



Aalto University
School of Science

Qualitative Research Methods

Session 2. Case Study Methods 18.5.2021

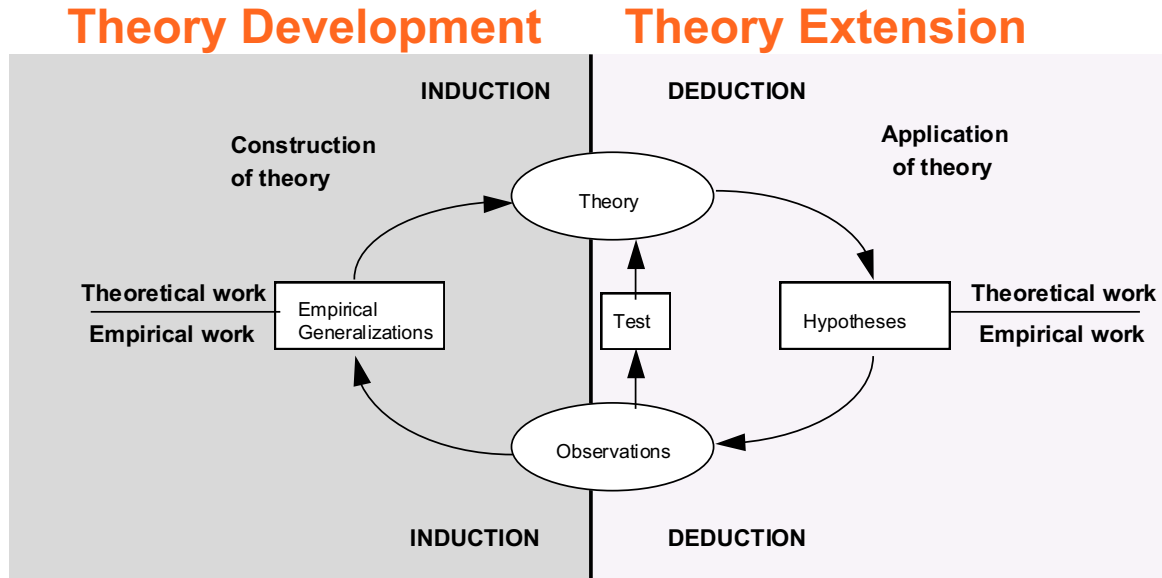
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Agenda

- Last session insights
- Case studies + assignment
- Theory and case approaches
- Case study design
- Analysis of a case study

Induction vs. Deduction



Inductive reasoning
The process of reasoning
from particular examples to
general principles

Deductive reasoning
The process of reasoning
from general principles to
particular examples

Case study

“Case study is a strategy for doing research which involves an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon with its real life context using multiple sources of evidence.”

An empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomena and and context are not clearly evident



Yin, 1981

Why should we use Case Study Research?



- To explain the causal links in real-life interventions that is too complex for the survey or experimental strategies (explanatory study).
- To describe the real-life context in which an intervention has occurred (descriptive study).
- To evaluate an intervention that has already occurred (evaluative study).
- To explore those situations in which intervention being evaluated has no clear, single set of outcomes (exploratory study).

How Case Studies can be Used to...

- Explore social processes as they unfold
- Understand social processes in context (internal, external)
- Explore new processes or behaviours
- Explore extremes
- Capture emergent properties
- Explore informal or secret behaviour
- Cross-national comparative research

Hartley, 1994

Products of Qualitative Research

Recurrent themes or propositions

- Identify and characterize patterns of behavior, group interactions, individual perceptions
- Identify salient factors
- Informing predictions of relationships

Taxonomies (empirical), often hierarchical and evolutionary

- For example
 - *Woodward's (1965) classification scheme allows organizations to be assigned to mutually exclusive sets based on the level of technological complexity.*
 - *McKelvey's (1982) taxonomy differentiates organizations into mutually exclusive sets using a series of hierarchically nested decision rules.*

Conceptual models (inc. typologies) and/or theories

Gephart, 2004

Coffee breaks in rooms



Case Study Design



Some Foundations for Case Studies

Variable (a construct)

- Power, trust, performance
- A phenomenon you try to give a name to

Proposition

- A relationship between the variable, i.e. the the more trustworthy person the higher performing, if A then B type of relationships
- Theoretical relationship: why this is true?
 - *Underlying theoretical model why a trustworthy person is more higher performing*
- Several relationships is making a theory, i.e. a theory of power

