



What Is a Case, and What Is a Case Study?

Author(s): Hervé Dumez

Source: *BMS: Bulletin of Sociological Methodology / Bulletin de Méthodologie Sociologique*, JULY 2015, No. 127 (JULY 2015), pp. 43-57

Published by: Sage Publications, Ltd.

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43761847>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <https://about.jstor.org/terms>



JSTOR

Sage Publications, Ltd. is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *BMS: Bulletin of Sociological Methodology / Bulletin de Méthodologie Sociologique*

What Is a Case, and What Is a Case Study?

Bulletin de Méthodologie Sociologique
2015, Vol. 127 43–57
© The Author(s) 2015
Reprints and permission:
sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav
DOI: 10.1177/0759106315582200
bms.sagepub.com



Hervé Dumez

i3-CRG, CNRS, École polytechnique, Université Paris-Saclay, France

Résumé

Qu'est-ce qu'un cas et qu'est-ce qu'une étude cas ? L'étude de cas est largement pratiquée dans les sciences sociales (gestion, psychologie, sciences de l'éducation, science politique, sociologie). Beaucoup de travaux méthodologiques y ont été consacrés. Paradoxalement, la question de ce qu'est un cas a donné lieu à moins d'analyses, ce qui explique la surprise (et parfois le malaise) que rencontrent les chercheurs quand ils essaient de comprendre ce qui constitue leur cas. L'article montre que l'étude de cas repose sur un paradoxe et trois questions. Contrairement à ce que suggère l'expression étude de cas (généralement comprise comme étude d'un cas), cette méthodologie repose sur l'idée d'une analyse comparative. Les trois questions à se poser sont les suivantes. De quoi mon cas est-il le cas ? De quoi mon cas est-il composé ? Que doit faire mon cas ?

Abstract

Case study is a common methodology in the social sciences (management, psychology, science of education, political science, sociology). A lot of methodological papers have been dedicated to case study but, paradoxically, the question “what is a case?” has been less studied. Hence the fact that researchers conducting a case study are sometimes surprised by what they are experiencing. The paper deals with the problem: Why is a real case study more puzzling than expected, having read the literature on case study? We assume that the answer lies in a paradox: despite what is suggested by the double singular “case study”, a case study requires a comparative approach. This paper addresses the three fundamental issues one must tackle when doing a case study: What is my case a case of? What is the stuff that my case is made of? What can my case do? (or what do cases do?)

Corresponding Author:

Hervé Dumez, i3-CRG (UMR 9217 – CNRS –École polytechnique), Batiment Ensta, 828 boulevard des Maréchaux, 91762 Palaiseau Cedex, France
Email: herve.dumez@normalesup.org

Mots clés

Méthodologie, Étude de cas, Analyse qualitative

Keywords

Methodology, Case Study, Qualitative Analysis

Introduction

It has been a long tradition that a social scientist may decide to focus on one case and an extensive literature provides the methodology to do a case study (Ragin and Becker, 1992; Gerring, 2004; Passeron and Revel, 2005; Yin, 2008, 2012). Yet, despite the interest of these analyses, upon starting a real case study the researcher is often surprised and destabilized. How things work in practice does not usually match with what she expects. Cases appear to be much more complicated than suggested by the rather clear and simple expression “case study”. Probably because the emphasis in the literature is on the case study itself, its properties, its fertility, its validity, its difficulties, and little on the fundamental issue: what actually is a case? The answers to this question are short and revolve around two ideas: one case is a singularity that could be isolated, even if it has fuzzy boundaries, and a case has a narrative structure (Herreid, 1997). Relying on these definitions, the researcher embarked on a case study has in mind two simple representations of what she will encounter. However, what she faces is much more complicated, which results a surprise and destabilization in the research process.

First, the paper will deal with the problem: Why is a real case study more puzzling than expected, having read the literature on case study? The answer lies in a paradox: despite what is suggested by the double singular “case study”, a case study requires a comparative approach. Then, the paper will address the three fundamental issues one must tackle when doing a case study: What is my case a case of? What is the stuff my case is made of? What can my case do? (or what do cases do?)

To illustrate these questions a researcher doing a case study must tackle, the paper will use eight representations or diagrams.

