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ARTICLE

The Small N Methodological Challenges of Analyzing Regional Integration

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ABSTRACT As the number of regional integration organizations increases, the attention to case selection in small-N qualitative analysis becomes more necessary in order to avoid selection biases that could produce results with doubtful generalizations. This paper addresses the problem of selecting cases and offers solutions to potential pitfalls in research. First we examine various research designs in qualitative methods and discuss the problems of selecting observations on the dependent variable. We next discuss the operational definition of regions. In order to select from a population of observations, it is important to understand what is and what is not included. Finally, a few implications are presented for the EU studies community.

KEY WORDS: Qualitative methods, comparative regionalism, case selection, inferential validity, regional integration, EU

Introduction

Over time, the number of states wishing to participate in regional integration has increased exponentially, so too has the number of regional integration projects. This fact has opened a debate which holds that the political study of regional integration is no longer the exclusive realm of European Union analysis. Indeed, many scholars have concluded that the European Union does not represent a *sui generis* case and can be compared to other cases in order to better explain the initiation, development, and effects of regional integration around the world.¹ We have also witnessed a conceptual evolution, that has taken us from regional integration concepts closely tied to the

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European case (and model), to a broader and more pluralistic understanding of regionalism and regionalisation (see below).

Although the debate on the so-called 'N = 1' question is perhaps not completely closed, the point of gravity of the debate seems to have shifted in the direction of 'what' and 'how' to compare in order to improve our knowledge concerning these important political phenomena. While large-N studies have utilized appropriate statistical methods, there is a growing body of qualitative work that does not necessarily use appropriate qualitative methods. This perceived preference for qualitative work on regional integration or regionalism by social scientists (other than economists) is due to – at least – three reasons: (i) the inherent heterogeneity of the regional phenomenon, requiring in-depth analysis of each individual case (see below), (ii) the heritage of qualitative research traditions in area studies, where very often research on regionalization emerged (De Lombaerde *et al.* 2010, 31), and (iii) the often underestimated problem of data availability (De Lombaerde *et al.* 2008). As we argue in the rest of this article, the problem with the use of qualitative methods has to do with unclear criteria for case selection, on the one hand, and a lack of clarity concerning the population of 'regions', which is directly linked to a problem of conceptual clarity, on the other.

The purpose of this paper is therefore to suggest various techniques based on systematic information gathering so that qualitative analysis of regional integration can produce valid inferences, specifically inferences that exhibit the detection of covariation among at least two variables (Freundt 1983) (section one). Without such techniques, potential answers to important questions regarding the production or effects of integration would leave us with doubts.

Another important question to consider involves the content of regional integration analysis. Namely, when we study regional integration, *what* exactly are we studying? This question will be dealt with in section two, where we will defend the necessity of conceptual pluralism. The latter is not only linked to the variety of research questions that can be addressed, but also to the observable diversity of the phenomenon itself. For example, the institutionalization of the regionalization process can be very weak (or even nonexistent) or supranational in nature, which speaks to the degree of integration. Further, the researcher can be interested in a specific area where states decided to coordinate decision-making. Such areas can include, but are not limited to, e.g. trade, labor mobility, or monetary policy. The decision regarding what to study is driven by theory and by the ultimate objectives of the research project, but needs to fall within a reasonable definition of regional integration. Nonetheless, selection of what to study needs to keep in mind the pitfalls of case selection biases (some of which are discussed in this paper) and careful attention regarding generalizability.

The first section of our paper examines some techniques that collectively comprise the comparative method of analysis. Comparative case studies can yield valid inferences when appropriate methods are used (King *et al.* 1994; Landmann 2008). The lack of attention to systematic collection of data generates descriptive knowledge regarding a set of examples, but not explanatory

analysis regardless whether regional integration is the explanatory or dependent variable in one's work. These techniques focus on two types of case selection: the most similar and the most different systems design. We then follow with a discussion regarding the problem of case selection biases. Section two discusses the population of cases. Indeed, appropriate case selection starts with the identification of the 'correct' population. And compared to comparative politics, delimiting the boundaries of the relevant population is much more complicated in comparative regionalism. Several complications and their implications are discussed in this section. Section three presents some further implications of our analysis for the EU studies community.

