

Stein Rokkan's Methodology of Macro-Historical Comparison

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Abstract

Stein Rokkan (1921–1979) left behind him an unfinished, ambitious macro-historical research project aiming to explain mobilization sequences, democratic resilience, and party systems in 16 Western European countries. This article explicates the comparative methodology behind this project with reference to a philosophy of social science framework. The main features of the methodology are a series of intermediate, substantive, methodological elements in between formal theory (paradigms) and empirical observations. Each element is presented in detail: lists of variables, regional grid, typological-topological maps, and comparative case reconstructions. Problems due to under-specification of variables and ambiguities in Rokkan's ideas about parsimonious systematizations are discussed, and two possible ways of revising the methodology are sketched. Among these, the contextualist option seems the most promising one.

Keywords

political sociology – democratization – macro history – comparative method – typology making – philosophy of social science

Introduction

At the time of his death in July 1979 – at the age of only 58 – Stein Rokkan was an internationally renowned scholar and academic entrepreneur. He once noted that his “topological-typological effort of systematization” relies on a

“basic style of reasoning” (Rokkan 1981a: 84).¹ By the mid-1970s, he had perfected this style to a high level of methodological sophistication. Our aim here is to present and critically discuss that last version of his style of comparative research. Based on a chronological reading, we systematically review its various elements. This is not a matter only for the history of social science. Rokkan has a lot to teach those who pursue macro-historical comparisons today. We are also going to point to important problems, thereby suggesting how his methodology may be improved.

A Philosophy of Social Science Framework

We start from two distinctions: a modern statement of classical nomothetic/idiographic-distinction (Gerring 2007), and the distinction between case- and variables-oriented approaches to comparative research (Ragin 1987).

In Gerring's (2007: 211) definition a case-study is “the intensive study of a single case” in order to understand “a *population* of cases”. It can be understood within an experimental template, and the goal is to produce general (law-like, nomothetic) knowledge. He admits, however, that the term case study often refers to “a piece of research whose inference is limited to the case under study”, that is an “idiographic” understanding (Gerring 2007: 187). Also such single outcome studies, he relates to the experimental template.

Surprisingly, Gerring (2007: Ch 7) distinguishes both case and single outcome studies from *process tracing*, “a style of analysis used to reconstruct a causal process that has occurred within a single case”. Not only that, he also claims that process tracing often is necessary to establish causal relations in case studies. A purely “covariational” style of research is “usually insufficient to prove causation in a case-study format.” Few such studies are “truly experimental”, since the “observational world does not usually provide cases with both temporal variation (making possible ‘pre’ and ‘post’ tests) and spatial variation

1 We often give double references to Rokkan's publications. This is because the date of the original publication matters to our arguments. However, since the original publications are not always easily available, we also provide references to the compilation volume (Rokkan 1999; available both in English, German and Italian) pieced together from Rokkan's writings in the period 1970–1979. When referring to the variables in Rokkan's grid, we use his notation, as defined in Tables 3, 7 and 8, e.g. 11:C, VI:R. For Nordic readers, the reference list also indicates those of the quoted Rokkan works that are contained in the Norwegian compilation (Rokkan 1987).

(‘treatment’ and ‘control’ cases) across variables of theoretical interests, while holding all else constant”. Furthermore “perfect ‘natural experiments’ are rare” in observational case studies (Gerring 2007: 172). Evidence pertaining to the link between cause and effect is often “opaque”. Case studies must thus be “supplemented by another form of analysis”: process tracing (Gerring 2007: 173).

Process tracing is distinguished by multiple types of evidence and complex causal processes (Gerring 2007: 216). The procedure is messy, evidence is disparate, but conclusions often convincing. Gerring notes four characteristics: First, “adjacent observations” are “non-comparable”, like “a series of N=1 (one-shot) observations” (Gerring 2007: 178f). Second, it does not matter whether observations are qualitative or quantitative. Third, the total number of observations is usually indeterminate. They are like court evidence, discrete, but with different weight in the overall assessment. Fourth, since process tracing is far from the experimental ideal, it leans “heavily on background assumptions about the way the world works” (Gerring 2007: 180). This is “contextual knowledge” (Gerring 2007: 181), and it ranges between natural laws and facts that are “quite matter-of-fact and close to the ground”. Such facts are only comprehensible when they are ordered and categorized (Gerring 2007: 180).

