

Case Study in Croatian Administrative Science: Towards a Common Research Model?

Jasmina Džinić *

UDK: 35.071:001.891(497.5)
3.071:001.891(497.5)

<https://doi.org/10.31297/hkju.26.1.3>

Review paper / pregledni znanstveni rad

Received / primljeno: 2. 11. 2025.

Accepted / prihvaćeno: 4. 2. 2026.

The aim of this paper is to examine the elements of a successful case study in social sciences and, specifically, how a case study contributes to the development of Croatian administrative science, i.e. whether there is a kind of emerging common research model. An analysis of the papers in one selected scientific journal and doctoral theses was conducted for that purpose. It showed that, for the successful implementation of a case study, it was of utmost importance to follow basic elements recommended to conduct a case study in social sciences, such as careful selection of cases and in-depth elaboration thereof, and preparation of a research protocol. On the other hand, due to the broad subjects (potential cases and phenomena) of

* Jasmina Džinić, PhD, Associate Professor at the Department of Administrative Science, Faculty of Law, University of Zagreb, Croatia (izvanredna profesorica na Katedri za upravnu znanost Pravnog fakulteta Sveučilišta u Zagrebu, Hrvatska), email: jdzinic@pravo.unizg.hr.

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3927-6875>

interest in administrative science, it seems that the case study research model is in the continuous process of development. In addition to the detection of new relevant variables and relations in the field, the application of a case study also contributes to mutual learning among scientists on this research approach and its further development.

Keywords: case study, methodology, administrative science, research model, public administration

1. Introduction

The debate on the usefulness of the case study as a research method, its advantages and disadvantages, has been around for several decades. Placed within the group of qualitative analysis methods, it is especially criticized when units of analysis are organizations. It is stated that “qualitative research on organizations cannot be expected to transcend storytelling” (Miles, 1979, p. 600) which led to conclusions of a potential case study crisis (Yin, 1981). The stance towards the usefulness of a case study depends also on the ontological and epistemological perspectives of an author. In that sense, reorientation from the positivist approach to the realistic or interpretative approaches contributes to the popularity of the case study (Gerring, 2007, p. 5). Nevertheless, the ratio of case studies to empirical studies in published papers, as well the amount of the articles featuring case studies in the total number of published articles have been increasing since 1970s (Koprić, 1999, p. 277). Moreover, the analysis of selected journals on public administration shows that the case study, i.e. qualitative studies are the most common used method of empirical analysis in the field of public administration (Groeneveld et al., 2015; Lopžić, 2013). Despite the trend towards more quantitative research and behavioural public administration (Groeneveld et al., 2015; Haverland & Van der Veer, 2018, p. 1136), case study research is still important for the field of public administration and management, especially when it comes to the analysis of macro-level phenomena (Haverland & Van der Veer, 2018, p. 1137).

Starting from a broader interpretation of the case study research approach and the fact that it can include various types of evidence and methods of data collecting, it is expected that the use of the case study can contribute to the development of social sciences in general, and administrative sci-

ence in particular. However, the case study may be considered an appropriate and legitimate research strategy in the circumstances where accessibility to administrative organisations is limited, or due to other research (in)conveniences. This could lead to insufficient attention dedicated to methodology used, various shortcomings in the conduction of empirical research and consequently questionable relevance of the scientific contribution of such papers to scientific development. In general, not much of scholars' attention is dedicated to the analysis of research methods in administrative science, or to the study of journals dealing with public administration (Lopižić, 2013, pp. 411–412).

The aim of this paper is to examine the elements of a successful case study when applied in administrative science, and how this research strategy contributes to the development of Croatian administrative science. To find the answers, this paper provides an analysis of the representation and content of case studies in the selected journal and doctoral theses in the field of administrative science in Croatia, and a discussion on selected papers.

The paper is organized into six parts. The introduction is followed by a theoretical framework based on main postulates and previous empirical research on case study methodological strategy. This is followed by the part on methodology applied (selection of the journal, issues, articles and doctoral theses for the analysis), and a presentation and discussion of the results. Basic elements of a common case study model for research in administrative science are identified based on the theoretical framework and content analysis. Main conclusions of the research are provided in the final part of the paper.

2. Case Study as a Methodological Approach in Social Sciences and Administrative Science

Case study is a research strategy or methodological approach which "attempts to examine a contemporary phenomenon in its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (Yin, 1981, p. 59). In doing so, it can be used to achieve various specific aims, such as provide a description, test a theory or generate a theory (Eisenhardt, 1989, p. 535). Difficulties or even impossibility to detach the research object from the context leads to problems in the analysis, including a series of contextually different cases

(Gerring, 2007, p. 3). It is much harder to conduct experiments in social sciences, so a case study seems to be an appropriate strategy which may be characterized as a kind of a “quasi-experiment” approach.