1. The Comparative Method and Avoiding Case Selection Biases

The comparative method is a strategy for conducting research that controls for variables through careful selection (Freundreis 1983). Debates on the appropriate research design center on selecting cases that use either the most similar or the most different techniques. The goal is to select cases for regional integration research that avoid biases so that scholars produce valid inferences. To do this, cases need to be selected so that one does not reach conclusions that either dismiss hypotheses when in fact they are valid (type I error) or support hypotheses when in fact they are not true (type II error). In order to produce valid inferences, scholars need to develop determinate research designs, namely ones that do not make more inferences than cases observed and avoid explanatory variables that are perfectly correlated (King *et al.* 1994). The following procedures help to avoid the indeterminate research design problem.

Lijphart (1971) defines the principal problem of the comparative method as 'many variables, small number of cases'. In studying the development and effects of regional integration, we are faced with a multitude of theoretical explanations. Each explanation comes with a huge number of variables. Part of the scientific process is to determine which variables are generally important, which are important for a smaller set of theoretically important cases, and which are irrelevant in answering our questions. Both designs discussed are alike because they both address Lijphart's principal problem; they both depend on the same logic regarding detecting relationships and controlling for irrelevant factors, namely trying to discover a lack of covariation between the dependent variables and the control variables (Freundreis 1983). However they differ because the most similar systems design attempts to identify the relevant factors while the most different systems design isolates irrelevant factors to eliminate (Freundreis 1983).

The more straightforward of our two suggestions is the most similar systems design. In this design the researcher selects cases that vary on the dependent variable and theoretically important explanatory variable(s) but will also be similar in a large number of variables (Lijphart 1971). If the cases vary between the constants and the dependent variable, then covariation does not exist, thereby removing the constants from consideration (Freundreis 1983). If the explanatory variable(s) covary with the dependent variable, then we can

conclude that there is a valid relationship. The simplest version of this design is Mill's ([1847] 2009) 'method of difference'. All variables are dichotomous, which gives the researcher strong clarity in presenting the covariation of the variables. To illustrate, we examine the relationship between power preponderance and regional integration: *the presence of a preponderant power in the region is a condition that promotes regional integration* (Genna and Hiroi 2004)² (see also Efird and Genna 2002). We select cases where such a power exists and one that does not: Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS). However each case also has a number of other variables we can consider, as displayed in Table 1. Since the two cases are similar on all other variables except power preponderance (where they are different), one can conclude that power preponderance is a necessary condition, or at least one such condition.

In research where it becomes important to demonstrate a degree of variation, Mill's (1847 [2009]) 'method of concomitant' can be used. In this version all variables have a range of values resulting in the researcher needing to explain which sets of covariations are more important than others. To illustrate this we choose the following hypothesis: the more homogeneous the domestic institutions of member states, the deeper the level of regional integration (Feng and Genna 2003). The cases are the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) and Southern African Development Community (SADC) (see Table 2). These two cases have the following constants: European colonial legacy, level of development, and legacy of democratic breakdown. In addition, there is a degree of overlapping membership between the two cases leading to many national attributes as constants.

The other and less straightforward design is the most different method. It is important to note at the outset that there is some confusion as to what this design entails. We will therefore explain the alternative designs. The basic

Table 1. Power preponderance and regional integration I

| Regional arrangement | Regional power present? | European colonial legacy? | Legacy of democratic breakdown? | Sub-Saharan Africa? | Deep level of integration? |
|----------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------|----------------------------|
| ECOWAS | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| ECCAS | No | Yes | Yes | Yes | No |

Table 2. Institutional homogeneity and regional integration

| Level of Institutional Homogeneity | Level of Integration | |
|------------------------------------|----------------------|------|
| | High | Low |
| High | COMESA | |
| Low | | |
| | | SADC |

requirement is that the dependent variable lacks variation across cases, but allows for a wide variation on all potential explanatory variables (Przeworski and Teune 1970). The researcher must then ‘distill’ the possible range of explanatory variables (Jervis 1989; Collier 1995). This is done by examining which potential explanatory factors vary across cases. Since the dependent variable is constant across the cases, all other variables between cases do not covary with the dependent variable and can therefore be eliminated from consideration. Conversely, those potential explanatory variables that are also constant (or nearly constant), can be considered as associated and therefore valid inferences can be made. We use the cases of Southern Cone Common Market (MERCOSUR) and ECOWAS to illustrate this technique using the power preponderance hypothesis. In Table 3 we see that there is difference on all possible explanatory variables except for one, power preponderance.