Stating the Problem

Robert Yin, arguably one of the great specialists of case study in management, has been using the following definition of case study for over thirty years:

- (a) a contemporary phenomenon in its real-life context, especially when (b) the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident. (Yin, 1981: 59)

In some ways, this definition is strange. The emphasis on the contemporary aspect of a case refers to the fact that, probably for political reasons related to the structure of scientific fields, Yin wants to mark a clear distinction between the case study and the historical approach. Besides, he does not want to associate case study with exclusive methods as ethnography or participant-observation. According to him, a case study can mobilize various methods (ethnography, action-research, etc.). The evocation of the

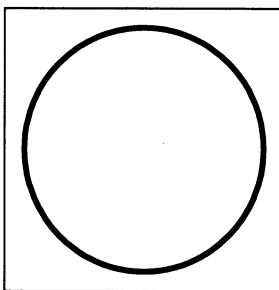
real-life context in the definition refers to a conflict with laboratory experimentation, opposition more sensitive today to the extent that this approach is growing very rapidly in the social sciences. Finally, in this definition, the central notion is that of a boundary, yet it is noted that this boundary is unclear.

Gerring develops a similar idea, defining case study as follows:

I argue that for methodological purposes a case study is best defined as an in-depth study of a single unit (a relatively bounded phenomenon). (Gerring, 2004: 341)

Significant is the fact that Gerring, who devotes his article to the case study, refers only in a parenthesis and in passing, to the definition of a case. Gerring is particularly illustrative of the problem raised here: the methodological literature provides an abundance of various analyses on what a case study is, but paradoxically quite few things about what a case is. A case is defined by a more or less blurred boundary and it is almost the only thing we can say about its nature. First remark: behind this definition of a case lies the idea that drawing a border around a phenomenon, we can define it and thus be able to provide a complete description of it. This idea is a myth: there is no such a thing as a complete description of a social phenomenon (Sacks, 1963; Dumez, 2010). With such a broad definition, phenomena of very different statuses, and located at very different levels, may be considered as cases in a bric-a-brac recalling Borges' Chinese encyclopedia: a State in political science, a firm or a business unit in management, a person in psychology, a relationship between two persons in psychosociology, a decision by a court in law, a community, a group, an incident in an organization in sociology, a conversation in ethnomethodology or pragmatics, an industry in industrial economics, an event (Waterloo), a state of the world (the political structure of France in 1789), etc . . . In addition, the boundary of a case may be determined empirically (a company whose existence is defined by law, a conversation that took place between two individuals such day between certain hours) or be constructed in an abstract manner, from a class given by a theory, an ideal-type or from a situation of observation. Empirical and theoretical boundaries overlap more or less (hence the blur). Determining the case is what historians call the "central subject problem" (Hull, 1975). The researcher must find what plays an integrative role, making the case a case.

In other words, the representation of a case suggested by the definitions by Gerring or Yin looks like this:



A relatively bounded phenomenon (representation 1)

A case is a singularity, defined by a boundary, although this boundary could be less distinct than this circle.

Another type of definition exists, but very different to characterize what may be a case. The simplest wording, given here by a researcher in education science, is the following:

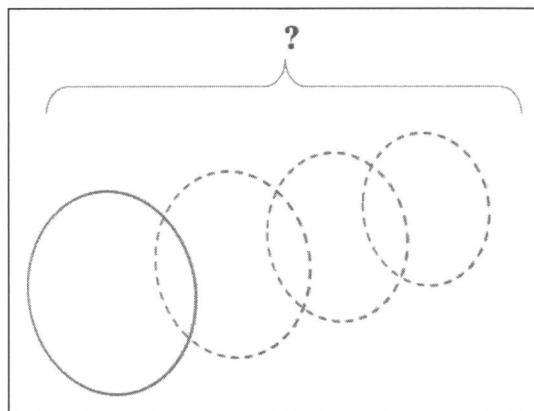
Cases are stories with a message (Herreid, 1997: 92)

The emphasis here is not on the border but on the narrative essence of the case, in relation with a theoretical issue, beyond the didactic one (the message). Psychology, psychoanalysis, but also sociology (think of the extraordinary sociology of Mozart by Elias, 1994) or industrial economics (Loescher, 1959; Dumez and Jeunemaitre, 2000) or management (Pettigrew, 1990) can use cases in that way. Passeron and Revel (2005) also insist on the narrative nature of cases.

Abbott binds the two previous definitions of what a case is with more complex, but probably more accurate, formulations:

The move from population/analytic approach to case/narrative approach is thus a move first to a new way of regarding cases — as fuzzy realities with autonomously defined complex properties — and a move second to seeing cases as engaged in a perpetual dialogue with their environment, a dialogue of action and constraint that we call plot. (Abbott, 1992: 65)

The notion of a singularity defined by blurred boundaries is expressed by the words “fuzzy realities”, “autonomously” and “properties”, and the narrative structure of the case is expressed by the word “plot”. We can then say that a case can be represented as follows:



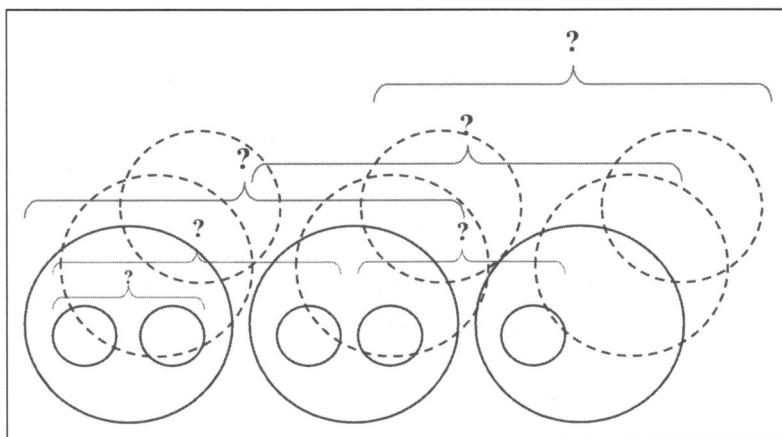
The case as a narrative structure (representation 2)

The case is the single unit represented by the continuous circle (see representation 1), but must also be seen in a narrative perspective, having experienced a series of previous states represented by the dotted circles. Cases are then:

[...] historical entities as they persist through time (Hull, 1975: 254)

The immediate question that arises from the above analysis is: Is there a continuity between the contemporary state of the case and its previous states, or discontinuity (breakthrough)? The issue is known as periodization. Imagine a researcher who has chosen the French company Saint-Gobain to conduct a case study in strategy. It is clear that the current strategy of the firm may be partly explained by the past. But knowing that Saint-Gobain was founded in the seventeenth century, how far should the researcher go? How to isolate the relevant previous statements to clarify the “contemporary” case as Yin would say? Should the researcher go back ten years, twenty years, choose the end of the Second World War; find elements back two centuries earlier?

Despite this critical issue, the representation suggested by the definitions usually given in the literature is relatively simple. However, a researcher who discusses a case study meets a much more complicated situation that has the following form:



A simplified representation of a case (representation 3)

The questions the researcher should ask is: where exactly are located the boundaries of my case? Should I expand my field of study, or restrict it? How far should I go back in time? What should I study in my case, and how? How to bring together the elements that I find? Should I also bring elements that are found in other cases? Are these elements really forming a whole (i.e., a case)? One can understand that the researcher who, having started with representation 1 or even 2, now facing representation 3, is somewhat confused and wonders how, in practice, he will get out of this maze of issues that arise all at the same time. If our approach is correct, how is it possible that the process of the case study can be based on such a complex (although simplified...) representation? To clarify what a case study is in practice, we will try to show, step by step, how to understand this complexity. The key to this complexity is a paradox and three questions. The paradox is: a case study, contrary to what the singular term suggests, is a process of systematic comparison (“constant comparative method”, in the words of Glaser and Strauss, 1967). The three fundamental questions one should ask when leading a case study are:

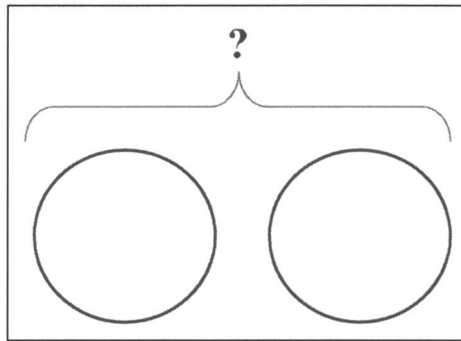
- What is my case a case of?
- What is the stuff that my case is made of?
- What does my case do?

First Question: What Is My Case a Case of?

The answer to this question has two parts, the first one is empirical categorization, which introduces the comparative nature of the case study, and the second is theoretical categorization.

Empirical Categorization

If the selected case is a market, it means that it can be compared with other empirical cases of markets. The representation of a case study becomes:



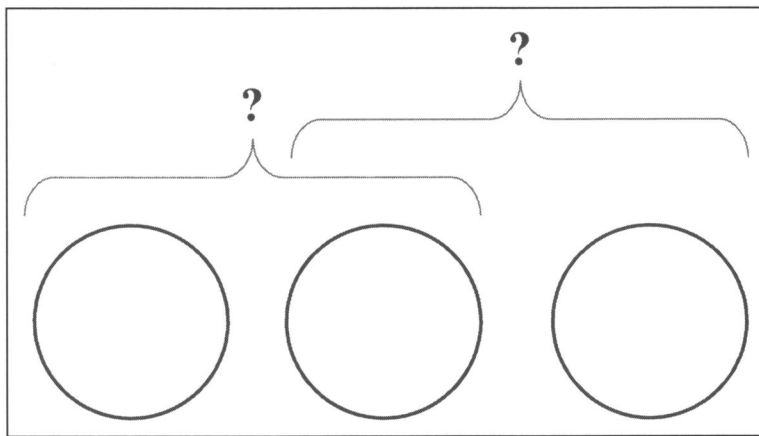
What is it a case of? Empirical categorization (representation 4)