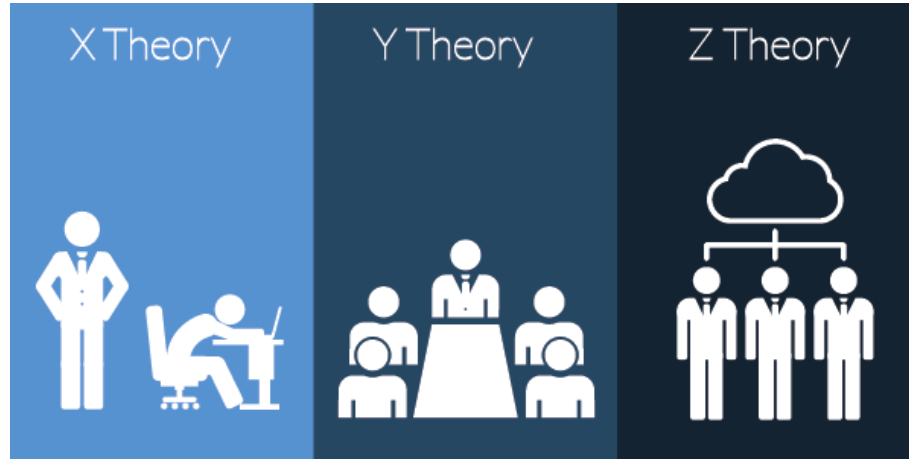
Theory Building Research Questions

Theory-building research using cases typically answers research questions that address "how" and "why" in unexplored research areas particularly well

Edmondson & Mc Manus, 2007



Theory building



- Creating a set of theoretical relationships
- Comming with a serie of propositions
- Linking to a phenomenon
- Proposing why this might be true

Dyer article

Single vs. Multiple Case Study

Single instrumental case study

- Focuses on an issue or concern, and then selects one bounded case to illustrate this issue.
- Challenge: you do not get a representative case



Multiple case study

- Focuses on an issue by analysing multiple cases.
- This approach uses the logic of replication in which the researcher replicates the procedures for each case
- Each case is a “replicated experiment”
- The level of abstraction raised with multiple cases

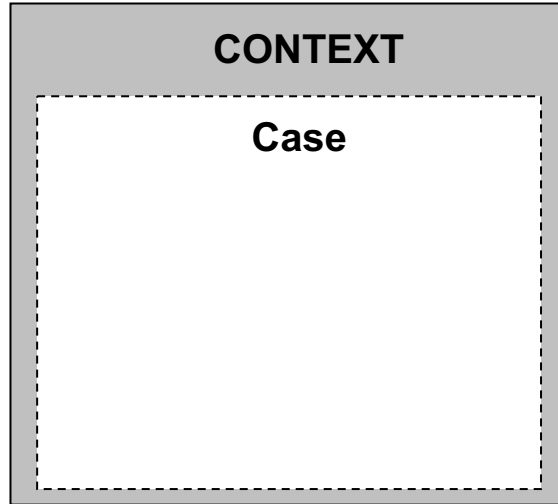


Single-case designs

Multiple-case designs

Holistic

**(single unit
of analysis)**



CONTEXT

Case

CONTEXT

Case

CONTEXT

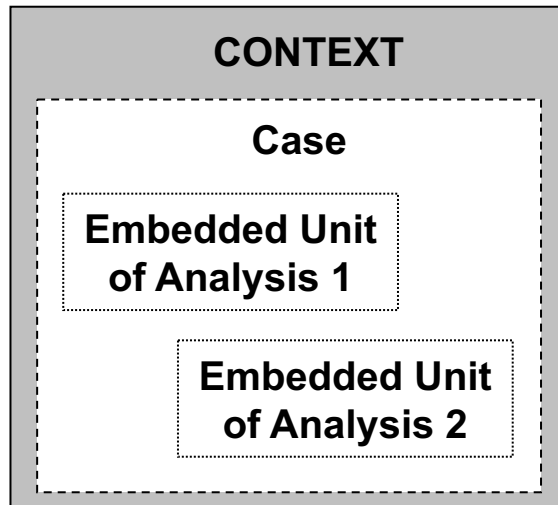
Case

CONTEXT

Case

Embedded

**(multiple units
of analysis)**



CONTEXT

Case

Embedded Unit
of Analysis 1

Embedded Unit
of Analysis 2

CONTEXT

Case

Embedded Unit
of Analysis 1

Embedded Unit
of Analysis 2

CONTEXT

Case

Embedded Unit
of Analysis 1

Embedded Unit
of Analysis 2

CONTEXT

Case

Embedded Unit
of Analysis 1

Embedded Unit
of Analysis 2

Group work

For a planned or ongoing study (one)

- What is/are your case/s? What is your unit of analysis?
- What is/are the social phenomena/variable(s) you are interested/ planning/ have started to study?