The aim of a case study and the subject of its investigation make a difference in comparison to other research strategies such as an experiment, a history or a retrospective study, a simulation, a comparative analysis and a longitudinal analysis. It is often placed within the group of qualitative research methods (Guerra, Gomes & Silva Filho, 2015), but it does not imply the use of specific data collection methods or type of evidence, and there are a number of case studies relying on quantitative data or a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods (Yin, 1981, pp. 58–59). Moreover, Yin (2003) states that no single source of evidence has an advantage over others, and that for a good case study, it is recommendable to use as many sources as possible. Eisenhardt (1989, p. 533) upholds not only the usage of multiple data collection methods, but also the combination of qualitative and quantitative data in order to achieve “synergistic view of evidence”. However, in order to conduct a deep and detailed analysis which contributes to the validity and reliability of the research, it is not sufficient to use a combination of techniques with no justification for their selection. It is of utmost importance to indicate their research tasks and objectives (Guerra, Gomes & Silva Filho, 2015, p. 283).

Since the case study method relates to one or several cases or units of analysis, the issue of potential risk to make generalizations based on the results of such kind of studies has been extensively discussed in the literature. The most common criticisms regarding the case study method are exactly the absence of representativeness and difficulties with generalizations (Adams & Schvaneveldt, 1985, p. 114; Gerring, 2007, p. 6; Yin, 1992, p. 132). However, as Yin (2003, p. 10) states, the aim of the case study is not to serve as a “sample” and to enumerate frequencies (statistical generalization), but to expand and generalize theories (analytic generalization).

Administrative science is a social empirical science which deals with the studying of various issues related to administrative organizations and management in public administration (Koprić et al., 2014, p. 16). Dealing with administrative organizations facilitates empirical verification of the theories, since organizations are easily definable social systems in the sense of space, material, structure, functions, etc. (Koprić, 1999, p. 274). On the other hand, administrative organizations are complex social systems which cannot be extracted from the context in which they act.

Therefore, a case study approach seems to be highly appropriate for the empirical research in administrative science (cf. Yin, 2003, p. xv). At the same time, a case or *locus* of research (such as an administrative organization, a municipality, etc.) should be carefully and not randomly selected (Eisenhardt, 1989, p. 533). Furthermore, it must not be confused with the phenomenon which is going to be studied (such as performance management in municipalities, corruption in public institutions, relation between civil servants and citizens, etc.). Moreover, the relationship between the case and the phenomenon must be clarified, i.e. the explanation of why a particular case was selected for the investigation of a specific phenomenon should be provided (Guerra, Gomes & Silva Filho, 2015, p. 283).

Notwithstanding the different subjects of interest of administrative science and other social disciplines, former research shows that all of them face the same problems regarding the use of case study (Guerra, Gomes & Silva Filho 2015, p. 283). Therefore, the basic proposals for the successful implementation of the case study could be summarized as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: *Basic elements of the case study methodological approach*

Element	Reason
Case study selection strategy	Explains why case study as methodological approach was selected
Clear identification of the case (<i>locus</i>) and phenomenon of the research interest	Clarifies why specific case was selected and what could be its contribution to the understanding of the phenomenon
Triangulation of research techniques with clear justification for their use and the aim that is going to be achieved	Case study is not limited to specific research method, and it is recommendable to use as many as possible in order to produce more profound results
Description of findings	Explains the contribution of the research to the theoretical development and provides the possibility for the replication of the study

Source: Author based on Guerra, Gomes & Silva Filho, 2015.

In the following part of this study, further elements of successful case studies will be identified through the analysis of the papers published in the Croatian journal dealing with public administration issues, and doctoral theses applying the case study as a main strategy for the empirical part of the research.

3. Case Study in Croatian Administrative Science

3.1. Method

To achieve the aim of this study, a twofold analysis was conducted. First, all issues of the Croatian and Comparative Public Administration (CCPA)¹ published until October 2025 were reviewed and an analysis was conducted of all the scientific papers that have applied the case study in the field of administrative science. Secondly, doctoral dissertations from the field of administrative science applying the case study strategy and defended in the period 1991 – 2025 at law faculties in Croatia,² were analysed.

Initially, all articles published in the CCPA that included the words *case study* (*studija slučaja* in Croatian) in their title, abstract and/or key words were selected to form a basis for further analysis. In total, 93 issues of the CCPA, each comprising six scientific papers on average, have been published since 1999. However, only nine papers applied the case study methodological strategy, out of which seven (six in English and one in Croatian language) can be classified in the field of administrative science.³ Contrary to expectations based on previous research on the application of the case study in public administration, it was shown that very few papers (approximately 1.61%) published in the CCPA had explicitly used a case study as methodological approach.

3.2. Findings

The first paper, titled “The Croatian Public Administration Is in a Stormy Period”, written by Koprić and published in the CCPA issue number 3

¹ Croatian and Comparative Public Administration (CCPA) is the first and only journal in Croatia specialized for researching public administration. It was established in 1999 by the Institute of Public Administration under the name Croatian Public Administration, but the new name was adopted in 2011. Although published in Croatia, it is an international journal due to the composition of the editorial board, languages represented and international bases where it is indexed and abstracted. See more at: <https://www.ccpa-journal.eu/index.php/ccpa>.

² Most theses in the field of administrative science (20 out of 21) were defended at the Faculty of Law, University of Zagreb. In the selected period, one thesis was defended at the Law Faculty of the University of Osijek.

