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## ***Comparing Differences***

**Selection and demarcation of cases in qualitative comparative case study research**

**Paper – PhD course: Analysing comparative research: qualitative and mixed methods.**

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### ***Abstract***

This paper deals with multiple case studies and challenges when comparing cases from different contexts. The main questions to be addressed are: How can we compare differences? How do we choose cases and how do we study them? The paper will have both a normative and a pragmatic approach. Through my selection of method and cases I will discuss challenges in case study when comparing different cases. I will focus on the process of selecting and demarcate cases.

The centre of attention in my PhD project is governance network, here understood as a vertical model of government. I will study how different governance networks organize, position and legitimize in different geographical settings. The geographical dimension in the study is related to two ongoing regionalization processes: the creation of city-regions and provinces (like “Vestlandet” and “Nord-Norge”). The main hypothesis is that these governance networks are diverse and act differently in city-regions and provinces.

In this project qualitative case study as a research design is chosen to be able to *explore, understand and explain* the internal and external driving-forces that make some governance networks more efficient and dynamic than others. Comparative case-studies give me the opportunity to study how governance networks operate and whether they act and position differently or not in provinces and city-regions<sup>1</sup>. The research strategy output-based backwards mapping will be used to follow different governance networks through a process towards a policy output.

## **INTRODUCTION**

In this paper the relation between differences and comparison are being discussed. The core purpose is to look at main challenges when choosing cases in qualitative comparative case studies. The logic underlying the use of multiple case studies is: each case must be carefully selected so that it either a) predicts similar results or b) predicts contrasting results but for predictable reasons. The main question to be addressed in this paper is: how do we select cases to prepare a rigid comparison? In order to discuss this, a short presentation of my project will be given at first. The comparative case study approach will then be outlined followed by my rationale for choosing qualitative comparative case studies to answer my research question. Further I will use my own strategy and design to discuss methods and challenges when selecting cases. This leads us to the conclusion which summarizes how selections and demarcations are made in the research strategy and possible pitfalls to be aware of.

### ***Project Description***

My PhD project is a part of a NFR (DEMOSREG) project called “Det nye regionale Norge”, funded by the Norwegian Research Council. This project started in 2006 and will continue to 2008. The PhD project started in February 2007. The main objective is to study governance networks in provinces and city-regions, how they organize, position and legitimize. Governance networks are being defined as: “1) *A relatively stable horizontal articulation of interdependent, but operationally autonomous actors, 2) who act through negotiations that involve bargaining, deliberations and power struggles, 3) and takes place in a relatively institutionalized framework of continually articulated rules, norms, knowledge and social imaginaries. 4) It is self-regulating within limits set by external agencies and, 3) contributes to the production of public purpose in the broad sense of visions, plans and regulations*” (Torfing and Sørensen 2005).

This definition is a relatively broad frame describing an interaction between different stakeholders. In this study where different kinds of governance networks will be studied, the definition gives the opportunity to explore the diversity among these. In contrast to government research where structures and processes are more predictable based on legal framework, formal system and structure, governance relations and processes can be more dynamic and unexpected. Kooiman (1993) emphasizes

governance relations and processes as dynamic, diverse and complex. In order to capture this field it is necessary with frames and methodological tools which allow for variations. Torfing and Sørensen's definition of governance network is a starting point and provides a frame and some demarcation. The definition can also capture diversities and differences.

Combining governance and networks into network governance is to join two forces of the same character coming out of the same research concern. The aim of governance research is to de-emphasize the idea of the organization as an anchor point in society and instead focus on governance processes. We can also understand the state as a network mingled with society at large, and consequently interactions patterns are being analyzed between different forms of interest representation. Torfing and Sørensen (2005) uses the concept of governance network as an analytical means to catch a movement of politics and administration towards being intertwined in various forms of interactive networks which in many cases are not prescribed by constitutions, legal framework or statutes.

Why study governance networks in Norwegian cities and provinces? In order to answer, a contextual frame is necessary: First, there are changes in the regional political regime in European countries. This concerns Norway as well. New regions and distribution of tasks between administrative levels are important key words for the discussion on the political debate in Norway.

The county council has the last ten years decreased their power, and is challenged both political and administrative from two angles: On one side city regions are increasing their role as important driving forces in developing national economy. The city-regions can offer a large variation in labour marked science and technology development and specialized business development which makes the city-region growing (Porter 1998, Florida 2002, Jacobs 1985, Holmen and Gjelsvik 2004, Vatne 2005).

