



UiO : **Department of Media and Communication**
University of Oslo

Case studies and comparative analysis

25.8.2011

MEVIT 4800 Perspectives and methods in media research

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”We cannot make precise definitions of cases or case studies because practices already exist for case study in many disciplines”.

(Stake, R.E. 1995: *The Art of Case Study Research*, Thousand Oaks: Sage, p. 2: footnote 2)

”In brief, the case study method allows investigators to to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events – such as individual life cycles, small group behaviour, organizational and managerial processes, neighbourhood change, school performance, international relations, and the maturation of industries”.

Yin, R. 2009: p 4

Case study: definition (Yin)

Empirical inquiry that

- investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real life context, (especially when)
- the boundaries between the phenomenon and the context are not clearly evident.

Yin 2009: 18

The case study inquiry (Yin)

- copes with the technically distinctive situation where there will be ***many more variables*** of interest than data points, and as one result
- relies on ***multiple sources of evidence***, with data needing to converge in a triangulation fashion, and as another result,
- benefits from the prior development of ***theoretical propositions*** to guide data collection and analysis.

Yin 2009: 18

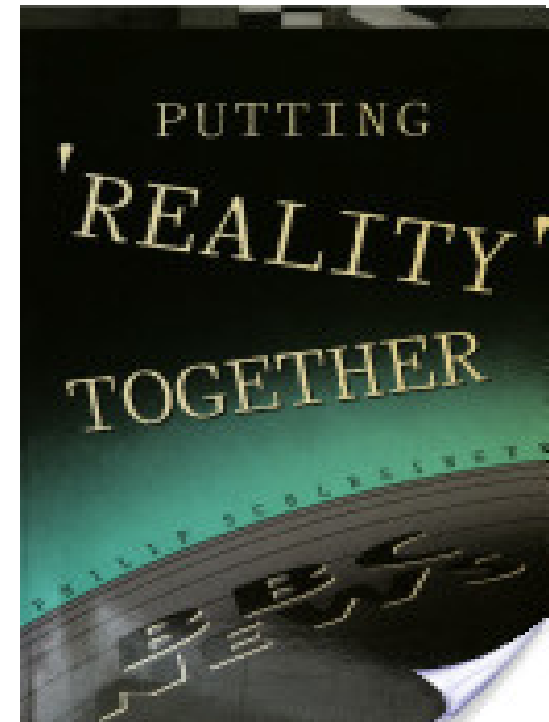
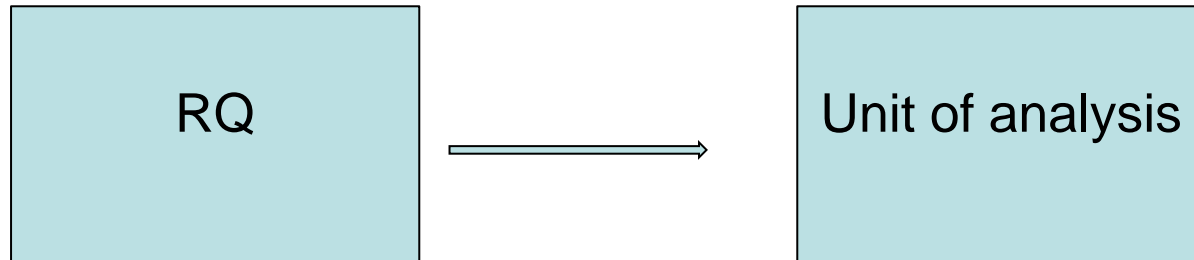
When is a case study relevant?

- RQ "how/why";
- Little control over behavioural events;
- Focus on contemporary events