Time: 5 min individually, then present what is/are your case(s) and the social phenomena/variables you are interested in studying, 15 min in groups

Go out for some fresh air and take a picture !

Picture assignment

Take a picture outside and when you return put it as your background for the Zoom (or you can show it with your phone when we return)



Theory and Case Study Synthesis Session with Jamboard

Write, draw, and refine your synthesis with your group during the presentations of the 4 articles your using Jamboard

Articles to be presented

- Van Maanen, Sorensen, & Mitchell, 2007
- Dubois, & Gadde, 2002
- Eisenhardt, & Graebner, 2007
- Ketokivi, & Choi, 2014

What makes an exemplary case study?

- Must be ‘interesting’
- Must display sufficient evidence
- Must be ‘complete’
- Must consider alternative perspectives
- Should be written in an engaging manner
- Should contribute to knowledge

Boundary conditions

- An important element in theory development
- “Who, where, when” aspects of a theory
- Context has been labeled an “amorphous concept capturing theory-relevant, surrounding phenomena or temporal conditions” (Bamberger, 2008, p. 839) and defined as “situational opportunities and constraints” (Johns, 2006, p. 386).
- Practically, context is multidimensional (Bamberger, 2008) and relates to various temporal and spatial conditions (Bacharach, 1989).
- The range of a construct denotes those contexts in which the construct can be applied with the same intended meaning.

Rigor in qualitative research (validity and reliability)

RELIABILITY

- Reliability in qualitative research, examination of trustworthiness
- Reliability in quantitative research: (1) the degree to which a measurement, given repeatedly, remains the same (2) the stability of a measurement over time; and (3) the similarity of measurements within a given time period (Kirk and Miller, 1986)

VALIDITY

- Validity (qualitative research) is affected by the researcher's perception of validity in the study and his/her choice of paradigm assumption, i.e. quality, rigor and trustworthiness (Davies & Dodd, 2002; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Mishler, 2000; Seale, 1999; Stenbacka, 2001).
- Validity (quantitative research) determines whether the research truly measures that which it was intended to measure or how truthful the research results are (Joppe, 2000)

Judging Case Study Design Quality (after Yin 2003).

Tests	Case Study Tactic
Construct validity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Multiple data sources•Chain of evidence•Informant review
Internal validity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Pattern matching•Rival explanations•Logic models
External validity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Theory – base (single cases)•Replication logic (multiple cases)
Reliability	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Case study protocol•Database

Selection in Case Study Research

Case selection for external validity & analytic generalisation

- Clarify domain
- Sampling using replication logic – theoretical
- Extremes and polar types



Selecting the Unit of Analysis

- Differences in outcome
- Coming to terms with time - snapshot / longitudinal / retrospective

Selecting the data sources/methods

- Informants - opponents / supporters / doubters
- Data sources & methods - databases / documents / observations / interviews

Analaysis of an exemplary case study in groups (15 min)

McDonald, R. M., & Eisenhardt, K. M. (2020). Parallel play: Startups, nascent markets, and effective business-model design. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 65(2), 483-523.