On the other side provinces appears as a political and administrative solution to challenges concerning governing. Supporters for this solution mean that the weakened county council needs to be replaced by a regional level with adequate power and resources to handle policy development for both cities and more periphery areas. This is an ongoing process. For the moment the regional debate about how these new regions

will appear are taking place. Discussions and negotiations between county councils and the national ministry are starting this year.

These two regionalization processes represents different interaction processes as well. In city regions interactions are increasingly based on networks crossing institutional and geographical borders. In the other case (county), the hierarchical model with reorganization of geographical and administrative boundaries is also changing to some degree. The development of new networks and changes in traditional hierarchical government is because of these two elements that contribute to different responses in our model of government. Governance represents an alternative to the democratic ideal process and the ideal of marked. The concept refers to a multisentric political system based on a number of autonomous subsystems and network relations (Rhodes 1997, Pierre 1998, Jessop 1998). Governing is in this perspective floating and complex where process and relations as just as important to study as formal organization and institutions.

With the two regionalization processes in mind, we can expect that governance networks are diverse and act differently concerning what regional context they operate in. The two regionalization processes represents different formation and developing strategies. One is based on formal decisions in a system where representation and election decides who to participate in decisions and implementations. Because of this one can expect that governance networks in county regions are based on public-public relations, that they are more formal and institutionalized and that they are more open and permeable in order to legitimate their actions. The other regionalization process is based on a large diversity of stakeholders who engage in one way or another concerning the city-centre and areas connected. Based on the variety of actors one can expect a wider selection among networks in city regions, with various degrees of formalization, kind of actors (public – private, public – public), openness, motives, ways of cooperation/interaction and various ways to position in the region.

Based on the expectations and hypothesis above, the main questions to be addressed in this research are:

1. What kind of internal organization- and interaction processes contribute to strong governance network?
2. Which factors makes a governance network strong and efficient in its geographical area?
3. To what degree are governance networks significant (influence) for ongoing regionalization processes?

The internal conditions in a governance network are considered to affect the networks ability to attain their goals, to be an actor on the regional agenda and to have legitimacy enough to have a position in the region. The internal conditions to be focused on in this study are structure and organization, participants, motives/conditions for participation and the process of decision-making. Studying internal conditions can contribute to understand how governance network operate, why they do so, and how different internal solutions can affect the networks ability to act and position.

Strong and effective governance network can be understood in many ways, depending on who is looking at it and what the motives are. It is a challenge to identifying a “perfect network”. The litterature does not provide such an ideal, like the ideal marked or the ideal democracy. Governance networks appear for different reasons, they maintain for different reasons and they very often change – for different reasons. Strong and effective in this setting is considered to be a governance network that operates and influence on the regional agenda, who manage to implement their goals and to put their strategies on the regional agenda. It is an active network with the strength and resources to act and at the same time have some kind of legitimacy and credibility in order to break through formal decision processes.

The third question addresses how these governance networks position in the regional context and how they in that matter affect the understanding of the region. The way they are organized and the issues they engage in can indicate how they position and how they define their region. Formalisation and institutionalization based on a networks definition of a region, can contribute to a common understanding of how and who to identify with. Strong and effective governance networks may also be able to influence how decisions are implemented, and which stakeholders that can be included.

A comparative case study approach will be chosen to study governance networks. The research design will be based on both case studies, which is an analysis of the network and how it operates *within* its regional context and a comparative study between the cases, which is a comparative analysis of the governance networks *across* the regions. In the first sense the methodological goal is not necessary to generalise, but to understand and explain how the governance network operate and influence in their regional setting (effect and affect) based on its structure. The comparative analyses aims to look for differences and similarities in governance networks between city regions and provinces. Trough the next section I will argue why this methodological approach is chosen and how I tend to use it.

## **COMPARATIVE CASE STUDY RESEARCH**

In the following section I will draw attention to case study and comparative case study research. The main questions to answer are: What is it and why use it?

Case study is one of several ways of doing social science research. Other ways includes experiments, surveys, histories and the analysis of archival information. Each strategy has peculiar advantages and disadvantages, depending on the type of research question, the control investigator has over actual behavioural events, and the focus on contemporary as opposed to historical phenomena (Yin 2003). Case study methodology involves the investigation of a small number of naturally occurring social situations or “cases” and the collection and analysis of a large amount of detailed information about each case (Hammersley and Gomm 2000). The case(s) are bound by time and activity, and data collection occurs over a sustainable period of time. Case studies are often described as an exploration of a bounded system.