The controversy arises regarding the level of analysis. One version of the most different design states that different cases are selected, but at the same level of analysis. For example, selecting cases of high degrees of integration and then isolating the irrelevant variables. This method was also illustrated in Table 3. The other version is to select one case at one level of analysis and then break that case down into other levels of analysis and then conduct the distilling process. Advocates of this version point to the resulting constants that can be identified.

For example if a region, such as Sub-Saharan Africa, East Asia, or Latin America, has various cases (levels) of integration, then one can simply go below the regional level in the design. This way the researcher can control for factors such as geographic or cultural variables. Another example would be to select one case of regional integration but to examine different areas of integration such as trade or monetary policy. One can also apply a temporal comparison using the same method. This is done by dividing a case into different events across time in order to see these observation include variables that covary with the dependent variable. For example in Genna and Hiroi (2007) MERCOSUR’s development was divided into critical points which helped explain how Brazil’s behavior either helped or harmed integration. However, Frendreis (1983) correctly states that the differences regarding the two applications are not necessarily important because the same logic holds if one were to examine the same level or different levels.

Since both designs require selecting cases based on knowledge of the variables, it is important to discuss the pitfalls of selection bias. The bias arises because the researcher ‘may overrepresent cases at one or the other end of the distribution on a key variable’ (Collier 1995, 462). If this selection falls

Table 3. Power preponderance and regional integration II

| Regional arrangement | Regional power present? | Iberian colonial legacy? | Recent democratic breakdown? | Sub-Saharan Africa? | Deep level of integration? |
|----------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------|----------------------------|
| MERCOSUR | Yes | Yes | No | No | Yes |
| ECOWAS | Yes | No | Yes | Yes | Yes |

above or below a particular value, then truncation of data can occur. Methodologists tend to agree that the problem of selection bias occurs when one selects cases on the dependent variable. This is defined as a mode of selection that is correlated with the dependent variable (Collier 1995). One extreme form of this problem is the lack of variation on the dependent variable. In fact, some view variation on the dependent variable as necessary to conclude any valid inference (King *et al.* 1994). A milder form of this problem is the truncation of the possible range of dependent variable values.

The difference between the extreme and milder form is that the former will lead to accepting an inference when it is in fact false and the latter will mean possibly rejecting a valid hypothesis or more likely underestimating the strength of the hypothesis (Collier 1995). We would not know for sure if the explanatory variable(s) has inference validity in the extreme form because it (or they) could only explain the value of the dependent that was held constant. In other words, other factors could be important. In addition, nonlinear patterns can produce different estimates, both in size and sign values, if the dependent variable is held constant (Collier 1995). The milder form could leave us believing that a covariance is weaker than we would expect because in a liner relationship we are missing the impact our explanatory values have on the higher or lower range of values on the dependent variable. This would depend on the steepness of the slope.

Of the two research designs mentioned, the most different system design would be more susceptible to this bias because of the requirement of holding the dependent variable constant or nearly constant. So should we abandon the most different design when examining regional integration? The short answer is yes, but there may be conditions where this design is salvageable. One methodologically permissible way to select on the dependent variable is to choose cases at the high and low ends of the range of values (King *et al.* 1994). One could design a study where the researcher selects two sets of cases, one with constants on the high and another with cases on the low end of the range. This way the most different design is employed and the results can be compared between the two sets. Next, the research may be only interested in the application of a theory that only applies to a certain set or sets of values on the dependent variable (Collier 1995). If the research question involves only highly successful or highly unsuccessful cases of integration, then selecting on the dependent variable would be necessary. Moreover, the issue may not be a problem if the researcher is interested only in the correlation and not the size of the correlation, which may be difficult to surmise when using qualitative methods (Collier 1995). Finally, a researcher could argue that the dependent variable lacks wide variation and therefore selecting cases on this criterion is unavoidable. However this researcher could use Fearon's (1991) technique in using counterfactual analysis to increase variance, if possible.

What about selecting on the explanatory variable? Would this produce a selection bias? Selecting on this variable does not produce inference problems because the selection procedure does not predetermine the outcome of the analysis. Using a particular theory would lead us to select certain explanatory

variables. Theory would then drive the researcher to select cases that vary on the independent variable and then see the results of the dependent variable. If no pattern of covariance is detected, then the potential explanatory variables can be deemed irrelevant.

Second, selecting on the independent variable is desirable so that the researcher does not have an overdetermined research design. We have such a design when there are more explanatory variables than cases. This is a problem because one case cannot provide independent information about more than one other fact (King *et al.* 1994). Therefore a design where $N = 2$ can have only one explanatory variable. All other variables must be constant values. Attempting to use more than one explanatory variable will not lead to a unique solution to our question.