- Retain complexity
- Holistic approach

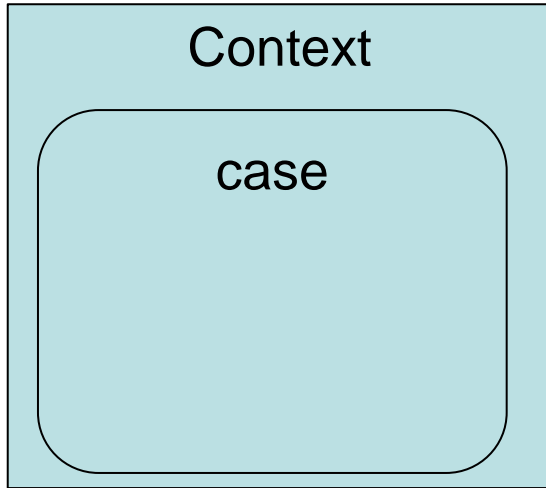
Designing case studies

- Find the *unit* of analysis



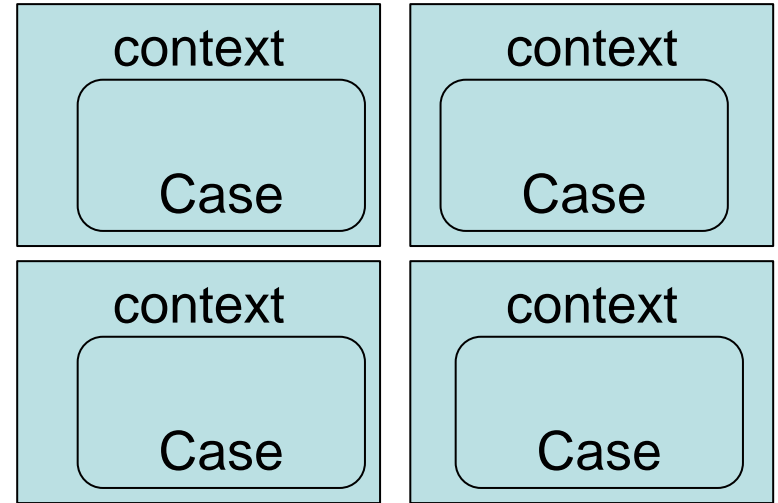
Holistic and embedded case studies

Single-case designs

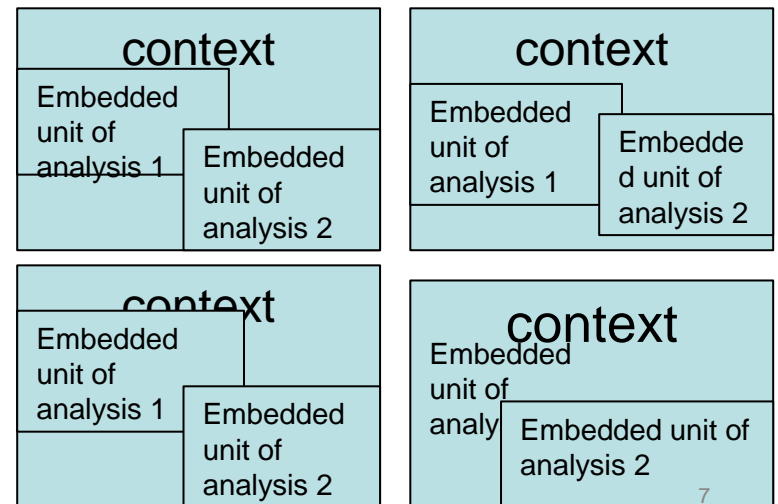
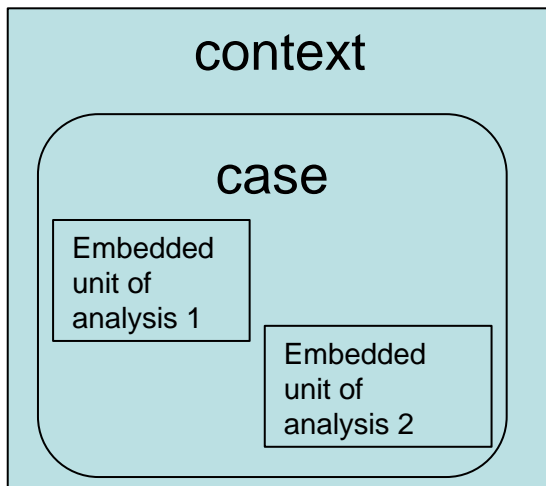


Holistic
(single
unit
Analysis

Multiple-case designs



Embedded
(multiple
units of
analysis



The role of theory (Yin)