The case study has a split position in the social science. On one hand, methodologists generally view the case study method with extreme caution. At the same time, the discipline continues to produce a vast number of case studies, many of which are considered classic work (Gerring 2004). Although much of what we know about the empirical world is drawn from case studies and case studies continue to constitute a large proportion of work, the case study method is held in low regard or is simply ignored. The main critique is generalization and rigidity. Practitioners have difficulties

articulating what it is they are doing, methodologically speaking. This affects the way case studies are defined and used.

Yin defines Case study to be an “*empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident*” (Yin 2003). Gomm has got a more vague definition: “*a specific form of inquiry*”. Gerring defines case study as an “*intensive study of a single unit for the purpose of understanding a larger class of (similar) units*” (Gerring 2004).

Gerrings definition emphasizes generalization as the main goal in case studies. He says that case studies rely on the same sort of covariational evidence utilized in non-case studies. Yin and Gomm underline that generalization is not necessary the goal in case studies. Case studies can be used both for generalization, but also as a method to explore and understand only one case. Gerring points out that even within one single case, generalization will be done diachronically or/and synchronically where a variation in one single unit is studied. Because of this Gerring states that case study method is a matter of selecting and defining cases.

The distinction as to whether to do a single or multiple case study depends partly on the issue of interest, and each type has its advantages and disadvantages. One key consideration is depth over breadth (Creswell 1998). Yin considers single- and multiple case designs to be variants within the same methodological framework, and no broad distinction is made between the so-called classic (single) case study and multiple case study. The choice is considered one of research design, with both being included under the case study method. In other fields, multiple-case studies have been considered a different “methodology” from single-case studies. For example, both anthropology and political science have developed one set of rationales for doing single case studies and a second set for doing what have been considered “comparative” (or multiple-case) studies. Gerring (2004) distinguishes between Case study and Cross-Unit study. He argues that case study is research within a single unit either synchronically, diachronically or both. Cross-Unit study is research across units or cases. Other methodologist (Hopkin 2002, Lieberson 2000) would refer to this as comparative research.

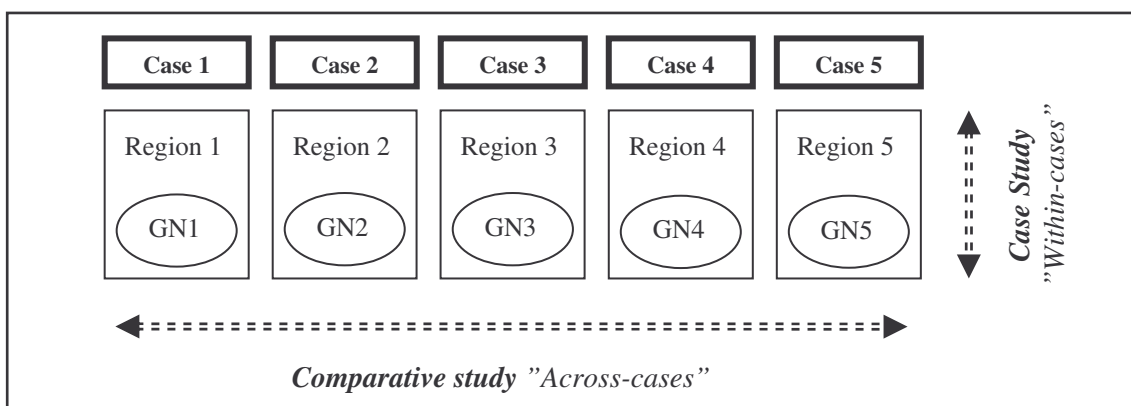
Comparison and the comparative method are used implicitly or explicitly across political science and the social science in general. Comparison serves several purposes.

By making the researcher aware of unexpected differences or even surprising similarities between cases, comparison brings a sense of perspective to a familiar environment and discourages parochial responses to social and political issues. Comparison across several cases enables the researcher to assess whether a particular phenomenon is simply a local issue or the professional academic’s “Holy Grail”, a previously unobserved “general trend” (Hopkin 2002).