Trying to identify the category under which the case study can be subsumed (issue represented in the diagram by the brace and the question mark) means necessarily a comparison of this case with related cases (hence the appearance of a second circle). The case is therefore defined as the instantiation of a class of phenomena:

We define a case as an instance of a class of events. The term ‘class of events’ refers here to a phenomenon of scientific interest, such as revolutions, types of governmental regimes, kinds of economic systems, or personality types that the investigator chooses to study with the aim of developing theory (or “generic knowledge”) regarding the causes of similarities or differences among instances (cases) of that class of events. (George and Bennett, 2005: 17-18)

The process to be used to conduct empirical categorization is old. It comes from Aristotle via the scholastic tradition and expresses thus: “*Definitio fit per genus proximum et differentiam specificam*” (the definition proceeds by the nearest genus and specific difference). This type of approach has experienced a powerful scientific development in the life sciences with Linnaeus. Any species is defined by the genus name and the closest specific difference in the genus. This classification is simple, and while it obviously has

some problems, is still robust. It focuses clearly on the essential work of comparison when it comes to wonder: What if it is the case? This task consists in rising in generality, but not too fast and not too much, that is to say, to seek the nearest generality (*genus proximum*), working on the specific difference (*differentia specifica*), again the closest difference. The lion is encoded *Panthera leo* (in the genus panther, it differs in lion). If we want to understand what a lion is, one must think in terms of the nearest genus (*panthera*) and not in relation to the “vertebrates”, which is a too general category, and in relation to the other species of this genus (jaguar, leopard, tiger and snow leopard) rather than in relation to more distant species such as the dog or cat with which differences are too pronounced. The main purpose of the process is a sophisticated approach of the similarities (*genus*) and dissimilarities (between species in the same genus). It does not amount too much to say that IBM, for example, is a case of a firm. “Firm” as a category is too general. To characterize IBM as a case, we must seek a class closer to the reality of this case. But representation 4 does not exhaust the original question. Indeed, a case, in the richness of what Abbott calls its complex properties, does not rely only on one category. It can be subsumed under several categories corresponding to the multiplicity of complex properties. In other words, the question should rather be represented as follows:



What is it a case of? Empirical categorization (representation 5)

It is essential for researchers to know their case from different perspectives, that is to say, to be able to develop different “seeing as”² to position their case in various ways. If the analysis focuses on cases of divorce, for example, cases can be seen as cases of interpersonal relationships, especially loving relationships. But it is also possible to see the cases as cases of failures, and to compare divorcing with machine breakdowns. Positioning a case requires an analogic game.

Theoretical Categorization

A theoretical answer to the question “What is my case a case of?” must also be given. It has a dynamic dimension. The researcher must ask himself the question at the very

beginning of his research, and look for answers. At this point, the theoretical framework is an orienting theory (Whyte, 1984). It is only at the end of his research that the final theoretical answer will appear to the researcher conducting the case study:

Researchers probably will not know what their cases are until the research, including the task of writing up the results, is virtually completed. What *it* is a *case of* will coalesce gradually, sometimes catalytically, and the final realization of the case's nature may be the most important part of the interaction between ideas and evidence. (Ragin, 1992: 6)

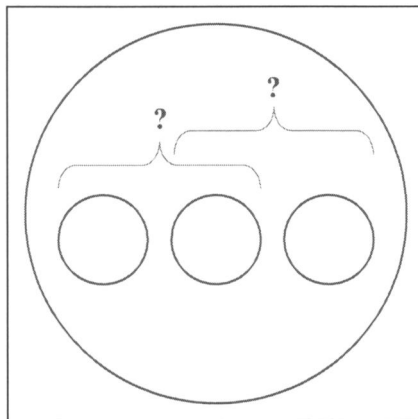
Characterizing the case, constructing it as a unit, is the result of the case study, in both senses of the word result: it is the result of the case study as a process and it is one of its fundamental theoretical results. Again, the question must be asked at the beginning of the research but, at this stage, the theory must only orient the research process and not structure it in order to escape the risk of circularity.³ Suppose the selected case is a case of a disruptive innovation. The aim of the case study will obviously not to show that the case initially selected as a case of disruptive innovation is one in the end—poor result. It will be to show how the case illuminates in a new way the notion of disruptive innovation, how it shakes the idea of disruptive innovation as it is developed in the literature and how the case enriches it. So, ultimately, the case will not be a case of disruptive innovation in the sense that was used at the beginning of the research. The true characterization of the case (what is it a case of?) is actually the result of the case study and will be theoretical in nature.