³ Two papers contain the words “case study” or “studija slučaja” in their abstracts, but they do not apply the case study as a research approach; instead, they analyse other case studies and therefore are not included in the analysis of this paper.

from 2009, represents the author's presentation at the International Political Science Association's XXI World Congress of Political Science held in Santiago de Chile, 12 – 16 July 2009. Therefore, the text is rather short, and it focuses on main issues of the topic. However, it gives a special contribution to the development of the case study approach in administrative science. Namely, the author listed several issues that, according to his opinion, should be addressed in the case studies of national bureaucracies and reform policies (Koprić, 2009, p. 611). The following issues were indicated:

- a) outline of a particular administrative system,
- b) the phases in its development,
- c) the main problems,
- d) current reform efforts, including documents on reform policy,
- f) perceived environmental influences, possible future development (and proposals, if possible).

This is the framework used in the analysis of Croatian public administration, which could be easily replicated and applied to administrative systems in other countries, and thus serves as a basis for comparative analysis. By doing so, the development of the case study as a research strategy was broadened from mere technical issues that should be followed in all social sciences to include more specific issues related to the content from the narrower field of administrative science.

In the paper "The Influence of Organizational Environment on Administrative Coordination: Croatian Ministry of Public Administration as a Case Study" written by Giljević and published in the CCPA issue number 4 from 2015, the author gives special attention to research methodology and discussion about triangulation used in the study. However, since the paper is the result of a broader study conducted during the preparation of a doctoral thesis and probably due to usual limitations in number of words required by the journal editors, neither this article goes into depth when explaining selected methodological approach. This is the only paper published in the CCPA in which the object of a case study is a state administration body.

The rest of the papers selected either countries or municipalities as the objects of their case studies.

In the paper "Local Perspective on the Practices and Challenges of Migrant Integration: The Case of Warsaw" written by Winiarska and Wojno, published in the CCPA issue number 3 from 2018, the authors focus "on

the case study of Poland and specifically its capital city – Warsaw” (Winarska & Wojno, p. 342). So, it is a case of a state or a city as the unit of the analysis. However, the paper does not go into any explanation of the methodology, nor does it provide reasons for choosing the state or city as a case – it is simply assumed that the analysis of a certain phenomenon within a limited territory (a state or a city) constitutes a case study.

In the paper “Local Government Capacities for the Integration of Migrants: Good European Experiences and Practices” written by Đorđević and published in the CCPA issue number 3 from 2018, the author selected five cities with good integration practices to conduct an in-depth analysis. The research methods and the explanation of selection of cases are shortly presented. The cities and regions analysed differ from one another in terms of national conditions for the integration of migrants, but they all show good results in this regard, and that formed a basis for their selection.

The paper “Application of Multi-Criteria Analysis on Theatres’ Efficiency – Czech and Polish Comparative Case Studies” by Bečića and colleagues, published in the CCPA issue number 3 from 2021, presents a comparative analysis of theatre efficiency in two countries. In this study, the comparative analysis consists of two case studies that are examined and compared with each other. First, case studies are conducted in both countries to provide an in-depth understanding of theatre efficiency, and then a comparative analysis is performed to compare the results and offer a broader insight into the phenomenon. The criteria for case selection, as well as the research methodology, are explained in detail.

The authors of the paper “Counter-Urbanisation as Refuge During the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Case Study from Turkey”, published in the CCPA number 4 from 2023, analysed the phenomenon of counter-urbanisation in selected Turkish districts (Memis, Düzgün & Köseoglu, 2023). In special chapters on research field and research methodology case selection, a case study as scientific approach and research methods (semi-structured interviews, observation) are extensively explained.

In the paper “Public Participation in Rapid Response Services for the Sustainability of Jakarta Smart City” by Firman, Idrus and Rahmawati published in CCPA, issue no. 3 (2024), the authors employ a case study approach to gain an in-depth understanding of participation and sustainability in the implementation of smart cities. While the rationale for selecting the case study as a research approach is not explained, the selection of interviewees and the use of data obtained from the official government

website are described. The authors also explicitly acknowledge the study's limitations, specifically referring to a key characteristic of the case study method – the limited number of samples, which restricts the ability to draw broader generalizations.

Although some of the analysed papers explain the case study selection strategy, the rationale for case selection, and the research methods, none of them (except the one that explicitly discusses the study's limitations) addresses the role of the case study or its contribution to theoretical development in the presentation of findings.

The limitations on the length of papers imposed by journals often prevent an extensive explanation of the scientific approach and methodology used, and sometimes even a comprehensive presentation of the research results. However, this is not always necessary, especially when case studies are conducted as a part of larger scientific project or doctoral dissertation. What is important is that the case study is conducted according to professional standards; thereafter, in the paper aimed to be published in a journal, it is sufficient to briefly explain the scientific approach, methodology, research results, and main conclusions, taking into consideration all the elements indicated in Table 1.

Analysis of the doctoral theses showed that the case study approach had been applied in five out of 20 dissertations analysed.⁴ Unlike most of the papers published in the CCPA, dissertations that use a case study as a research approach provide a detailed explanation of the methodology, including the use of the case study itself.