Case studies ≠ grounded theory

Case studies ≠ ethnographic studies

Implementing quality

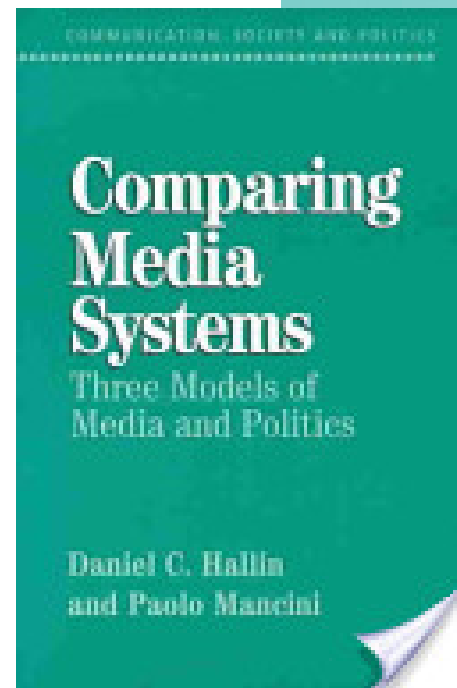
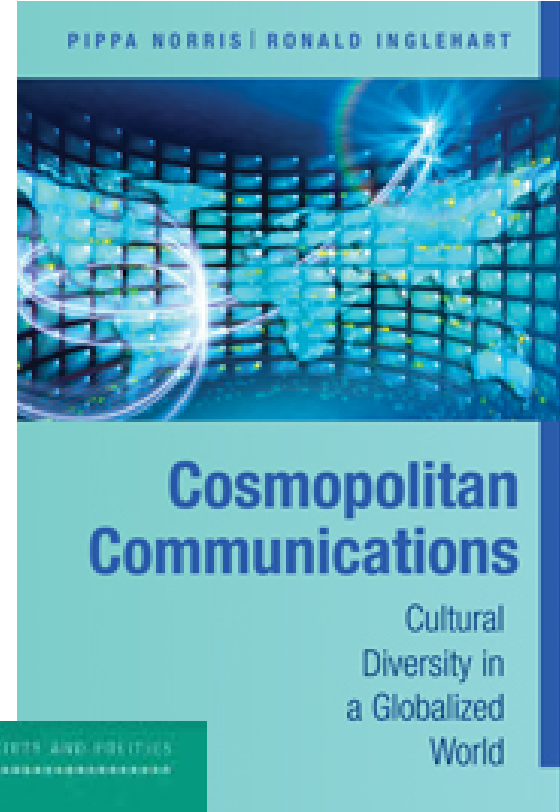
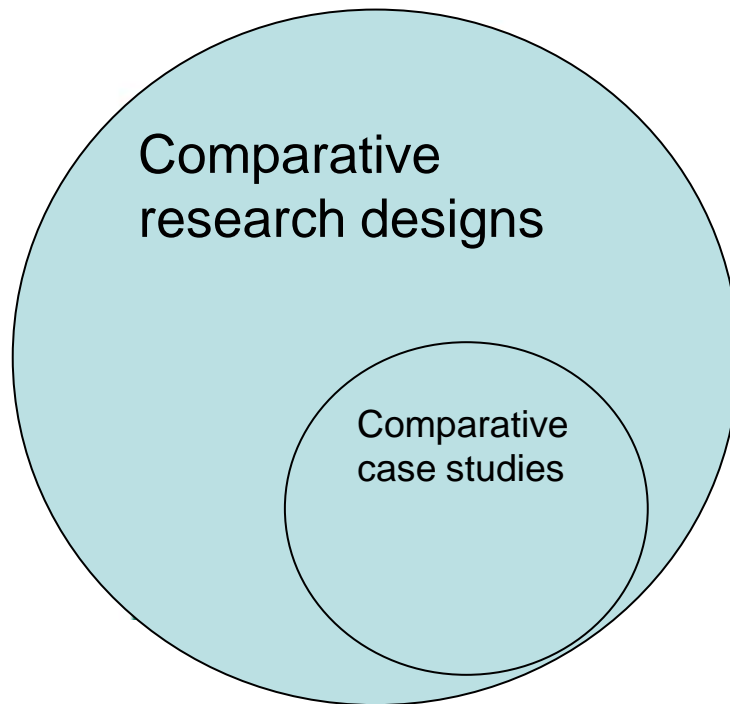
- ✓ construct validity
- ✓ internal validity
- ✓ external validity
- ✓ reliability

Analytical generalizability and falsification

Yin: "...case studies are generalizable to theoretical propositions, not to populations or to universes. ... your goal will be to expand and generalize theories (analytical generalizability) ..." (2009: 15).

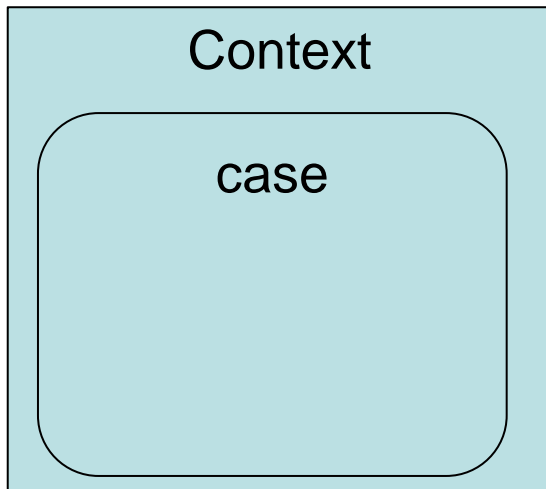
Flyvbjerg: "The case study is ideal for generalizing using the type of test that Karl Popper called 'falsification' which in social science forms part of critical reflexivity. Falsification is one of the most rigorous tests to which a scientific proposition can be subjected: If just one observation does not fit with the proposition, it is considered not valid generally and must therefore be either revised or rejected (2005: 228).