What are the relationships between empirical categorization and theoretical categorization? This question is a difficult one. Kuckartz (1991) and Gerhardt (1994) have shown that Weber, when conducting empirical studies on German peasants, has used empirical types or categories, and not ideal-types or theoretical constructs. The articulation between empirical and theoretical categorization is a delicate one. In early research, theoretical categorization of the case study is an orienting assistance to the researcher. As an orienting theory, it can help the empirical categorization that consists in identifying classes of cases and sub-cases (see next question), which allows the work on similarities and dissimilarities, i.e. the constant comparative approach. The actual work of theoretical categorization will not appear until the end, as a result of the case study. If we take the example of disruptive or breakthrough innovation, this category will be handled at the beginning of the search as a simple guidance for the researcher: it allows her to ask the first questions about her case without structuring its analysis too much (to avoid the risk of circularity). It will also be handled as an empirical categorization to identify cases close to the case, and within it, sub-cases (management situations, incidents devices related to the nature of disruptive innovation) that will be the basis of a systematic comparative work. The researcher will then ask himself whether “disruptive innovation” as an empirical category is the *genus proximum* to identify the specific difference that is the case itself, that is to say, if it is not too broad a category. At the end of the research will take place the actual theoretical categorization, which is to discuss the concept of disruptive innovation, to clarify, to enrich it. Methodologies exist that try to articulate ex ante empirical and theoretical categorizations (Van Meter et al., 1987; Hektner et al., 2006).

Second Question: What Is the Stuff that My Case Is Made of?

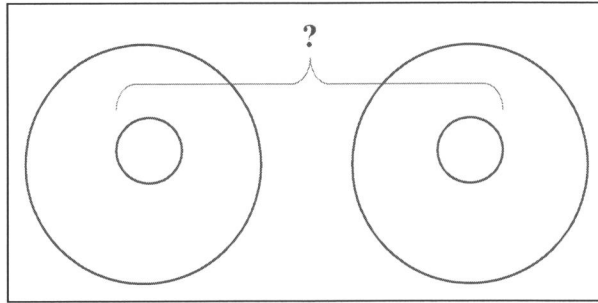
The case study is often presented as a “holistic” exercise, based on the study of a singularity, a kind of systemic reality in which the whole and its parts have close and interdependent relationships. For example, Yin speaks of holistic cases (i.e. a unit) in opposition to multiple-cases. But he soon introduced the notion of embedded cases. A holistic case may consist of embedded cases. The practical reality of the case study is different. A complete or holistic description of a case is impossible, as we said. It is therefore necessary to know what the researcher will focus his interest on. The researcher conducting a case study will encounter incidents, changes, practices illustrative of routines, decisions, etc. All these elements can be defined as units of analysis, and therefore constitute cases. In other words, a case is made of an infinite number of sub-cases. Every case is made of cases. Moreover, on this multiplicity of units of analysis, the researcher will gather a mass of data forming a heterogeneous material (documents, notes, field journal, case reports, interviews, etc.).

The approach falls under the paradox mentioned above: Inside the case (as it does outside: some could speak of a fractal phenomenon), the case study consists in a systematically comparative work. To make the comparison possible, the material must be cut into units of analysis and each unit must be encoded. Again, the coding of the units of analysis uses the approach by *genus proximum* and *differentia specifica*. Hence, we have inside the case a representation similar to the one we had at the case level (representations 4 and 5):



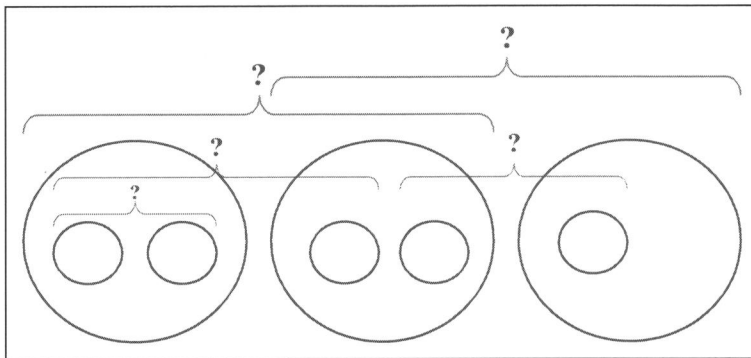
The comparative work within the case (representation 6)

But if we take into account representation 4, i.e. the question “What is my case a case of?” and the answer in terms of empirical categorization, units of analysis within one case can also be compared with units of analysis of a case belonging to the same category:



Comparison between sub-cases of cases belonging to the same class (representation 7)