The aim of the dissertation “Inter-conditionality Between Structure and Communication in Administrative Organizations” written and defended by Koprić in 1999 was, on one hand, to examine the conditionality of communication by a structure when the structure was taken as an independent variable, and communication as a dependent one. On the other hand, the aim was to determine the reverse impact of communication on the structure of administrative organizations when communication was considered as an independent, and structure as a dependent variable (Koprić, 1999, p. 5).

The author very carefully approaches the empirical part of the study. All necessary elements for successful application of the case study indicated

⁴ Since the author of this paper is the author of one of the doctoral dissertations belonging to this group, to avoid any subjectivity, the subject dissertation will not be included in the analysis herein.

here above were extensively included and explained. First of all, as reasons for the selection of the case study strategy, the author indicates its appropriateness for the empirical research of organizations as complex social phenomena, but also its usefulness for the preliminary empirical verification of a new theory and, if necessary, for further development of an established theoretical model (Koprić, 1999, p. 278). By doing so, he rejects arguments against the validity of the case study approach based on the presumption that scientific research should result in statistical generalizations. The author also clearly explains the reasons for the selection of two specific organizations to serve as units of his analysis or cases for the verification of a previously developed theoretical model related to a specific phenomenon (inter-conditionality between structure and communication in administrative organizations). To verify the set hypotheses, the selection of organizations was done according to "theoretical replication", i.e. the author selected two organizations which differ from one another in terms of some variables indicated as reasons for variations in certain features of the communication network (Koprić, 1999, p. 278). Moreover, special subsection (4.3.) was dedicated to the analysis of differences between selected organizations, namely organizational environment, organizational technology and organizational culture (Koprić, 1999, pp. 280–282). Nevertheless, further research showed that the case study was very delicate method of empirical research which required extraordinary attention during the selection of organizations (Koprić, 1999, p. 377). Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected during the research to get a reliable and profound insight (Koprić, 1999, p. 352). Data were collected in selected organizations and other institutions by analysing normative acts, registers, official gazette and other documents, by conducting semi-structured interviews with senior civil servants in both organizations, but also by including the author's own observations (Koprić, 1999, p. 352). Since certain difficulties related to the measurement of a specific variable emerged (namely, types of organizational culture), the author found recommendable the use of questionnaires as an additional methodological instrument in further research. Finally, the report on the results of the research was prepared. As recommended, it comprises the explanation on the ways in which the case study method can contribute to the verification of the hypotheses on the relation between the structure and communication in administrative organizations. Since the aim of the study was the verification of a theoretical model, selected organizations were analysed and compared simultaneously, not one after another. The author also proposes the inclusion of other, both similar and different

organizations to make further verifications of the theoretical model, but also in order to facilitate a more comprehensive insight into the national administrative system.

Special attention was dedicated to the preparation of the case study by formulating the research protocol. As this research showed, it is of utmost importance to prepare the empirical investigation very carefully. Because of that, research protocol is recommended as the first step in conducting of a quality case study, especially when a multiple-case study is concerned. In general, the protocol comprised the following elements of the case study: the aim of the study, hypotheses to be verified, variables to be measured and measurement methods, and the selection of organizations the research would be conducted in (Koprić, 1999, pp. 278–279). On the basis thereof, the research protocol template is presented in Table 2. The protocol serves as a research guide for researcher, but it could also be useful as a documented explanation for persons who decide on the allowance of the research to be conducted. In addition, the dissertation included the annex on the types and manner of collecting the data required for the conduction of the study (Koprić, 1999, pp. 384–386).

Table 2: *Case study research protocol template*

Element	Meaning
Aim of the study	Additionally explains and confirms the validity of the case study as the selected research methodology
Main research strategy	Type of the case study (i.e. multiple-case study) with indication of cases for the research of the phenomena (e.g. administrative organization in Croatia)
Main thesis	General hypothesis of the study
Specification of hypotheses	Indication of all the hypotheses with specification of variables which stand in specific interrelation
Variables	Separate indication of all types of variables (independent, dependent, intermediate)
Measurement of variables	Decomposition of variables into elements to be measured with specific measurement indicators (e.g. variable: hierarchy of formal organizational structure; specification of variable: number of instances in hierarchy; indicators: number of levels in the hierarchy of formal structure, number of personnel on each hierarchical level)

Selected units of analysis/cases	Indication of concrete unit(s) of analysis of the study is going to focus on (e.g. concrete administrative organization(s))
Focus	Explains the selection of concrete units of analysis by associating them with the hypotheses to be verified
Data collection plan	Explains selected manners of data collection in relation to concrete selected units of analysis

Source: Author based on Koprić, 1999, pp. 380–383.

The doctoral thesis “Human Resource Management in Public Administration”, written by Marčetić, aimed to obtain the answers to specific questions in the field of human resource management (HRM) in public administration (Marčetić, 2006, p. 5). Unlike in the previously analysed dissertation, the case study applied here was aimed not to test a theory, but to provide deep description and discussion of the HRM normative regulation and practice in the selected local administrative organization, as well as to provide proposals for improvement (Marčetić, 2006).⁵

A combination of research methods were applied, namely normative analysis, descriptive statistics, unstructured interview and observation (Marčetić, 2006, p. 7). Findings are described and main characteristics of the researched phenomenon determined in accordance with the previously developed theoretical framework (Marčetić, 2006, p. 369–370).

