# Descriptive methodologies: Case Studies

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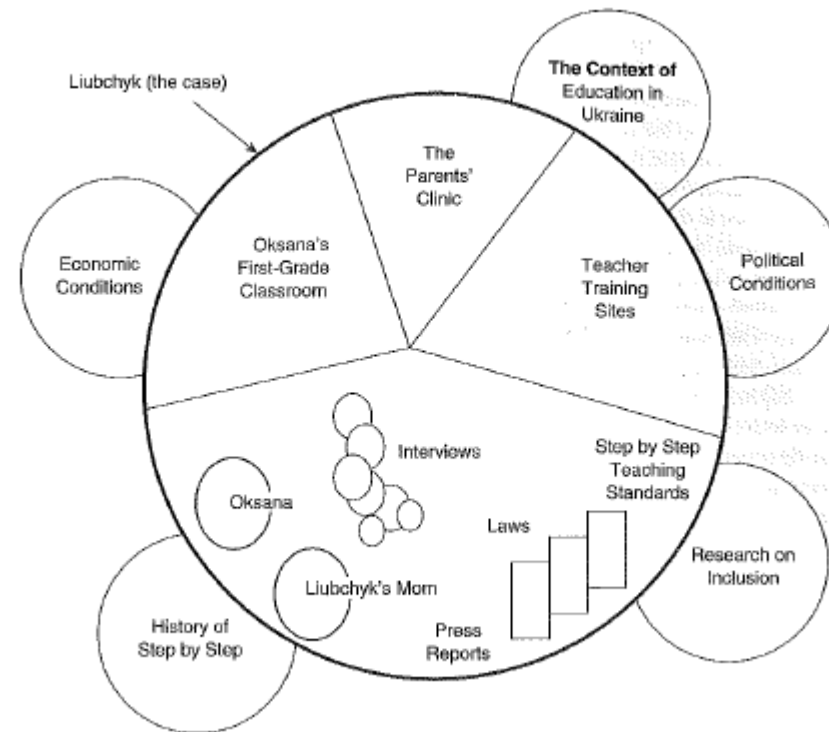Feb 7  2018 Guri Verne,

Design group

# WHAT IS A CS?

- A choice of what to study

  - A case is a **specific, unique, bound system**
    (Stake 2005)

- The study of complex phenomena in their context
  (Baxter & Jack 2008)

- A case study is a situated and detailed inquiry for
  learning – not proving (Flyvbjerg 2006)

- Case studies focus on activities, functionings and
  local meaning within specific case(s)  (Stake 2005)

- A case has insides and outsides

# A case in its context



Liubchyk (the case)

The Context of Education in Ukraine

The Parents' Clinic

Economic Conditions

Oksana's First-Grade Classroom

Teacher Training Sites

Political Conditions

Interviews

Step by Step Teaching Standards

Oksana

Laws

Research on Inclusion

Liubchyk's Mom

History of Step by Step

Press Reports

Issues:

Mainstreaming Versus Special Schools
Child-Centered Versus Teacher-Centered Teaching
Parent Involvement
Teacher Assistants

Main Information Questions:

What does Liubchyk learn in school?
Does his presence distract others' learning?
Does the Ministry support mainstreaming?
What disabilities are not admissible here?
Why did Oksana become an advocate?
How did Liubchyk's socialization change?
Is the teacher training trainee-centered?

(Stake 2005)

# PARADIGM

- Interpretive
- Critical, or
- Positivist

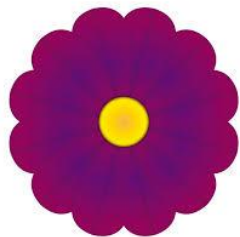- Origin: Social sciences

# METHODS

- Interview
- Observation
- Documents
- Coding (GT)
- Interpretation (GT)