For such process tracing, a “formal research design” (“a formal investigation into causes”) is insufficient. To compensate, the researcher must rely on “natural wisdom”: “an intuitive “feel” for a situation, usually gained through many years’ experience in that area, be it a foreign country, a historical era, or a medical specialty” (Gerring 2007: 181). As two main “mitigating features”, Gerring suggests firstly, process tracing as part of a mixed methods strategy, and secondly, the option of downplaying all obvious elements of everyday knowledge, except where evidence is weak. Thus, one focuses attention “on those links in the causal chain that are (a) weakest and (b) most crucial for the overall argument” (Gerring 2007: 184).

Gerring also notes that the “event of interest” must have occurred in the past. Although Gerring does not expand on this, this is obviously the style practiced in the discipline of history and in social science area studies. Furthermore, Gerring never compares process tracing with single outcome studies, nor does he discuss whether process tracing also should be considered “idiographic”, which it obviously must be.

Gerring has recapitulated a famous dualism (“Methodenstreit”, “two cultures”) in the philosophy of social science: experimental ideal and real-life quasi-experimental designs for social science versus the historians’ ideal of knowledge to be gained from immersion in the details of historically significant processes. Rokkan was well aware of it:

The student of politics is torn between two sets of super-ego demands: he feels an obligation to reduce the welter of empirical facts to a body of parsimoniously organized general propositions, but he also feels under pressure to treat each case *sui generis*, as a unique configuration worthy of an effort of understanding all on its own. This is of course a dilemma common to all social sciences but is particularly difficult to handle in the study of such highly visible, amply documented macro-units as historical polities. (Rokkan 1968: 173)

Studying these macro-units, Rokkan was not interested in isolated singular outcomes (the focus of Gerring's two idiographic approaches), but in differences between outcomes in a small set of regional macro-units. To account for such a study of differences, we shall relate Gerring's account to Ragin's (1987) distinction between case- and variables-oriented approaches in *comparative* social science. Note that Ragin's definition of case-oriented comparative approaches does not fit Gerring's definition of a case-study. Ragin's distinction between variables- and case-oriented approaches roughly converge with Gerring's distinction between the (generalizing) case-study and his two idiographic types.

Ragin's distinction is based on a mix of criteria from methodology and the philosophy of social science. In Table 1, we *distinguish* these two sets of criteria. Case-/variables-oriented refers to researchers' actual methodological craftwork of studying either few cases or large-n datasets, while the older, neo-Kantian distinction between nomothetic and idiographic science (Natur-versus Geisteswissenschaften), indicates how scholars reason about what they are doing.

TABLE 1 *Ideals and reality in social science*

		<i>Experiment as external ideal</i>
		Case-oriented
		Variables-oriented
Nomothetic	Topological-typological systematization (Rokkan)	Standard* (Gerring, case-study; Ragin: variables-orientation)
Idiographic	Case reconstruction* (History; Ragin case-orientation; Gerring process tracing)	QCA as a synthesis (Ragin), single outcome study (Gerring)
<i>Historical understanding as ideal</i>		

The *methodological* orientation of variables-oriented social science (Ragin 1987: 53–55) is grounded in analysis of large data-sets by means of inferential statistics based on probability theory. Case-orientation relies on experience with ethnographic studies of a few cases, employing narrowly defined categories with due attention to context. In *philosophy of social science* terms, nomothetic reasoning emphasizes generality as a goal, testing of hypotheses derived from high-level theory, and net-effects notions of causality. Cases are mere means to achieve general causal explanation. Idiographic reasoning, in contrast, appreciates complexity and causal configurations, treats singular cases as worthy of study as such, and it uses grounded/middle-range theory as a guide to the interpretation of processes.

Like social science generally, the comparative social science study of macro-units is torn between ideals emanating from the two older faculties of the university institution: the humanities and natural science. These are the two “outside” ideals in Table 1. The natural science ideal, represented in social science by the standard view, promises an easy connection between formal theory and manipulation of real-world forces in the experiment. The ideal is the hard and replicable knowledge deriving from the Galilean experiment. Researchers pursuing case reconstruction often identify with the humanities ideal incarnated in historical research: a “deep” understanding of non-replicable singular processes. Since we access the social world by introspection and relational experience with others, human interaction is inaccessible to experimentation. We are ourselves the same kind as those we research.