In his doctoral dissertation “Impact of Organizational Variables on Administrative Coordination”, Giljević (2014) conducted a multiple-case study to verify a theoretical model on the impact of selected internal (administrative capacity and organizational complexity) and external (environmental complexity and type of administrative function) variables on administrative coordination.

The dissertation comprises all the elements of a successful case study indicated in Table 1, although the author does not explicitly explain the reasons for the application of that research strategy. However, the aim of the thesis leads to the conclusion that the case study was advisedly selected as the most appropriate method for its achievement. The selected approach

⁵ It is stated that “In the first part the existing state in administrative bodies of the City of Zagreb related to civil service, civil service legal regulation and organization of human resources management is represented. In the second part, the proposals for the improvement of civil service legal regulation, establishment of new organization and content of activities of the HRM, and introduction of new methods and techniques promoting merit system and contributing to gradual introduction of integral model of HRM, are provided” (Marčetić, 2006, p. 6).

and application of theoretical replication logic, as well as the combination of data collection methods, indicate the influence of the supervisor.⁶ Namely, data were collected by virtue of the analysis of documents, conduction of semi-structured interviews and the use of questionnaires (Giljević, 2014, p. 3). Precisely the latter research method was recommended by the supervisor during the conduction of the case study in his own doctoral dissertation (*supra*). Giljević dedicated special attention to the explanation of the application of mixed research methods (2014, pp. 159-161), as well as to the selection of concrete units of analysis (2014, pp. 161-162). Two ministries were selected to serve as researched cases. However, access to one organization was limited by the minister's political decision passed after the research had already started (Giljević, 2014, p. 162). The findings of the study were properly described at the end of the thesis, with the explanation of their contribution to the theoretical development of the analytical apparatus for studying coordination in the administrative system. However, the need for further research in the field by application of more refined analytical apparatus was indicated (Giljević, 2014, p. 329). In addition to elements indicated in Table 2, research protocol comprised also the guarantee of anonymity and confidentiality, and the information on the possibility of providing the feedback on research results (Giljević, 2014, p. 349).

The main research question of the doctoral dissertation "The Employment of Minorities in Public Administration" written by Tijana Vukojičić Tomić (2016) was to determine how the employment of minorities in public administration influenced performing of functions in administrative organizations (Vukojičić Tomić, 2016, p. 6).

To verify one of the hypotheses, the author used the multiple-case study approach with the application of mixed methods in data collection and analysis. Theoretical replication was applied, as in some previous dissertations analysed here. However, it was partly supplemented with the logic of literal replication, where the cases are designed to corroborate each other (Vukojičić Tomić, 2016, p. 288).⁷ The case study was considered an

⁶ The supervisor was Professor Ivan Koprić, the author of the above analysed doctoral thesis "Inter-conditionality Between Structure and Communication in Administrative Organizations".

⁷ While the logic of theoretical replication was applied for the analysis based on statistical data, the logic of literal replication was used for the selection of organizations the interviews were going to be conducted in. In doing so, special attention was dedicated to the selection of the sample for the interviews (Vukojičić Tomić, 2016, pp. 288–289).

appropriate strategy, since the set hypothesis was tested by deep analysis and elaboration of the results obtained. For this purpose, the analysis of statistical data was conducted, and the results were then clarified and confirmed by conduction of unstructured and semi-structured interviews with meticulously chosen persons (Vukojičić Tomić, 2016, pp. 289-290).⁸ In addition, relevant legal regulation was analysed as well. Accordingly, the study resulted in deeper insights in the set variables but also kept the required level of objectivity. Units of analysis (administrative organizations) were carefully selected by considering the set hypothesis, i.e. specific types of administrative functions that were going to be explored (Vukojičić Tomić, 2016, p. 288). The results of the study showed that the application of mixed research methods provided the possibility to obtain the answer not only to the "does" question, but also to the "why" and "how" questions. An in-depth analysis also showed there was a potential influence of some intermediate factors which should be considered in the future, when the necessary requirements are fulfilled (Vukojičić Tomić, 2016, pp. 331–333). This dissertation thus represents a firm foundation for broader studies in the field which could include more interviews, but also direct observations of the researcher, as recommended by the author (Vukojičić Tomić, 2016, p. 333).

Case studies conducted within the described doctoral dissertations are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3: *Case studies in doctoral dissertations in Croatian administrative science*

Author	Reasons for the selection of the case study approach	Units of analysis/cases	Researched phenomenon	Research methods	Description of findings
Koprić (1999)	Verification of theoretical model	2 administrative organizations (1 ministry and 1 internal unit of a ministry)	Inter-conditionality between structure and communication in administrative organizations	Document analysis, Interviews, Observation	General confirmation of theoretical model with demand for more data collection methods to be used, careful selection of cases and replication of the research

⁸ The author explicitly indicated the three main purposes for the conduction of semi-structured interviews: a) verification of previously collected data, b) clarification of potential doubts related to data, and c) obtaining the data from persons having direct information and/or experience on the subject phenomenon (Vukojičić Tomić, 2016, p. 142).