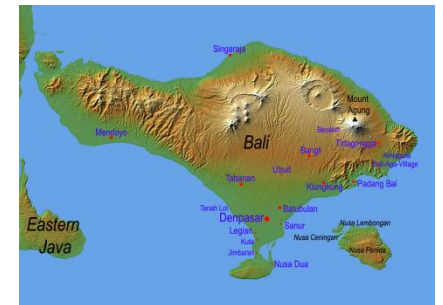  (Stake 2005)

# TYPES OF CASE STUDIES

- Intrinsic – the case itself

- Instrumental – to learn about something else

- Collective case study – to learn from many cases (Stake 2005)

# CASE STUDY EXAMPLES 1

- Deep Play: Notes on The Balinese cockfight (Geertz 1972)
    - Getting access
    - "Much of Bali surfaces in a cock ring"

    - For further readings on Geertz and 'thick description' see e.g. Atkinson & Delamont (2005) + Hylland Eriksen (2006).
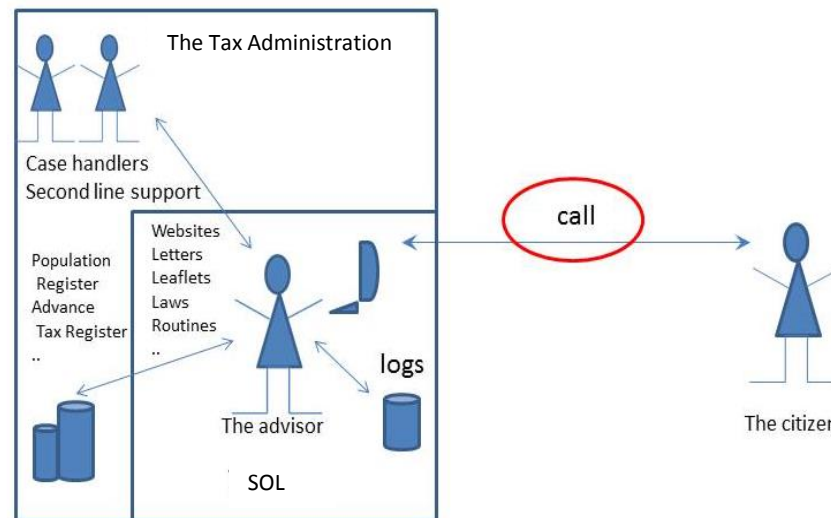

The case =
unit of analysis
(Baxter&Jack 2008)

# CASE STUDY EXAMPLES 2

**"The winners are those who have used the old paper form"**
**On citizens and automated public services (Verne 2015)**

- an instrumental case study within a critical research paradigm (Stake 2005; Myers Living version).

# Description of the case

Chapter 4. The sociomaterial assemblage of doing taxes

# Description of the case

Chapter 4. The sociomaterial assemblage of doing taxes

4.1 SOL - The advisor's workplace

4.2 IT in the Tax Administration

4.3 The call advisor

4.4 The advisor in action

4.5 The callers

4.6 The call



Example 5.2.1: The caller says that she will retire this month. She has talked with a SOL advisor last Friday, and she has received a form for changing her tax card. She needs help to fill it in. "What is included as income? What goes into entry 5.1?" Kathrine explains that costs for refinancing are deductible. The caller has more money in the bank, and Kathrine explains that she will need to check the value of her car; perhaps she has higher interest incomes now, and she will also need to check "other income". The caller says "This is not so easy; I would not have managed it without you". (20111017-16)

Chapter 5. Into the telephone calls

# CASE STUDY RESEARCH

- Figure out what is important about the case within its own world: its own issues, contexts, and interpretations, its "thick description"[1]

- Focus on the case and its activities and functioning + its contexts (social, cultural, economic, legal, political, historical)

- What is going on? – What can be learned from the case?

- Be reflective: think about what you encounter. Dig into meanings, relate them to contexts and experiences. Revise.

- Seeking the particular more than the ordinary

(Stake 2005)

1) Clifford Geertz is one of the founding fathers of this notion by which is meant that ethnographic accounts should include context**s** to fully capture and lay bare a case.