The comparative research method literature makes a distinction between two types of comparison. ‘Large N’ (many cases - quantitative) and ‘small N’ (few cases - qualitative) research highlights the different ways social scientists can test their hypothesis. Qualitative research is often regarded as a methodologically “soft” option, inherently less rigorous than quantitative analysis. The apparently greater reliability (all other things being equal) of finding results from ‘large N’ analysis, and the rather descriptive and methodological unsophisticated nature of some ‘small N’ and case oriented research, lend support to this view. However, there is no *a priori* reason to regard case-oriented, qualitative comparative research as methodological ‘soft’. This approach can indeed provide a far more rigorous and sophisticated response to some types of research questions. The most significant contribution is that qualitative studies look at the phenomena within their contexts, looking at the cases as “wholes” (complex combination of variables) (Harkness 2004).

In this research a combination between qualitative case study and qualitative cross-unit study / comparative study will be used. The figure below illustrates this:

Figure 1: Comparative case study approach in this study



The figure is an illustration and shows only five such cases, but my study will consist of nine cases. Shown in the figure above, a case in this study is the governance network in its regional context. The case study is the foundation in this study, giving descriptions

about how the network operates both internal and in its surroundings. The case study also analyzes if and how the governance network is significant for the regionalization process. This will be done through a policy output, which will be outlined later in the paper. The comparative study, which is a study across the cases, compares governance networks between the regions. This comparative aspect is necessary to explore the differences in governance networks in city-regions and provinces. The same main research questions asked in the case study will be analysed here, but through a comparative angle. In this part there is a question of generalization.

Is it possible to generalize from nine cases, where everyone of these is created in its own regional environment? It will be possible through the comparative analysis to reveal if it is patterns in similarities and/or differences between city-regions and provinces. Whether or not it is possible to generalize through discovered patterns will depend on the selection of cases (Gomm 2000, Gerring 2004). Gomm emphasize systematic selection of cases as an approach that case study researchers can use to deal with the problem of empirical generalization. He states that far too often cases seem to be selected solely on the basis of convenience, and turn out to be atypical in important aspects. The choice of cases for study is itself critical, requiring great thought about appropriate procedure for choosing them (Liberson, S. 2000, Hopkin 2002).

Selection of cases will be the main focus forward in this paper, but first a short summarize and clarifying of my rational for choosing qualitative comparative case study as a research strategy in this study.

### ***Why use qualitative comparative case study?***

There are several rationales for choosing qualitative comparative case study to answer my research questions. I will address five main primary reasons for choosing a comparative case study design in this research. First, like experiments, case studies investigate a relatively small number of cases. While in surveys a large number of cases are investigated (Hammersley and Gomm 2002). This research project will compare relatively few cases (9).

Second, in general case studies are preferred strategies when “how” and “why” questions are being posed – an explanatory approach (Yin 2003). This approach is necessary to understand and analyze the different governance network in their

individual context. The aim is not necessary to generalize, but to explore, describe, illustrate and explain.

Third, what separates case studies from other social research is that information is gathered and analyzed about a large number of features of each case (Hammersley and Gomm 2002). Also the ability to handle different data sources is significant. In my case governance networks can appear in different form, with different objectives and motives, within different arenas in different regionalization processes. In order to understand “how” and “why” the need for several data sources is significant in order to establish a broad knowledge about the surroundings these governance networks operate in.

The fourth factor is that case study investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries are not clearly evident (Yin 2003). Policies and practice are changing all the time, so when studying ongoing regionalization processes, the need for a flexible and explorative approach is essential in order to capture the networks dynamics in the process of regionalization.

The last point addresses the reason for choosing *comparative* case study. Comparison can make us aware of unexpected differences or similarities between cases. Also, comparison brings a sense of perspective to familiar environment. Comparison across several cases assesses whether a particular phenomenon is simply a local phenomenon or a more general trend (Hopkin 2002). Governance network studied in different geographical cases and in different regionalization processes, gives me the opportunity to explore if the networks are, act and engage differently in provinces and city-regions.

## **CHOICES AND SELECTION**

*“The object of a social inquiry is seldom an individual person or enterprise. A case is often thought of as a constituent member of the target population”* (Hammersley and Gomm 2002).