Marčetić (2006)	In-depth description of the phenomenon and provision of proposals for improvement	1 administrative organization with in-depth analysis of its internal units (city hall)	Human resource management in public administration	Document analysis, Interviews, Observation	Description of phenomenon and identification of its characteristics in accordance with previously developed theoretical framework, followed by proposals for improvement
Giljević (2014)	Verification of theoretical model	2 ministries	Impact of administrative capacity, organizational complexity, environmental complexity and type of administrative function on administrative coordination	Document analysis, Interviews, Questionnaires	Mostly confirmed theoretical model with the indication of the need for further research in the field by applying a more refined analytical apparatus
Vukojičić Tomić (2016)	Verification of theoretical model	6 elementary schools	Influence of the employment of minorities in public administration on performing of functions in administrative organizations	Document analysis, Interviews	Theoretical model partly confirmed, and the influence of some intermediate factors identified

Source: Author.

4. Towards a Common Research Model?

Very few papers applying the case study method in administrative science were published in the CCPA. Out of seven papers analysed here, only three go into details when explaining the methodology used. However, by indicating the issues which should be addressed in case studies of national bureaucracies and reform policies, Koprić (2009, p. 611) contributes to understanding of research in administrative science by application of the case study. In this manner, the content relevant for administrative science was considered as well, along with technical issues on what elements a case study should comprise..

The analysis of Croatian doctoral dissertations in administrative science showed a similar pattern in the use of the case study method. Most authors applied a multiple-case study with theoretical replication logic, i.e. they selected cases which differ from one another in relevant factors which should then lead to different results related to dependent variables.

Therefore, the main aim was mostly to verify the theoretical model developed in the previous part of the study. Slight additions could be noticed in later theses in the form of new elements in the research protocol, application of literal replication in addition to theoretical, and the use of more data collection methods. However, as the analysis showed, the case study method could be used to provide an in-depth description of the selected case, which then served as a basis for the discussion and improvement proposals.

The cases or units of analysis in administrative science are often administrative organizations, as showed in the analysed doctoral dissertations. However, the whole public administration system of a country could be a case as well. Administrative organizations from different government levels (state, regional, local) and from different domains of public administration (state administration, local administration and services of general interest, both at central state and local/regional level) could be analysed. A unit of analysis could be also an organizational unit, as showed in the thesis written by Koprić (1999). In the journal papers, however, entire countries or municipalities are indicated as cases or units of analysis.

On the basis of research results and the discussion of findings, the following question could be posed: Is there a kind of a common research model in Croatian administrative science and how did the case study in analysed papers and dissertations contribute to the development of administrative science?

Due to the limited scope of this study, it is hard to provide one general answer to the first part of the question. Moreover, the possibilities of the case study method to be applied for various purposes and specificities of each new research make the creation of rigid rules for its use virtually impossible in any, including administrative, science. Nevertheless, it could be noticed that authors in general follow the basic elements recommended to form a part of the case study (as indicated in Table 1). The importance of a very careful selection of cases and an in-depth elaboration for the selection thereof was confirmed to be crucial for further progress of the research. Moreover, access to the unit of analysis (an organization) could be limited, which also requires good preparation of the empirical part of the study. To introduce persons authorized to approve research with research plans, but also for the author and future readers, it is useful to create a research protocol. However, all these recommendations count for all social sciences. The specificities related to administrative science may relate to the subject of its interest. Accordingly, it can be expected

that a unit of analysis will in many cases be a single organization, a group of organizations (administrative system) or an organizational unit, but specific phenomena could be analysed in a municipality or a country. On the other hand, various topics or features of the researched phenomena could be covered, and special recommendations can be provided for specific issues, as in the paper written by Koprić (2009). It seems that new elements of a successful case study emerge during the research itself. In this way, researchers enrich the existing frameworks for the use of the case study in general, and in specific scientific fields. However, when doctoral dissertations defended in Croatia are observed, a kind of a common pattern can be noticed in the selection strategy of cases and the application of research methods. This may be attributed to a small group of scientists dealing with administrative science in Croatia and their mutual "infection" and learning.

The analysis of doctoral dissertations confirmed the convenience of the case study for the research in administrative science. It is suitable for the verification of developed theoretical models, but it also provides possibilities for replication of research. An in-depth analysis of the case leads to profound insights into the researched phenomenon and thus detect new relevant variables and relations. Accordingly, a successful case study not only enables the verification of a theory but also contributes to its generation.

5. Conclusion

The popularity of the case study in social sciences in general as well as in administrative science in particular has been on the rise since 1970s, and despite the trend towards quantitative studies and behavioural public administration, it is still a necessary and valuable research approach in this field. However, not much attention is dedicated to analysis of the quality of conducted case studies and their contribution to the development of administrative science. The aim of this paper was to examine what the elements of a successful case study are and how it has contributed to Croatian administrative science.