# CASE STUDY RESEARCH

When probing the particular and common (but mostly the uncommon) of a case, take into account and gather material on:

- The nature of the case, particularly its activity and functioning
- Its historical background
- Its physical setting
- Other contexts, such as social, economic, political, legal and aesthetic
- Other cases through which this case is recognized, and
- Those informants through whom the case can be known

(Stake 2005:447)

# SELECTING A CASE

- Learn from atypical cases

- Gives opportunity to learn

- Accessible cases

- Possibility to stay long

- Strategic choice of case

(Stake 2005, Flyvbjerg 2006)

# DESCRIBING THE CASE 1

- Report the collection of field data
  - The research sites
  - The reason for this choice
  - The number of people interviewed
  - Their positions
  - Other data sources
  - Over what period
- How the iterative process between field data and theory took place and evolved (Walsham 2002)



| Tax advisors | 6 |
|---|---|
| SOL Managers | 2 |
| Employees in other units of the Tax Administration, working with their web, IT, or usability | 6 |
| Employees in an NGO | 1 |
| Sum interviews: | 15 |

Table 1: Number of interviews with various groups inside and outside of the Tax Administration.
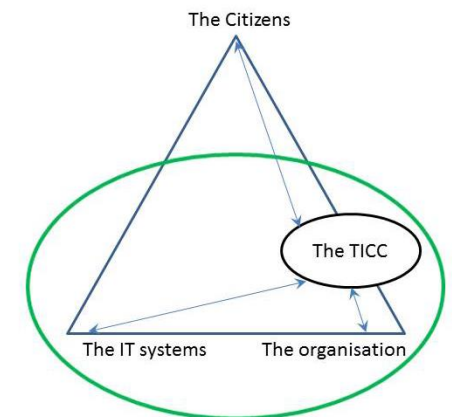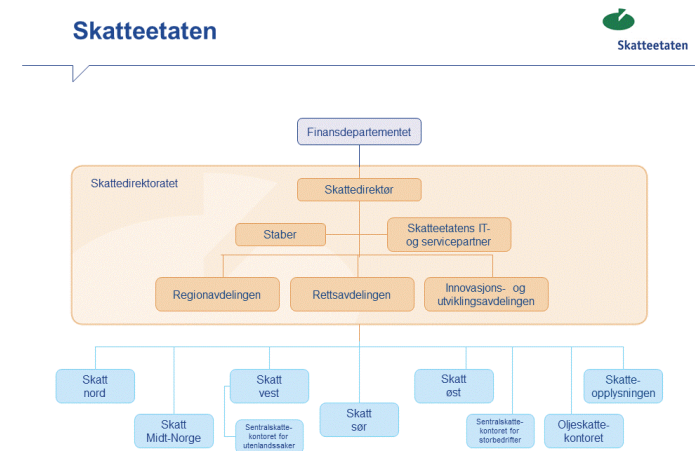
# DESCRIBING THE CASE 2

- Converge data from multiple sources
- Chronological report, a story or address issues (Baxter and Jack 2008)
- Good narratives express complexities of real life
- Details, not general conceptualizations (Flyvbjerg 2006)
- "Present a coherent point of view with grace, wit and felicity" (Van Maanen 1989, p 32)

# ISSUES TO CONSIDER

- Bounding the case, conceptualizing the object of study
- Selecting phenomena, themes, issues (i.e. the research questions to emphasize)
- Seeking patterns of data to develop issues
  - Data collection and analysis occur concurrently
- Triangulating for clarification and diversity
- Selecting alternative interpretations to pursue
- Developing assertions about the case
    (Stake 2005)
- Generalizations – the black swan
- What is this case a case of?

        (Flyvbjerg 2006)

# Literature not listed on syllabus

Atkinson, P. & Delamont, S. (2005): Analytical Perspectives. In Denzin & Lincoln (eds.): *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Sage Publications.

Hylland Eriksen, T. (2006): *Hva er Socialantropologi*. Universitetsforlaget, Norge