The social sciences thus position themselves at various points in between the extremes of formal theory and detailed explanatory understanding. These two external ideals create a tension inside social science. For idiographic, case-oriented research, the tension is between an ideal of complete “Verstehen”, and the social scientist’s self-reflection that full knowledge of the other, or full understanding of historical processes, is impossible. Some kind of selective modelling is always involved. Similarly, any scholar with experience from the analysis of large data-sets knows that there is no full application of experimental logic. Following the pioneering work of Donald Campbell (the textbook version of which is Shadish, Cook and Campbell, 2001) students of social science methodology know that “quasi-experimenting” is a better approximation to actual practice. This view also informs Gerring (2007).

The two cells in Table 1 marked with an * are two well-known combinations of methods use and philosophy of science reflection. The standard approach combines variables-oriented practice and nomothetic reflection, while case reconstruction combines case-oriented practice and idiographic reflections (Mjøset 2009: 42–44). These are crude types and a huge number of particular

versions can be discussed. Here we shall focus on two peculiar *departures* from the standard approach. They are attempts to develop synthetic solutions (Ragin 1987: Ch 5) that transcends the variables/case-polarization. In Table 1, Rokkan's approach is located as a reflection on case-oriented research in nomothetic terms, while Ragin's QCA (*Qualitative Comparative Analysis*) is located as a reflection on variables-oriented research legitimated by idiographic reasoning. Our main focus will be Rokkan's methodology, but we shall return to QCA towards the end.

In his first publications as a social scientist, Rokkan adopted the current mainstream idea that with inputs from large data sets (of comparable data) one could move fairly directly to an explanation. The standard adaptation of experimental logic to social science implies, as Rokkan (1965: 676) emphasized for his own research, that one should "start from a general theory of conflict".

A very direct application of experimental logic would look like this: Internal principles represent high theory, formulating main concepts and formalizing the main connections between these. For instance, one would define the "mean kinetic energy of the molecules" of an "ideal gas" (Cartwright 2007: 228). Then there are bridge principles that link such theoretical concepts to actual measurements, in this case: the temperature of the gas. Building an adequate experimental set-up, the experiment will produce the predicted outcomes, and other researchers can build the same experiment and replicate the findings.

Initially, Rokkan tried to proceed in analogy to such a logic (Mjøset 2000). But once he gained some experience, he took a surprising turn for a researcher who started with a quantitative focus on generating datasets. He accepted entirely qualitative types of empirical material. He approached his generation of historical sociologists, and began to count historical monographs and other qualitative sources as equally important empirical sources as the datasets. His empirical craftwork became increasingly case-oriented.

In almost every major paper he published since the mid 1960s, he started by giving a progress report on how his modelling had developed, and how certain findings had made him revise his schemes. In the following, we shall show how Rokkan shuttled between a number of layers between formal theory (which he called paradigms) and empirical observations. For each layer, he used specific schemes: lists of variables, a regional grid and typological-topological maps (see Table 2). We call them: intermediate, substantive, methodological elements. They are *intermediate* between formal theory and empirical information. They are *substantive* because they process empirical information and in this respect they are akin to bridge principles. They are *methodological* because they are tools that allow Rokkan to conduct comparisons of smaller selections of macro-cases (pairs, triplets or clusters). The lists/grid/map are

both empirically grounded and guided by formal concepts. They “stratify” an abstract population of all states in which pressure for democratization unfolds.

There is a similarity between these intermediate elements and an experimental set-up: both build a context. But Rokkan’s context is a reconstruction of historical conditions (institutional complexes developing from historical turning points in various realms of society), requiring both periodization and typologization. It is not a set-up within which he can run experiments, since the factors (variables) involved cannot be controlled and manipulated. They are in the past, and can only be accessed via multiple kinds of evidence. The institutional features form the configurations that Rokkan needs to explain differences between the outcomes (mobilization sequences, democratic resilience, and party systems) he is interested in.