Third, selecting on the explanatory variable can reduce the instances of multicollinearity. Multicollinearity is a situation where different explanatory variables are perfect predictors of each other. This is a problem because again we have no unique solution to our problem (King *et al.* 1994). It would be difficult to determine the explanatory value of either variable.

Finally, selecting on the independent variable can help control for alternative explanations, which is needed for the most similar system design. Given the merits of the selection process focusing on the explanatory variables listed above and the importance of this process in the most similar design, this design may be the superior method if discovering valid generalizable inferences is the interest of the researcher.

2. The Population of Cases

In comparative politics, the size and boundaries of the population from which to select the cases in a particular research project is generally not considered a problematic issue. The population is generally understood to coincide with the set of existing countries in the world, or a sub-set of it. At a given moment in time, only a very small number of border cases might require some consideration from the researcher. Such cases could include non-UN member states or self-proclaimed independent states without diplomatic recognition (yet), but these are marginal and easy-to-solve problems. Sub-sets of this maximalist population could be: democratic states, federal states, and so on.

Most researchers consider the total number of countries (or nation states) in this maximalist population as large, although there is not necessarily a consensus about this. Landman (2008, 26), for example, considers more than 50 cases (countries), as a heuristic device, already as a large number. Also from the perspective of statistics and econometrics practice, a figure higher than 200 (i.e. the number of countries) will usually be considered large. However, for Rihoux and Grimm (2006, 2), for example, countries are considered examples of 'naturally limited' populations with small or, at best, intermediate size.

The same authors also explicitly refer to country groupings or regional organizations such as the European Union, ASEAN (Association of South-east Asian Nations), Mercosur, etc., as naturally limited populations and add

that these small-*N* research designs are particularly suited for mixed-method approaches (Rihoux and Grimm 2006, 3). This will be further developed in the next section.

Suffice it here to observe, and warn, that there is not necessarily a one-to-one correspondence between the size of a population and the empirical method (qualitative, quantitative, or mixed) to be used. This is related to the fact that, just as in comparative politics, a distinction should be made between cases, units of analysis, and observations (Landman 2008, 18–19). Let us illustrate this with an example. If one would like to test whether trade liberalization, in the context of regional arrangements, leads to more trade, one could start by selecting a number of relevant arrangements using criteria as discussed in the previous section (e.g. EU, ASEAN, Mercosur, Andean Community and so on). These would be the ‘cases’. One could then opt for a micro-level approach, gathering data at the firm level. The firms located in the member states would thus constitute the ‘units of analysis’. Finally, one could gather data for a number of relevant variables: tariff reductions, firm export levels, firm export destinations, firm size, red tape faced by the firms, perceptions of business people, etc. The ‘observations’ are the values of the variables for a given firm in a given member state. The analytical method that will be chosen depends on the nature of the variable (mainly whether it can be quantified or not) and the number of observations, *not* the number of cases.

Let us now return to the issue of the population of cases in comparative regionalism, which is more complicated than in comparative politics. If we take the latter as a point of reference, several complications can be observed.

A first complication is that regions are moving targets, much more than countries are. Whereas many countries (states) have been relatively stable in terms of their attributes over a long period of time, this is not the case for regions. Even if we limit ourselves to the post-World War II period, the world of regions has undergone important changes and has become ever more diverse. Following Hettne and Söderbaum (2004, 5–6), we agree that the world of regions gradually moved from a situation dominated by unidimensional (or unisectoral) organizations to a situation characterized by the presence of multidimensional organizations, on the one hand, and less formally institutionalized regional networks, on the other. The diverse world of regions today is the result of a proliferation of regional initiatives in different geographical, cultural and historical contexts. This variety has led several observers to plead for flexibility when defining ‘regions’ or ‘regional organizations’ in a comparative context (e.g. Hettne 2003; Laursen 2003; Dabène 2009). Although there are indeed good reasons to be flexible, the price to pay is the difficulty to clearly establish the boundaries of the population of relevant cases.

