussion site which can be accessed either via the office intranet, or from external internet connections.

There are various levels at which the discussion can take place. At the most practical level there is the question of how to organise data so that each member of the Abteilung can produce information on certain shared themes. In the workshop on qualitative methods an idea emerged that it would be helpful if people could use certain common keywords, and discussions are continuing on what these might be. The consensus was that, at least to start with, it would be best if these keywords remained at a fairly general level – to avoid the danger of imposing a rigid framework on the data at an early stage.

This discussion led on to a related issue: that of specifying checklists of data items that it would be helpful for everyone to collect. I offered some of the tables above for this purpose – and a number of colleagues have suggested additions to the list, including

- data on legal disputes, and the various legitimating principles and institutional frameworks they bring into play; and
- data on networks of barter and informal exchange.

Other colleagues have queried the relevance of some items on these lists for their own projects, and also expressed concern that the lists are simply too long: it may not be possible to collect good data on all these topics in the time available to any one fieldworker. If this turns out to be true, it would be very helpful if we could reach consensus on a shorter list of core information items.

Though the discussion of how to draw our projects together started out at this practical level, it very rapidly widened to take in conceptual issues: both the definition of the basic research questions, and the methods that are appropriate in dealing with them. It is expected that much, probably most, of our continuing discussions (both face to face, and via the internet site) will deal with issues of this kind.

Conclusion

I hope this paper has given a fair idea of the steps we have taken towards developing a shared methodology over the last year – and of some of the directions in which progress is still needed. We started by trying to fill in a gap in the methodological background of many anthropologists by looking at quantitative methods – feeling that this was particularly likely to matter when researching such a solid, economic sort of thing as property. We then tried to extend our technical background by focusing on ways that computers could help us organise qualitative data (including audio-visual data). The paradoxical result of this effort to plug what may have seemed rather peripheral gaps in our skills, has been to turn our attention to anthropologically central, but unresolved, issues concerning the interpretation of fieldwork data and its relation to theory building – which now look like becoming the focus of a vigorous debate.

As the project continues it is likely that further methodological issues will come to the fore – among them the question of how to integrate our quantitative and qualitative findings. There is also the issue of representativeness: how far does our rather distinctive selection of field sites enable us to draw conclusions about post-socialist societies in general? Or should we (as

this paper has implicitly suggested) shift our attention from the area-studies focus and concentrate instead on how the data from our field sites can contribute to the advancement of anthropological theory in general? Like any growing thing, our shared project is likely to develop in ways that cannot be fully foreseen.

References

Banfield, E. C. 1967. *The moral basis of a backward society.* New York: Free Press

Becker, G. 1991. *A treatise on the family.* Cambridge Mass: Harvard University

Bourdieu, P. 1977. *Outline of a theory of practice.* Cambridge: CUP

Brandtstädter, S. 2000. *Elias in China: "civilising process", kinship and customary law in the Chinese countryside.* Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, Working Paper No.6

Burawoy, M. and K. Verdery 1999. *Uncertain Transition: Ethnographies of Change in the Postsocialist World.* Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield

Durkheim, E. 1997. *The Division of Labour in Society.* New York: Free Press

Foster, G. 1965. Peasant society and the image of the limited good. *American Anthropologist* 67 (2) 293-315

Hardin, G. 1968. The tragedy of the commons. *Science* 162, 1243-48

Heady, P.1999. *The hard people: rivalry, sympathy and social structure in an alpine valley.* Amsterdam: Harwood Academic

Hivon, M. 1998. The bullied farmer: social pressure as a survival strategy. *In* Bridger, S. and F. Pine (eds) Surviving post-socialism: local strategies and regional responses in eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. London: Routledge

Kandiyoti, D. 1999. Poverty in transition: an ethnographic critique of household surveys in post-soviet central Asia. *Development and Change* 30 (3) 499-524

Kuhn, T. S. 1996. *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions.* University of Chicago Press

Ledeneva, A.V. 1998. *Russia's economy of favours.* Cambridge: CUP

Lévi-Strauss, C. 1969. *The elementary structures of kinship.* London: Eyre & Spottiswoode

Marsh, C. 1998. *Exploring Data. An introduction to data Analysis for Social Scientists.* Cambridge:Polity Press

Mauss, M. 1974. *The gift: forms and functions of exchange in archaic societies.* London: Routledge and Kegan Paul

Schlicht, E. 1998. *Custom in the Economy.* Oxford: Clarendon Press

Schneider, J. 1990   Spirits and the spirit of capitalism. *In* E. Badone (ed) Religious Orthodoxy and popular faith in European Society. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall

Stewart, M. 1997 *The time of the gypsies.* Oxford: Westview Press

Weber, M. 1990. *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft: Grundrisse der verstehenden Soziologie.* Tübingen: JCB Mohr