1. What makes this study rigours? Any challenges
2. How about validity? What is exemplary? Any challenges?

Case analysis



Analyzing multiple cases

First write a case / narrative / story

- With the research questions by itself

Then a cross case analysis

- Compare pairs together
- Put pairs that do not go together
- You can build tables
- Bring in multiple people to take a look on it

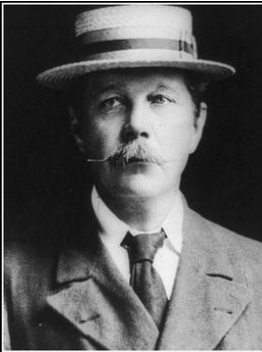


Analizing multiple cases



You start to see relationship coming out

- Then go back and see if they are coming out in the other cases
- Get the right abstraction so you can see the phenomena across cases
- Combining qualitative and quantitative data
- Sharpen construct and sharpen measures



Theorizing

- Look on relationships
- Draw on another field, something different from literature
- What is the novel?
- Iterate, iterate iterate
- Make it surprising

Analysing Case Studies

Data collection and analysis an iterative process

Within case analysis

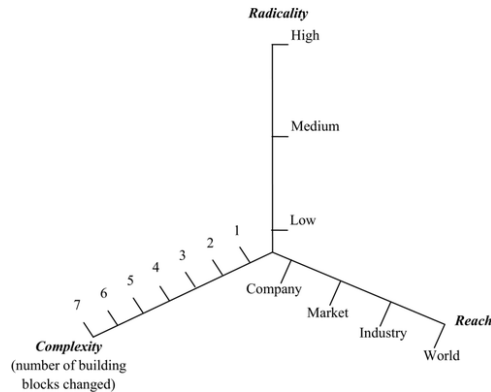
- Between units of analysis or establishing links between observations
- qualitative and quantitative data

Cross-case analysis

- Search for patterns
- Similarities & differences



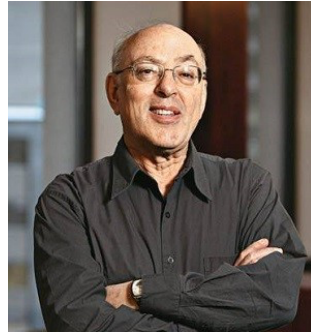
Typologies



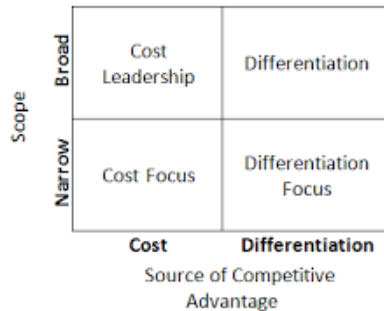
- **Typologies = conceptually derived interrelated sets of ideal types**
- Typologies identify multiple ideal types, each of which represents a unique combination of the organizational attributes that are believed to determine the relevant outcome(s).
- **Conceptualization along minimum of two dimensions**, i.e. nations according to political system - democratic vs authoritarian; market system – market vs. controlled) or theories
- Theories highlight the internal consistency among the first-order constructs within an ideal type, and they explain why this internally consistent pattern results in the specified level of the dependent variable(s). Thus, typologies hypothesize relationships between the similarity of an actual organization to an ideal type and the dependent variable(s).
- **Classes formed need to be exhaustive** (every case observation fits into one of the classes) **and mutually exclusive** (one case fitting only one and not several)

Typologies

Five Structural Configurations of Organization			
Structural Configuration	Prime Coordinating Mechanism	Key Part of Organization	Type of Decentralization
Simple Structure	Direct Supervision	Upper Echelon	Centralization
Machine Bureaucracy	Standardization of Work Processes	Technical Staff	Limited Horizontal Decentralization
Professional Bureaucracy	Standardization of Skills	Operating Level	Vertical and Horizontal Decentralization
Divisionalized Form	Standardization of Outputs	Middle Level	Limited Vertical Decentralization
Adhocracy	Mutual Adjustment	Support Staff	Selective Decentralization



Mintzberg (1979, 1983) identified five types of organizational structures (simple structure, machine bureaucracy, professional bureaucracy, divisionalized form, and adhocracy) that are hypothesized to result in maximal organizational effectiveness



Porter (1980, 1985) identified three ideal-type strategies (cost-leadership, differentiation, focus) that are hypothesized to maximize competitive advantage.

Introducing new constructs in qualitative research

Developing a new construct must clearly articulate the definition and boundaries of the new construct, and map its association with existing constructs.



Bono, J. E., & McNamara, G. (2011). Publishing in AMJ—part 2: research design. *Academy of Management Journal*, 54(4), 657-660.

Will I be able to generalise?

Generalising to theory (Robert Yin)

Interpretivism is more about **understanding**
than **generalising**
(Robert Stake)

Petite generalisations

- from case to comparable case

Grand generalisations

- counter example modifies a generalisation
- positive example increases confidence