This brings us to a second and related complication. Whereas countries (or nation states) are defined through international law (diplomatic recognition, UN membership), thus solving the problem for the researcher, this is not the case for regions. As already suggested in the introduction, the definition of the ‘region’, and therefore the delimitation of the population, is part of the problem in academic research. And in effect, many definitions circulate in the

academic literature. From ‘classical’ definitions such as Nye’s (1971, vii: ‘a limited number of states linked together by a geographical relationship and by a degree of mutual interdependence’), we have moved to more recent definitions that emphasize more the process characteristics and multidimensional character of regionalization, and the presence of a multiplicity of actors. There is also more awareness that it makes sense to distinguish more clearly between regional interdependence, driven by these multiple actors, on the one hand, and regional institution-building, on the other. This conceptual evolution is not only the result of the dynamics of the regional phenomenon per se, as discussed in the previous point, but also of the changing understanding of it under the influence of *new* regionalism.³

As argued by De Lombaerde *et al.* (2010), conceptual pluralism therefore seems to be inevitable and the definition of the regional concept will depend on the research questions that are being addressed in a particular research project. A variety of essential characteristics of a region can be put forward, both internal (i.e. intra-regional) and/or external (extra-regional). It is the choice of the definition that will guide us then when delimiting the population of cases and the identification of relevant comparators in comparative research. In other words, regions have to be ‘unpacked’ before they can be compared; and comparison focuses on particular areas of regionalization (Warleigh-Lack and Van Langenhove, this volume). Broader definitions of regions (for example, definitions allowing both supra-national and sub-national regions to be included, definitions allowing regional non-state governance systems to be included, or definitions based on regional agreements including regional trade agreements) will logically lead to larger populations of cases; narrower definitions (for example, regional organizations) will lead to smaller populations. In addition, the larger the population, the more heterogeneous it will be.

A third complication refers to the possibility of the existence of overlapping regions. In comparative politics, dealing with sovereign states, this issue is practically nonexistent, with the possible exception of joint protectorates at some points in history. If we look at the world of regions, the situation is quite different. Independently of how they are exactly defined, regions (both formal and informal) usually overlap with other regions. In other words, membership or belonging is usually not exclusive. Let us illustrate this with an example. Table 4 shows a selection of African regional arrangements, included in the RIKS (Regional Integration Knowledge System) database, which includes a set of 66 regional arrangements. Most member states seem to be part of seven, eight or nine overlapping memberships. Chad, for example, is a member of no fewer than ten regional arrangements.

This poses particular challenges for empirical research. As many or most of these regional arrangements have coinciding policy objectives (e.g. to build or maintain regional peace, to enhance political stability, to foster regional growth and prosperity, etc.) and share policy instruments (e.g. tariff reductions, sectoral policy cooperation and coordination, technical secretariats, etc.), it will often be difficult to assess, ‘separate’, and attribute explanatory factors, policy effects and causalities that are specific to a particular

Table 4. Overlapping memberships in selected regional arrangements in Africa

| | Number of RAs to which individual member states belong | | | | | | | | | | Number of member states per regional arrangement |
|--------|--|---|---|---|---|---|----------|---|----------|----|--|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | |
| EAC | | | | | | | 1 | | 4 | | 5 |
| ECCA | | | | 1 | | 1 | 2 | 4 | 3 | 1 | 12 |
| ECOWAS | | | | | 2 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 4 | | 14 |
| SADC | | | | | 2 | 1 | 4 | 5 | 2 | | 14 |

Source: Based on RIKS data, <http://www.cris.unu.edu/riks/web> (last visited 16 March /2010). The figures in bold show the location of the median.

case. This is a problem for quantitative analysis (although in time series or panel data analysis non-concurrent timing of events can help solving it), but also for qualitative approaches. For example, it might be difficult to attribute qualitative variables such as ‘business climate’ or ‘political climate’ in a region with multiple arrangements to a particular arrangement, even if it is clear that these arrangements are playing an important role in this respect. The existence of overlapping regions also questions the applicability of comparative politics approaches where overlapping membership is – as mentioned before – not an issue. It also questions the idea that regions are good examples of naturally limited population (see above).

3. Implications for EU Studies

The main task of this article was to introduce methods that researchers can consider in order to improve inference validity. Even ‘case studies’ can benefit from these suggestions when they are broken down into multiple observations. The following implications of these methods are important when causal mechanisms and generalizable theories are sought for explaining a group of observations.⁴

The major implication of a rigorous case selection strategy is the opportunity it gives for doing more with the information in hand. A description of a set of events without a careful examination of what and why to compare may produce a literature with a nice set of historical accounts, but what would be missing is a way to fit the pieces of the puzzle together. The identification of a population of cases, the isolation of explanatory variables and an unbiased method to demonstrate validity allows us to safely accumulate usable knowledge. This is knowledge that we can replicate using other cases or convincingly refute when it does not apply to other cases. With this method we can come to some reasonable point in understanding the generalizability of a theory and/or the uniqueness of a regional case. Perhaps the outcome of this accumulation of knowledge may be that the European

Union, for example, is in fact *sui generis*. However if this conclusion is reached it is done so by a careful testing of theory across many cases and not by simple assertion.