Contrary to previous expectations, the research conducted in relation to the case studies in Croatian administrative science showed that the case study was not a popular research strategy when journal articles were concerned. It is more often applied and elaborated in doctoral dissertations.

However, the articles that had not explicitly indicated the case study as research approach fall beyond the scope of this research. This means that there is a possibility that more case studies in the papers published in the CCPA had been conducted. Nevertheless, in that case, the authors had not dedicated sufficient attention to elaboration of the methodology applied. The analysis of the two leading public administration journals on case study research conducted by European scholars showed that most of the case study research was focused on north-west Europe, while most of the Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries were not featured at all (Haverland & Van der Veer, 2018, p. 1142). This may indicate the lower number of papers published by the scholars affiliated to CEE universities in the analysed journals, but also the lower representation of case study research method in those countries, including Croatia. However, empirical studies conducted in various contexts are especially valuable for testing and development of theories, and should therefore be encouraged (Haverland & Van der Veer, 2018, p. 1143).

As research showed, in order to conduct a successful case study, it is of utmost importance to carefully follow basic proposals for the use of the case study, namely to prepare the research protocol, to carefully select the case(s) and various research methods, and to describe findings in a manner which explains the contribution of the case study to theory verification, generation or other research aims. Moreover, for a quality paper, it is important that the process of research with all indicated elements is clearly elaborated. Even then, some unexpected issues could appear because of "living" cases which are the subject of the author's interest. Nevertheless, application of the case study research method is the process of learning which leads to enrichment of the existing knowledge of this empirical research strategy and development of a model which is under constant construction (s. Haverland & Van der Veer, 2018, pp. 1143–1144). By taking into consideration previous knowledge on the use of the case study and by its careful application and clear elaboration in their own research, the authors contribute to the development of science.

When administrative science is considered, specific issues related to units of analysis and the content of study are relevant. Administrative organizations as the main subject of scientific interest in administrative science are very convenient units of analysis for a case study. It is possible to define clear boundaries for the investigation and, when the case study is properly prepared and conducted, replicate the research and gain deeper knowledge on a specific phenomenon. As this study showed, it is impossible to detach administrative organizations from the context in which they act,

but the application of a case study method enables deeper understanding of various interrelations taking place in and around them.

References

- Adams, G. R. & Schvaneveldt, J. D. (1985). *Understanding research methods*. New York, USA: Longman.
- Bečić, J., Vavrek, R., Galecka, M., & Smolny, K. (2021). Application of multi-criteria analysis on theatres' efficiency – Czech and Polish comparative case studies. *Croatian and Comparative Public Administration*, 21(3), 423–455, <https://doi.org/10.31297/hkju.21.3.5>
- Đorđević, S. (2018). Local government capacities for the integration of migrants: Good European experiences and practices. *Croatian and Comparative Public Administration*, 18(3), 465–486, <https://doi.org/10.31297/hkju.18.3.5>
- Eisenhardt, K. M. (1989). Building theories from case study research. *Academy of Management Review*, 14(4), 532–550, <https://doi.org/10.2307/258557>
- Firman, F., Idrus, I. A., & Rahmawati, R. (2024). Public participation in rapid response services for the sustainability of Jakarta Smart City. *Croatian and Comparative Public Administration*, 24(3), 423–446, <https://doi.org/10.31297/hkju.24.3.4>
- Gerring, J. (2007). *Case study research: Principles and practices*. Cambridge, UK: University Press.
- Giljević, T. (12 February, 2014) *Utjecaj organizacijskih varijabli na upravnu koordinaciju [Impact of organizational variables on administrative coordination]*. Doctoral dissertation. Faculty of Law University of Zagreb, Croatia.
- Giljević, T. (2015). Utjecaj okoline organizacije na upravnu koordinaciju: Ministarstvo uprave kao studija slučaja. [The influence of organizational environment on administrative coordination: Croatian Ministry of public administration as a case study]. *Croatian and Comparative Public Administration*, 15(4), 875–908.
- Groeneveld, S., Tummers, L., Bronkhorst, B., Ashikali, T., & Van Thiel, S. (2015). Quantitative methods in public administration: Their use and development through time. *International Public Management Journal*, 18(1), 61–86, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10967494.2014.972484>
- Guerra, M., Gomes, A. O., & Silva Filho, A. I. (2015). Case study in public administration: A critical review of Brazilian scientific production. *RAC, Rio de Janeiro*, 19(2), art. 6, 70–289, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1590/1982-7849rac20151282>
- Haverland, M., & Van der Veer, R. (2018). The case of case study research in Europe: Practice and potential. In E. Ongaro & S. van Thiel (Eds.), *The Palgrave handbook of public administration and management in Europe*. Vol. 2 (pp. 1135–1145). London, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-55269-3_58