Comparative research designs



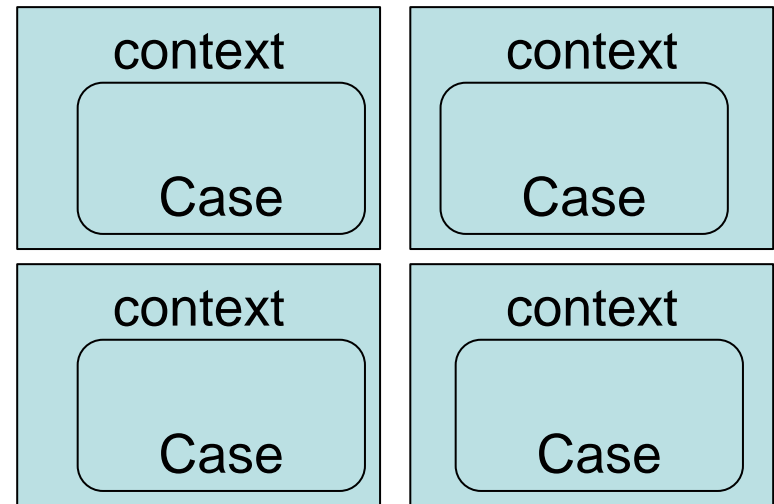
Comparative case studies

Single-case designs

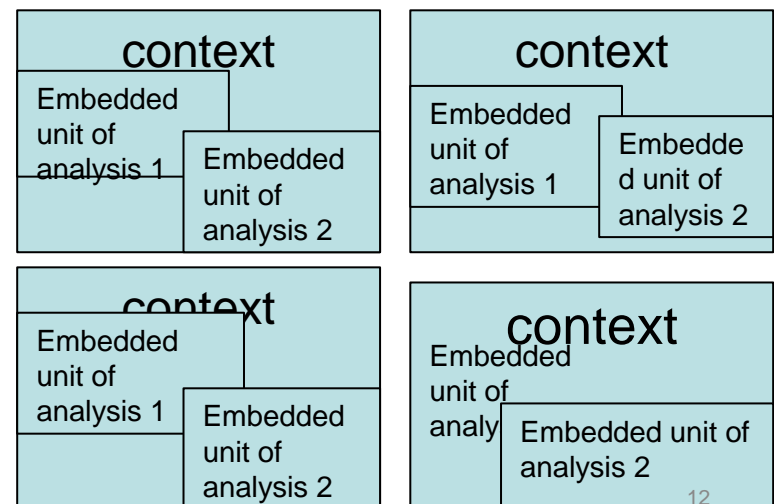
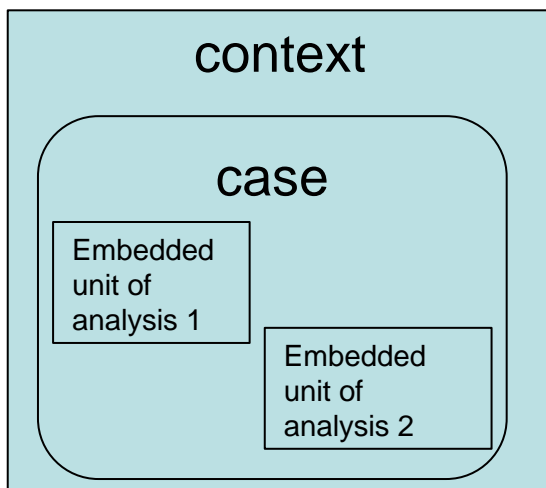


Holistic
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Comparative method (Lijphart)

”.. (a) method of testing hypothesized empirical relationships between variables in which cases are selected in such a way as to maximize the variance of the independent variables and to minimize the the variance of the control variables”

(Lijphart 1975: 164)

Recommendations

- ✓ increase the number of cases as much as possible
- ✓ reduce complexity (“property space”)
- ✓ find comparable cases
- ✓ restrict the analysis to the key variables

(Lijphart 1975: 159)

Most similar systems –design

- *Largest possible similarities apart from dependent variable*
 - *E.g. Comparison of Nordic media systems, broadcasting institutions etc*

Most different systems-design

- *Variation on both independent and dependent variables*
- *e.g. comparing media systems*

Mixed designs

Units for comparison

Systems level (states)

- e.g. Norris and Inglehart: use individual data from appr 50 countries

Subunits

- Media systems (Hallin and Mancini 2004)
- Telecommunications policy development (Skogerbø and Storsul 1999)
- Public service organizations (Syvertsen 1992 etc)
- Political communication across the Nordic countries (Strömbäck, Aalberg and Ørsten 2008)

Diachronic – synchronic comparisons

Comparison in time

Comparison in space

Next lecture
Monday 29.8.2011
Theme:
Qualitative interviews