The task of fitting the pieces of the puzzle together can be difficult if we are defining the pieces differently. As mentioned in the previous section, isolating what a population of cases includes and does not include is problematic. Therefore when accumulating knowledge it is important to line up the cases, observations, and units of analysis correctly. As mentioned before, a fundamental problem is related to the definition of regional integration. Economists and political scientists, inside and outside of EU studies, for example, often differ on what this means. Economists often refer to the levels of trade, capital and labor mobility, etc. while political scientists focus on the establishment of institutional structures that enable trade, capital, and labor to move freely. Therefore process and outcome become confused if we are not certain of the definition. But even if scholars within EU studies have a common view regarding what European integration would include and exclude, would this definition be shared with those outside EU studies? If not, then the accumulation of knowledge regarding regional integration around the world would also be disjointed.

Another implication is the need to develop research teams or individual expansion of area expertise. In order to do justice to the cross-case comparison, expertise must be at hand. Expert knowledge of facts, language, histories, societies, etc., will add depth and content validity to any study. In fact inferential validity needs the content as much as the methodological considerations! Otherwise we have a good research design and not much else. Aspirations to be knowledgeable about every case of regional integration is noble, but for most, not feasible. The solution would be for those that are knowledgeable in one area, either geographic or theoretical, to team up with others in order to achieve both the rich content *and* the methodological rigor to produce a convincing analysis. Another strategy would be to become an expert in a new theory or geographic area, but this may be time-consuming. If teams are viewed as a reasonable way to expand knowledge about regional integration, one starting point is for EU experts with theoretical expertise to team up with diverse area experts to answer basic and complex questions. Since the EU is the most developed and complex case of regional integration, it offers a rich array of both substantive and temporal comparisons. For example, does the development from a FTA (Free Trade Area) to a customs union follow similar patterns around the world? One could isolate the significant variables that led to this development in the EU with other cases using one of the methods discussed above.

4. Conclusions

This article has explored ways to increase the quality of empirical research in comparative regionalism. Apart from tackling the (quantitative) data bottleneck which would open the door to more quantitative and mixed method research, we argued that this can be done in two complementary ways.⁵

Firstly, as in much (most?) comparative regionalism research, case selection is done on an *ad hoc* basis and is not based on explicit and valid selection criteria; there is room for more rigorous research when based on appropriate research designs and selection biases are avoided. This was illustrated with several examples.

Secondly, the quality of comparative research can gain from a clearer delimitation of the relevant population of cases. We have shown that in comparative regionalism at least three specific complications have to be addressed: the character of regions as moving targets, the plurality of regions (and the need to ‘unpack’ regions), and the existence of overlapping regions. We have also warned that there is no one-to-one relationship between the size of a population and the method chosen; a clear distinction should be made between cases, units of analysis, and observations.

Finally, we have presented some ideas about the implications of our analysis for the EU studies community. We argued that the community can benefit from: (i) a more rigorous case selection strategy because it allows more (and more useful) knowledge to be accumulated, (ii) more conceptual clarity because this is a pre-condition for more comparative research, and (iii) a re-organization of research teams so that existing expertise can be better combined and lead to new insights.

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Notes

1. See, for example, Caporaso *et al.* (1997), Laursen (2003, 2010), Telò (2007), Kühnhardt (2009), De Lombaerde *et al.* (2010), and Warleigh-Lack and Van Langenhove (this volume). For a contrasting view, see, for example, Hix (1994, 1999).
2. We do not go into the theoretical underpinnings of this and other illustrative examples due to scope and space limitations.
3. On the new regionalism, see for example, Hettne *et al.* (2000, 2001), Breslin *et al.* (2002), De Lombaerde (2003), and Söderbaum and Shaw (2003).
4. See also Warleigh-Lack and Van Langenhove (this volume) on this point.
5. On the use of mixed methods, see for example, Lieberman (2005) and Rihoux and Grimm (2006).

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