- Koprić, I. (1999). *Međuvjetovanost strukture i komuniciranja u upravnim organizacijama* [Inter-conditionality between structure and communication in administrative organizations]. Doctoral dissertation. Faculty of Law University of Zagreb, Croatia.
- Koprić, I. (2009). The Croatian public administration is in a stormy period. *Croatian and Comparative Public Administration*, 9(3), 609–616.
- Koprić, I., Marčetić, G., Musa, A., Đulabić, V., & Lalić Novak, G. (2014). *Upravna znanost: javna uprava u suvremenom europskom kontekstu* [Administrative science: Public administration in contemporary European context]. Zagreb, Croatia: Faculty of Law.
- Lopižić, I. (2013). Usporedba zastupljenosti tema u znanstvenim časopisima o javnoj upravi. [Comparison of the representation of topics in scientific journals dealing with public administration]. *Croatian and Comparative Public Administration*, 13(2), 399–431.
- Marčetić, G. (11 December, 2006). *Upravljanje ljudskim potencijalima u javnoj upravi* [Human resource management in public administration]. Doctoral dissertation. Faculty of Law University of Zagreb, Croatia.
- Memis, L. Düzgün, S., & Köseoglu, S. (2023). Counter-urbanisation as refuge during the COVID-19 pandemic: A case study from Turkey. *Croatian and Comparative Public Administration*, 23(4), 559–591, <https://doi.org/10.31297/hkju.23.4.7>
- Miles, M. B. (1979). Qualitative data as an attractive nuisance: The problem of analysis. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 24(4), 590–601, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2392365>
- Vukojičić Tomić, T. (28 December, 2016). *Zapošljavanje društvenih manjina u javnoj upravi* [The employment of minorities in public administration]. Doctoral dissertation. Faculty of Law University of Zagreb, Croatia.
- Winiarska, A., & Wojno, M. (2018). Migrant integration: The case of Warsaw. *Croatian and Comparative Public Administration*, 18(3), 341–372, <https://doi.org/10.31297/hkju.18.3.4>
- Yin, R. K. (1981). The case study crisis: Some answers. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 26(1), 58–65, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2392599>
- Yin, R. K. (1992). The case study method as a tool for doing evaluation. (Trend report: The case Method in sociology), *Current Sociology*, 40(1), 121–137, <https://doi.org/10.1177/001139292040001009>
- Yin, R. K. (2003). *Case study research; Design and methods*. London, UK, New Delhi, India: Sage Publications.

CASE STUDY IN CROATIAN ADMINISTRATIVE SCIENCE: TOWARDS A COMMON RESEARCH MODEL?

Summary

This paper addresses the use of the case study as a research approach in Croatian administrative science, with particular attention on its methodological articulation and contribution to the field. The analysis encompasses journal articles published in the journal of Croatian and Comparative Public Administration over a twenty-five-year period, as well as doctoral dissertations defended at Croatian law faculties that rely on case study research. By examining how case studies are presented and elaborated across these sources, the paper sheds light on prevailing research practices and methodological patterns. The findings indicate notable differences between publication types: while doctoral dissertations consistently provide detailed methodological explanations, journal articles only rarely offer systematic accounts of case study design and implementation. This divergence highlights the varying expectations and constraints shaping scholarly outputs within the discipline. At the same time, the diversity of research topics and units of analysis characteristic of administrative science suggests that the case study remains a flexible and evolving research approach. Through its application, researchers not only explore complex administrative phenomena but also contribute to the gradual refinement and shared understanding of case study methodology within the field.

Keywords: case study, methodology, administrative science, research model, public administration

STUDIJA SLUČAJA U HRVATSKOJ UPRAVNOJ ZNANOSTI: PREMA ZAJEDNIČKOM ISTRAŽIVAČKOM MODELU?

Sažetak

Rad se bavi primjenom studije slučaja kao istraživačkog pristupa u hrvatskoj upravnoj znanosti, s posebnim naglaskom na njezinu metodološku razradu i doprinos razvoju discipline. Analiza obuhvaća znanstvene radove objavljene u časopisu *Hrvatska i komparativna javna uprava* tijekom razdoblja od dvadeset i pet godina, kao i doktorske disertacije obranjene na hrvatskim pravnim fakultetima koje se temelje na istraživanjima primjenom studije slučaja. Ispitivanjem načina na koji su studije slučaja predstavljene i elaborirane u tim izvorima, rad pruža uvid u prevladavajuće istraživačke prakse i metodološke obrasce u upravnoj znanosti. Rezultati upućuju na značajne razlike između pojedinih vrsta publikacija: dok doktorske disertacije dosljedno sadrže detaljna metodološka objašnjenja, znanstveni radovi u časopisima tek rijetko nude sustavne prikaze dizajna i provedbe studije slučaja. Ta razlika odražava različita očekivanja i ograničenja koja oblikuju znanstvenu produkciju u ovoj disciplini. Istodobno, raznolikost istraživačkih tema i jedinica analize karakteristična za upravnu znanost upućuje na to da studija slučaja ostaje fleksibilan i razvojno otvoren istraživački pristup. Njezinom se primjenom ne istražuju samo složeni upravni fenomeni, nego se pridonosi i postupnom usavršavanju te zajedničkom razumijevanju metodologije studije slučaja unutar discipline.

Ključne riječi: studija slučaja, metodologija, upravna znanost, istraživački model, javna uprava