Robert Stake (1995) argues that the first criterion, when preparing case studies and selecting cases, should be to maximise what we can learn and to choose cases that are likely to lead to understandings, assertions and perhaps to modifying generalisations. Practical considerations can also be involved in relation to resources, access and how receptive the potential respondents are (Stake 1995). In the following section the

identification of scope, policy area and sites will be done followed by a research strategy for identifying the main research target in this research: governance network. These governance networks will be studied through policy outputs and the process towards this result. The selection of policy outputs will because of this be of significant. This will be discussed in the last part of this section.

### ***Demarcation of Cases (Scope, Policy Area and Sites)***

In order to answer the research questions I could have chosen a single case study, but to be able to explore differences in governance networks in provinces and city-regions, it is necessary to have at least two cases – one from each type of region. Earlier studies of governance networks show that they appear in diverse forms, with different preconditions and incentives. They have different objectives and operate differently (Pierre 2000, Jessop 1998, Torfing og Sørensen 2005, Rhodes 1997). Because of this the need for a comparative study with several cases is significant. Still, in order to understand how and why the different governance networks appear as they do context and depth is of importance. A balance between enough depth to understand the processes and enough cases to be able to explore differences is a fine line, and depends on time and recourses in the project.

The two provinces “Nord-Norge” and “Vestlandet” and the biggest city-regions within, constitute the empirical geographical demarcation for this study. These two provinces were chosen because they are the only ones having a history in formal cooperation. No other provinces have established a cooperation between county councils in this extent as these two<sup>2</sup>. In order to compare governance network in provinces and city region, this is the only selection possible. The city regions within the provinces are Stavanger, Bergen, Haugesund, Bodø and Tromsø. These are defined as regional centres and include the city centre municipality in addition to surrounding municipalities who are sharing the same work, live and service area.

Concerning scope, the level of analysis is regional. Still, governance networks in provinces are presumably regional networks, but this is not necessarily the case with governance networks in city-regions. In provinces the central actor will be county-councils and other public regional/provincial actors. In city-regions I expect networks to include both municipal level and the county level. Stakeholders participating are also

expected to be diverse. The comparative analysis can not be considered as a multi-level analysis, but there need to be an awareness of differences in level concerning the two regionalization processes that represents different region definition.

In this study a demarcation of policy area is done. Examining a particular policy area would help to identify governance networks that might – or might not – overflow their boundaries. Hence, the policy area ought to be one in which it is possible to identify governance networks in both city-regions and provinces and within a policy area where both public and private actors engage at a regional level. Business development is such a policy area which will be used as a demarcation in this study. This is a policy area where normally several interest are involved, and different combinations of initiative and cooperation is common. This policy area is a major interest and task for both the county council level and municipal level who are the main actors in respectively provinces and city-regions.

Concerning criteria for selection of cases, there are different forms of comparative explanations which effects how we choose our cases. Przeworski and Teune (1970) distinguished between “most similar systems (method of difference by Mills)” and “most different systems”. In the most similar system design the researcher chooses cases with many similar features, so that most variables will be held constant and cannot be adduced as causes of any differences between them. Mill, Przeworski and Teune argued that this method was not very helpful, as there will almost always be enough differences between cases to “overdetermine” the depended variable, making it difficult to establish which differences are key and which are not. For this reason they strongly argued that “the most different system” (method of agreement by Mill) was preferable. This approach seeks out similarities between cases in spite of the potentially confounding differences between them. If a hypothesised relationship between two or more variables is replicated across a wide variety of different settings, then there are stronger grounds for arguing that there is causal link between the variables (Hopkin 2002).

In this research Mills method of agreement will be used in the comparative analysis between the different cases. All cases in this research are different because of their geographical location. They also differ concerning type of region in the matter of level and region definition (province and city-region). Still the most fundamental differences between the governance networks are that no networks are the same. There are variation

in size, structure, duration, actors within and formation incentives. Within the definition of governance network together with some contextual demarcation, the goal is to select a variation of cases in order to understand and analyze what makes a strong governance network and to explore how they involve and influence at the regionalization processes.

### ***Identifying Governance Networks***

In order to study governance networks in the field of business development it is necessary to find a uniform way to identify these governance networks to ensure that I can compare them. The goal is to study the complex interaction among all of the social and political actors. The gradual step by step identification of all relevant policy actors in one policy area is slow and time-consuming, but can be accelerated by looking for some formal network structures. Torfing (2007) recommend identifying the different governance networks in relation to a *policy output*<sup>3</sup> in terms of a specific policy report, action plan, project, regulation or initiative. Both top-down and bottom-up policy analyses tend to privilege a certain policy actor, but by beginning with a certain policy output and then attempting to unravel the complex network of actors somehow involved in its production, it is possible to capture all of the relevant policy actors and explore how they act through a process towards a policy output. This is the research strategy of *output-based backward mapping*.

