Explanatory Case Study (ECS) Method: A Brief Summary

Work Package 2: Welfare and Social Protection Policies
Our SOPHIE team, working on Work Package 2: Welfare and Social Protection Policies, is based at the Centre for Research on Inner City Health in Toronto, Canada.

**Our Team:**

Fariaha Ali        Emilie Renahy
Aysha Butt        Ketan Shankardass
Alix Freiler
Jongnam Hwang
Christiane Mitchell
Carles Muntaner
Edwin Ng
Patricia O’Campo
The essence of a case study is that it tries to illuminate a decision or set of decisions: *why they were taken, how they were implemented*, and *with what results* (Schramm 1971 as cited in Yin 2014).
ECS: Single and Multiple Designs

Figure 2.4 Basic Types of Designs for Case Studies


SOPHIE Newsletter: Explanatory Case Study Method (June 2015)
ECS: Process

SOPHIE Newsletter: Explanatory Case Study Method (June 2015)
Three conditions must be met to be deemed suitable for an explanatory case study method. The research project must (Yin, 2014):

• seek to explain “how”/“why” a phenomenon occurs,
• seek to examine a contemporary phenomenon, and,
• the researchers must have no control over the phenomenon.
ECS: Data Collection

Examples of ECS data sources:

- Documents (e.g., newspapers such as la Repubblica; articles, books)
- Archival records (e.g., government reports)
- Interviewers (e.g., open-ended conversations with key informants)
- Direct observations (e.g., observing parliamentary proceedings)
- Focus groups (e.g., group interviews with key stakeholders)

*ECS are stronger when there are multiple sources of data as it enables triangulation of evidence.*
ECS: Data Collection

- **Data Triangulation**: Establishes *converging lines of evidence* to increase the robustness of findings.
- Use multiple sources of evidence to establish the same set of events or “facts”.
- Evidence can include qualitative and quantitative types of data.

Source: Yin, 2014, p.121.
ECS: Data Analysis Approaches

• Pattern-matching: Assessing collected evidence against expected outcomes
• Explanation building: Explaining a case and identifying a set of causal links
• Cross-case synthesis: Using multiple case studies to augment study aims

*Increasing the robustness of findings involves developing and testing rival explanations or alternative perspectives.
ECS: SOPHIE Examples

Explanatory *Single*-Case Study:
Using an explanatory case study method, we explain *how* opposition efforts (i.e. strategies and activities) have influenced the maintenance of fuel poverty policies and programmes in England during a time of fiscal austerity (O’Campo et al., Manuscript in preparation).

Explanatory *Multiple*-Case Study:
Following the single-case study, we hope to undertake a subsequent *multiple*-case study that compares our findings with other SOPHIE explanatory case studies. The purpose of a multiple-case analysis is to find similarities across cases, and to further explain the broader mechanisms around opposition efforts and policy change in a time of widespread austerity.
ECS: HiAP Example

Explanatory *Multiple*-Case Study:
In addition to the SOPHIE projects, we have undertaken another explanatory *multiple*-case study that uncovers *how* well-established Health in All Policies (HiAP) initiatives managed to sustain implementation across sectors and across geographic levels of government (Shankardass et al., 2014).
Useful References