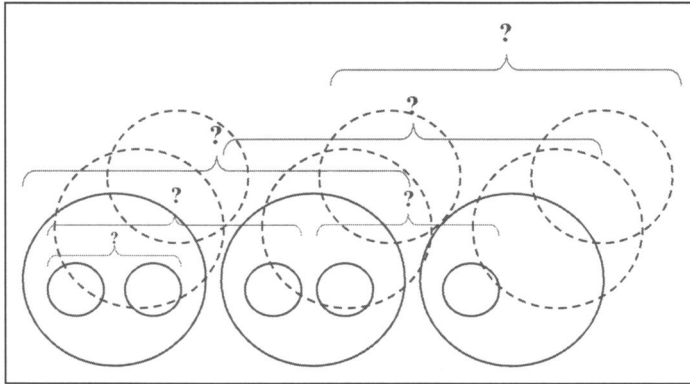
When comparing one element of a case to an element of another case, attention should be paid to the unity of each case. Locke and Thelen (1995), after Montesquieu, show that term by term comparisons can be misleading. For instance, all countries have experienced a trend of decentralization of wage bargaining. But decentralization means very different things in Sweden, where wages are negotiated at the national level, in Germany where they are negotiated at the interbranch level, or in the U.S. where they are negotiated at the industry level. When comparing an element of a system with an element of another system, the focus must be put on “sticking points” say Locke and Thelen, not simply on elements that are named the same. If one element is a sticking point in one system and if the element of another system has the same name but is not a sticking point in that system, the comparison is misleading. When representations 4, 5, 6 and 7 are superimposed, the comparative work, both on the case in its relation to other cases and inside the case, we obtain a representation of the following type:



Comparative work at the case level and inside the case (representation 8)

However, as we have seen, the case study cannot overlook the dynamic dimension, although Yin speaks of “contemporary” cases. This dimension lends itself to a comparative study. Indeed, different dynamics can be analyzed as a chain of sequences interrupted by turning points; these sequences, within one dynamics or between different

dynamics, as the turning points, can be compared. The comparison is made easier by using templates (Dumez and Rigaud, 2008). If we introduce this dynamic, narrative, dimension, specific to the case study, we obtain the representation 3:



A simplified representation of a case (representation 3)

This representation (simplified) is the one a researcher who deals with a case study should have in mind. It shows how the distinctions single-case/multiple case, single case/embedded cases are inadequate. Any case is multiple, as having to answer the question: “What is it a case of?” Any case is embedded, as made of cases on which the researcher has to work, in the same way, which is a fine-tuned comparative work. But again, this complexity should not discourage researchers. It simply invites to handle rigorously a comparative and narrative approach. We can then address the third key question posed by the case study.

Third Question: “What Do Cases Do?”

This question is raised by Abbott (1992) concerning narratives but can be generalized. The political scientists have attempted to classify cases according to what they can do.

The do-nothing case is what Lijphart (1971) calls the atheoretical case. It is only a description or narration of the case, without any theoretical element, a monography or a chronicle. This approach falls under the criticism often addressed to researchers who practice case study:

But your analysis is merely descriptive. (Abbott, 2003: 43)

This is not the description as such that is criticized, but the wrong description, that is to say the one that is conducted in the absence of any theoretical work (Dumez, 2010, 2011b).

Historians have a different approach. A case considered as unique (a historical situation) is explained with the use of explicit or implicit general laws. This is the interpretative case (Lijphart, 1971).

Lijphart makes a distinction between the hypothesis generating case-study and the deviant case. Regarding the first one, no theory is able to explain the case. Regarding

the second one, the case contradicts a theory. Statisticians tend to exclude deviant cases. The case study makes them the basis of an original argument. It is not sure that the distinction between hypothesis generating cases and deviant cases does withstand, as it is difficult to imagine a case without a theory, at least a “background theory” (Aliseda, 2006). So it appears to be more appropriate to talk of heuristic case (Eckstein, 1973), this category covering the previous two (hypothesis generating and deviant cases). The general process by which is the enrichment of the theory in this type of case study, undoubtedly the most interesting type of case studies, is abduction (Fann, 1970; Aliseda, 2006). How abduction can operate in a case study has been analyzed by Dubois and Gadde (2002). Ideas created by abduction from a single case have no real scientific validity, but they can (and should) still be solidified through a process of triangulation (Jick, 1979; Flick, 2009: 444 and following) before being rigorously tested by the use of quantitative methods. Passeron and Revel (2005) also highlights this category of cases, cases that constitute a puzzle, an enigma, and that allow the construction of a theoretical framework.