A particularly well-suited method for identifying actors involved in certain policy processes will be used in this study. The so-called “snowball method aims to identify the relevant policy actors on the basis of their respective reputation within a particular policy field. Initially informant interviews, documentary studies (including discourse - analysis in papers and Internet searches) are used to identify a number of central policy actors, who are asked to name other key actors who have been involved in the policy making process. These are then asked to do the same until, ideally, the policy actors no longer come up with new names (Bogason 1998, 2007).

## ***Selection of Policy output***

*“A policy output can be a specific policy report, action plan, project, regulation or initiative” (Bogason and Zølner 2007).*

Output-based backwards mapping is a research design that helps me to identify governance networks. This strategy also narrows down the contextual frame which isolates the case and chances for errors and bias decreases. With this design it is possible to follow a governance network through a “lifeline” process and explore how it operates towards a specific goal. Still, one question concerning case selection is remaining: How do I choose what policy output to follow? What are the criteria for the selected outputs to study?

Identifying governance networks and relevant policy outputs to follow, will be done through the main project – “the new regional Norway”. The first phase in the main project contains a mapping of concepts for regionalisation. All regions (city and provinces) will be explored through a three step process: 1) mapping of material/physical structures<sup>4</sup>, 2) mapping of everyday practice<sup>5</sup> and 3) mapping of the regions profiling strategy<sup>6</sup>, 4) Mapping of institutionalized practice<sup>7</sup>. This creates the context of the governance networks to be studied in each region.

Based on the “population” of policy outputs which are mapped through the first phase, a selection of policy outputs to follow is necessary. The possibility for error in population is in this case a challenge. The mapping process in the main project includes four different policy areas in thirteen regions. It is not likely to believe that all relevant policy outputs will be discovered. Still, important policy output *which is on the agenda* will probably be referred to when talking to central stakeholders in the mapping process. Contemporary policy output is in this study of most interest in order to capture examples which are relevant today.

Selection of policy output discovered has do be done based on certain criteria. Several demarcations concerning selection of cases are already done earlier in this paper: 1. the demarcation of regions which makes the contextual frame for the governance network case to study. Concerning numbers of policy outputs, all regions have to be represented, which means one policy output and governance network in each region (total 9), 2. demarcation of policy area, which is business development and 3. demarcation of governance network as defined by Torfing and Sørensen (2005). The policy output

selected must include such a governance network. These demarcations narrows the choice of policy output considerably and isolates the contextual frame in order to secure both the internal validity within the case study and the external validity in the comparison across cases.

Still, some more selection criteria can be done in order to be clear when choosing governance networks through one policy output. This is kind of a methodological crossroad in this research design: significant demarcation is already done. If I narrow it up even more, I will loose some of the diversity in the different governance network that is chosen. Still, concerning validity and reliability, a further demarcation will be preferred. In this respect, time is one necessary demarcation. In order to study governance network in today's context, it is of value to study processes which is relatively up to date and on the agenda. Another factor is access to data. Backwards mapping implies going back in time, and access to documents and the informant's capacity to remember details decreases over time. Because of this the output should not be older than five years.

The last demarcation to be done is type of policy output. I will concentrate the policy output to concern strategic processes where goal and objectives are outlined, and the output can be identified as a strategic document of any kind. A strategic document can be considered an emerging institutionalized frame for the governance network, which can reveal the networks strategies and working methods towards a future goal. Through this it is possible to expose the regional anchorage through type of participators, responsibility- and resource management and strategies for implementation. This strategic document will be the starting point for the backwards mapping in the search for answers of how governance networks operate and position in their regional context.

## ***CAN WE COMPARE DIFFERENCES – WHAT ARE THE PITFALLS?***

In this paper I have discussed, through my own research strategy, the challenges by creating a rigid comparative case study research. The most prominent critique of comparative case study research is the question about generalization and rigidity. Is it possible to compare cases from significant different context in a qualitative study and generalize? I would say yes, but with assumptions. My main argument through this paper is based on several methodologists and concerns selection of cases: In order to create a rigid and valid case study and in order to compare across cases, demarcation and selection of cases is significant.

