Case Study

INF5220
March 13th Guri Verne,
Design group
(based on Sisse Finken’s lecture notes)
FEEDBACK INTERVIEW

- Please remember your group number and names!
- How to present an interview – and information from an interview
- How can your informants answer your research questions?
  - How do we ask?
  - Yes/no
  - Instrumental/practical questions
- Interviewing a familiar or unknown person
- Note-taking on computer or paper
- When does your interpretation start?
- Interview data used for design
- Digital living = smartphones?
- What kinds of technology?
- Generalising
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)
PARADIGM

Origin: Social sciences

• Interpretive
• CS can also be critical and lean towards positivism
TYPES OF CASE STUDIES

• Intrinsic
• Instrumental
• Collective case study
  (Stake 2005)
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 contexts to fully capture and lay bare a case.
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)
CASE STUDY EXAMPLES

• 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

- The calls to Skatteopplysningen (SOL)
METHODS

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

(Stake 2005)
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)
DESCRIPTING 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)
DESCRIPTING 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