Lijphart mentions a last type of case study, the theory-confirming or infirming case study. Strictly speaking, a case cannot confirm a theory, as shown by Popper. But, when a theory or model has been formulated, a case can establish its plausibility. In this sense, Eckstein (1973) speaks of plausibility probe case study. Yet, one case alone can refute or disprove a theory (Koenig, 2009). But conducting an in-depth case study during several years with the only objective of disproving a theory is a very expensive way of doing research. Therefore, the most fruitful type of case study is the heuristic one, and it is linked with the identification of new causal mechanisms:

It is not the fact that the old theory is strongly disconfirmed that makes a single case study so important; rather, it is its provision of new causal mechanisms in empirical accounts that fit the data at least once. (McKeown, 1998: 14)

The new ideas that a case can produce are not universal laws. They fall under what Merton called middle-range theory. More precisely, a case can allow to identify social mechanisms (Hedström and Swedberg, 1998; Depeyre and Dumez, 2007; Hedström and Bearman, 2009); to build theoretical and exploratory typologies, not only descriptive ones (George and Bennett, 2005); to redefine a concept, in identifying its range of validity, its contexts of application (Dumez, 2011a).

Conclusion

The papers and books on case study are full of insights. But the definitions on which they lie (a single phenomenon, a narrative unit, an instantiation of a class of events) do not account for the complexity of what a case is actually (see representation 3). This explains why researchers conducting a case study are often puzzled by what they encounter in practicing this kind of approach.

Indeed, a case study raises a paradox and three main questions. The paradox stems from the fact that the case, defined as a single unit, must generate a systematic work of comparison: the case with neighboring others, the elements within the case, the elements between cases. The very nature of case study is comparison.

The three questions a researcher conducting a case study must ask herself, and try to find answers to, are : “What is my case a case of?”; “What is the stuff that my case is made of?”; “What does my case do?”

From there, the world appears to be a huge reservoir of potential cases, as the world is everything that is the case.⁴ But we must pay attention to the Latin: *Ex uno omni aspecta* (from one case, understand the whole). It means that it is possible to understand a whole from one case.⁵ But it underscores at the same time the possibility of a false generalization from one case. The case study can be a powerful instrument to bring out new ideas or to rethink established theories; it can also be reduced to nothing. In that late sense, unfortunately, numerous case studies are nothing but scientific disasters.

Notes

1. This notion of “seeing as” comes from Wittgenstein (2008).
2. “If we are uncritical we shall always find what we want: we shall look for, and find, confirmations, and we shall look away from, and not see, whatever might be dangerous to our pet theories. In this way it is only too easy to obtain what appears to be overwhelming evidence in favour of a theory which, if approached critically, would have been refuted” (Popper, 2002: 124). On Popper and the risk of circularity, see Bamford, 1993. Jefferson had also pinpointed this kind of risk: “The moment a person forms a theory, his imagination sees, in every object, only the traits which favor that theory.” (Bergh, 1905: 312)
3. “Die Welt ist alles was der fall ist” [“The world is everything that is the case”], is the first proposition of the *Tractatus logico-philosophicus* by Wittgenstein.
4. As also noted by Virgil : “Et crimine ab uno/Disce omnes” – From one crime, learn everything on all crimes - (*Aeneid*, II, 65)

References

- Abbott A (1992) What do Cases do? Some Notes on Activity in Sociological Analysis. In: Ragin CC and Becker HS (1992) *What is a Case? Exploring the Foundations of Social Inquiry*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 53-82.
- Abbott A (2003) La description face à la temporalité. In: Blundo G and Olivier de Sardan JP (eds) (2003) *Pratiques de la description*. Paris: Éditions de l'EHESS, 41-53.
- Abbott A (2004) *Methods of Discovery: Heuristics for the Social Sciences*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company.
- Aliseda A (2006) What is Abduction? Overview and Proposal for Investigation. In: Aliseda A, *Abductive Reasoning. Logical Investigation into Discovery and Explanation*. Dordrecht: Springer, 27-50.
- Bamford G (1993) Popper’s Explications of Ad Hocness: Circularity, Empirical Content, and Scientific Practice. *British Journal for the Philosophy of Science* 44(2): 335-55.
- Bergh AE (1905) *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson, vol. VI*. Washington DC: The Jefferson Memorial Association.
- Depeyre C and Dumez H (2007) La théorie en sciences sociales et la notion de mécanisme - A propos de *Social Mechanisms. Libellio d’Aegis* 3(2): 21-24.
- Dubois A and Gadde LE (2002) Systematic Combining: An Abductive Approach to Case Research. *Journal of Business Research* 55(7): 553-60.