The main focus in my research is governance network. The case study will explore how these are organized, how they operate in order to get influence and how they position in their regional context. The comparative aspect will be a “cross-unit study” between the different governance networks. The aim is to look for differences and/or similarities between governance networks in provinces and city-regions. The fact that the governance networks will be studied in different regions and in different types of regions is a traditional challenge in comparative studies. Mills method is chosen to function as a comparative explanation, and the need to limit and define the cases in order to secure validity is because of this significant.

This paper is an attempt to sort out and narrow up my case research through demarcation, choices and selection. Four main demarcations have been done in order to select cases to study and in order to compare them. In addition a research strategy is chosen which limits the contextual setting the governance networks are studied in. Through this paper I have argued why the different demarcations are chosen. I will end this paper by stating some possible pitfalls with these choices:

The first selection made was a geographical demarcation. “Vestlandet” and “Nord-Norge” as provinces and the city-regions was chosen as samples. The ideal in this study would be a comparative case study including one case from every province and city-region in Norway in order to cover a selection from the whole population. Choosing city-regions within provinces instead of choosing city-regions from all over the country can be a possible pitfall. Overlapping governance networks in one province and the city-regions within can occur. It can be a challenge to identify what kind of regional anchorage the different policy output has its basis in. Congruent cultures can also affect

the way governance networks are operating in provinces and city-regions, which can affect the result in how the governance network operates. Still, the comparative aspect between two different provinces can prevent errors.

The second demarcation was the choice of policy area. By choosing only one policy area I might only capture a specific kind of governance network, and lose some variation in how they work. Choosing business development as a policy area also makes a limitation in actors participating. The third sector (voluntary sector) will probably be left out, replaced by a segment of elites in business.

The third demarcation is the definition of governance network. I have chosen one definition among many. The definition is a statement of how the governance network “looks like”. A possible pitfall is that this may not be. Maybe they appear in other forms? If so, how can I really test this definition of governance network? When selecting policy output need to have in mind the different stages the governance network can be in. A governance network is not an institution, nor is it an organization, but something in between. An organization today could have been a governance network yesterday. It is a constant process, which is of severe interest. Time is an aspect in this matter. I will follow the policy output back in time, and most likely shape and structure of the governance network has changed through this period. In the search for policy output this definitional scope needs to be taken into account in order to meet this challenge.

The last demarcation defining what policy output to study governance network through, really narrows the selection of cases. The research design policy based backwards-mapping gives a rigid and stringent way of following a governance network in depth through a process. Through this method it is possible to go back in time and capture all actors and explore how they act in a process towards a policy output. Still, choosing a specific type of policy output in each case can cause limitations in diversity concerning governance network. Following all of these demarcations, the chances for not finding many governance networks are very possible.

Despite “losses” through the process of demarcation and selection, the argument concerning internal and external validity in case study is significant. When operating with different cases representing different geographical areas, different types of regions and the fact that no networks are similar, the need for contextual control is considerable in order to predict similar results or contrasting result for predictable reasons.

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> This PhD-project started February 2007, and is a part of a larger project ("the new regional Norway – city regions or provinces?) at IRIS (International Research Institute of Stavanger). This project is funded by the Norwegian research council under the program DEMOSREG (democracy, governing and regionalization).

<http://www.forskningsraadet.no/servlet/Satellite?c=Page&cid=1119339867705&pagename=demosreg%2FPage%2FHovedSide>

<sup>2</sup> The idea that definable provinces exist in Norway can be tied to cultural and geographical differences. Still there is no definitive, formal and legal demarcation of provinces in Norway.

<sup>3</sup> The alternative would be to start out from a *policy outcome* in terms of the problem-solving effect of a certain policy. However, policy outcomes are not only difficult to measure, but also notoriously difficult to ascribe particular effects to particular policies due to the presence of multiple and contingent causalities. Policy output are much easier to identify and trace back to host of policy actors, who, in one way or another, are responsible for their form and content.

<sup>4</sup> Contains a demarcation of the region, labour in business, landscape and location of important physical buildings/institutions.

<sup>5</sup> Contains work related commuting in the region, newspaper-praxis, travel and shopping habits.

<sup>6</sup> Contains a discourse analysis through how the regions are presented at the internet.

<sup>7</sup> Contains a mapping of different types of actors within different policy-areas. Also a mapping of different types of networks I each region. Also contains a discourse analysis of regional and local newspapers and how they refer to and understand their region.