- Dumez H (2010) La description - Point aveugle de la recherche qualitative. *Libellio d'Aegis* 6(2): 28-43.
- Dumez H (2011a) Qu'est-ce qu'un concept ? *Libellio d'Aegis* 7(1): 67-79 (Supplément: Les concepts en gestion - Création, définition, redéfinition).
- Dumez H (2011b) "L'Actor-Network-Theory (ANT) comme technologie de la description." *Libellio d'Aegis* 7(4): 27-38.
- Dumez H and Jeunemaitre A (2000) *Evaluer l'action publique*. Paris: Editions L'Harmattan.
- Dumez H and Rigaud E (2008) Comment passer du matériau de recherche à l'analyse théorique – A propos de la notion de *template*. *Libellio d'Aegis* 4(2): 40-46.
- Eckstein H (1973) Case Study and Theory in Political Science. In: Greenstein FI and Polsby NW (eds) *Handbook of Political Science*. Reading MA: Addison-Wesley, 79-137.
- Elias N (1994) *Mozart, The Sociology of a Genius*. New York: Polity.
- Fann KT (1970) *Peirce's Theory of Abduction.*, The Hague: Martinus Nijhof.
- Flick U (2009) *An Introduction to Qualitative Research*. Thousand Oaks CA: Sage Publications, fourth edition.
- George AL and Bennett A (2005) *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*. Cambridge MA: MIT Press.
- Gerhardt U (1994) The Use of Weberian Ideal-type Methodology in Qualitative Data Interpretation: An Outline for Ideal-type Analysis. *Bulletin de méthodologie sociologique* 45: 74-126.
- Gerring J (2004) What is a Case Study and What is it Good for? *American Political Science Review* 98(2): 341-54.
- Glaser B and Strauss A (1967) *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*. New Brunswick NJ: Aldine Transaction.
- Hedström P and Swedberg R (eds) (1998) *Social Mechanisms. An Analytical Approach to Social Theory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hedström P and Bearman P (2009) *The Oxford Handbook of Analytical Sociology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hektner JM, Schmidt JA and Csikszentmihalyi M (eds) (2006) *Experience Sampling Method: Measuring the Quality of Everyday Life*. Thousand Oaks CA: Sage Publications.
- Herreid CF (1997) What is a Case ? Bringing to Science Education the Established Teaching Tool of Law and Medicine. *Journal of College Science Teaching* 27(2): 92-94.
- Hull DL (1975) Central Subjects and Historical Narratives. *History and Theory* 14: 253-74.
- Jick TD (1979) Mixing Qualitative and Quantitative Methods: Triangulation in Action. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 24(4): 602-11.
- Koenig G (2009) L'étude de cas à visée infirmationniste. *Libellio d'Aegis* 5(4): 7-13.
- Kuckartz U (1991) Ideal-types or Empirical Types: The Case of Max Weber's Empirical Research. *Bulletin de méthodologie sociologique* 31: 44-53.
- Lijphart A (1971) Comparative Politics and the Comparative Methods. *American Political Science Review* 65(3): 682-93.
- Locke RM and Thelen K (1995) Apples and Oranges Revisited: Contextualized Comparisons and the Study of Comparative Labor Politics. *Politics and Society* 23(3): 337-67.
- Loescher SM (1959) *Imperfect Collusion in the Cement Industry*. Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press.
- McKeown T (1998) Why is a Single Case so Important? *APSA-Comparative Politics Newsletter* 9(1): 12-15.

- Passeron JC and Revel J (eds) (2005) *Penser par cas*. Paris: Éditions de l'EHESS.
- Pettigrew A (1990) Longitudinal Field Research on Change: Theory and Practice. *Organization Science* 1(3): 267-92.
- Popper K (2002) *The Poverty of Historicism*. London: Routledge.
- Ragin C (1992) Introduction: Cases of 'What is a Case?' In: Ragin CC and Becker HS (1992) *What is a case? Exploring the Foundations of Social Inquiry*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1-17.
- Ragin CC and Becker HS (1992) *What is a Case? Exploring the Foundations of Social Inquiry*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Sacks H (1963) Sociological Description. *Berkeley Journal of Sociology* 8: 1-16.
- Van Meter KM, de Vries MW, Kaplan CD and Dijkman CIM (1987) States, Syndromes, and Polythetic Classes: The Operationalization of Cross-classification Analysis in Behavioral Science Research. *Bulletin de méthodologie sociologique* 15: 22-38.
- Whyte WF (1984) *Learning from the Field: A Guide from Experience*. Thousand Oaks CA: Sage Publications.
- Wittgenstein L (2008) *Philosophical Investigations*. Commemorative Edition. Oxford; Basil Blackwell.
- Yin RK (1981) The Case Study Crisis: Some Answers. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 26(1): 58-65.
- Yin RK (2008) *Case Study Research. Design and Methods*. Thousand Oaks CA: Sage Publications, fourth edition.
- Yin RK (2012) *Applications of Case Study Research*. Thousand Oaks CA: Sage Publications, third edition.