What we have to learn is to develop multi-dimensional typologies for configurational complexes: typologies which tap significant elements of each historical-political context and yet allow wide-ranging comparative analysis dimension by dimension. Any attempt to develop a scheme of codes or to construct a typology implies a series of choices and a series of rejections within a vast mass of actually assembled or potentially “collectable” information: to assign units to types means to leave out large chunks of information in an effort to establish knowledge of invariances across them. (Rokkan 1968: 174)

While the experimenting researcher is only interested in singular outcomes as means to test general law-like theories, Rokkan’s “systematization” implies that outcomes are considered interesting as such. They form important parts (a party system, a set of democratic rights) of the contemporary context for both researchers (studying events and processes in national politics), politicians and civil society groups. As Ragin (1987: 53) noted, case studies “emerge clearly from one of the central goals of comparative social science – to explain and interpret the diverse experiences of societies, nations, cultures, and other significant macrosocial units”.

The collection of his 1960s research – which Rokkan put together under the title *Citizens, Elections, Parties* (1970a) – contains only crude anticipations of the intermediary elements. The discovery and differentiation of these elements marks off Rokkan’s increasingly case-oriented work in the 1970s. But he reflects on this in a standard, nomothetic terminology. As we shall show, this leads to problems connected to what he called “accounting schemes”, and to his use of the term parsimony. In our conclusion, we shall sketch two ways in which main tensions in Rokkan’s methodology may be solved.

TABLE 2 *Five components of Rokkan's methodology*

Element (year)	Methodological features	Scope	Variables	Connections	Reference to cases	Outcomes	Main examples
1 Paradigm, abstract model, basic grid (1970)	Conceptual framework – formalisms combined with classifications	Abstract, conceptual, formal	+ Only in conceptual terms	Conceptual connections, depending on formalism	÷	+	Figures 5 and 7
2 List of variables (1972)	List, not periodized	World divided into (geocultural) regions	Variables, specifications of range of variations	÷	World regions, but incomplete (also singular countries plotted)	Not specified, but outcome module can be generalized	Figure 10. List in Rokkan 1975, omitted in Rokkan 1999
3 "Model of Europe", grid. (1974)	A periodized list of main explanatory factors – a tool for generating conceptual maps (typologies).	A specified region (West Roman, Cold war Western Europe, 16 "pioneer" democracies), periodized	Variables organized with reference to social areas (economy, territory, culture)	Form: pre-conditions/ intervening variables/ outcomes	Western Europe, but no cases distinguished	Six-fold table, structured into rights, system and party alternatives	Figure 12 "The basic model of Europe"

TABLE 2 *Five components of Rokkari's methodology (cont.)*

Element (year)	Methodological features	Scope	Variables	Connections	Reference to cases	Outcomes	Main examples	
4	Conceptual map, typological/topological map (1971)	Conceptual distinctions projected on to a stylized topological (geographical-historical) map of the region. Rokkari's master map contains his interpretation of the specificity of Western/European developments	Same as regional grid. The master map covers the preconditions phase. Modified maps include "intervening process variables"	Selected variables (mostly three to five). After 1974 mapping by values of variables selected from the regional grid	Long-run connections ("legacies") of contextual importance in a later period. Typologies tailored to specific explanatory purposes.	Typology: More or less complete plotting of cases or just a limited range of typical examples	Specified from six-fold table, or even items of the intervention period as outcomes	Figures 13, (minimum version: 21), 26, 44, 45, 46

Element (year)	Methodological features	Scope	Variables	Connections	Reference to cases	Outcomes	Main examples	
5	Comparative case reconstructions (pairs, triplets, clusters) (1968)	Understanding of case-specificity by means of comparisons	Selected cases (or all Rokkan's 16 cases) over some range of a historical trajectory towards the outcome period	Case comparison made systematic by employing several maps specified from the regional grid	Combining material from historical process tracings with data from available social science data bases	Case sensitivity, accepting diversity of macro-cases as interesting	Explanation of differences of contemporary interest, tracing of the processes towards the outcomes to be explained	Rokkan 1970b, Rokkan 1981, Rokkan/Urwin 1983

Note: Figure numbers refer to main examples in Rokkan 1999.

Outcomes to be Explained

In one word, Rokkan's focus was *democratization*. In one sentence, he analysed the mobilization trajectories and the impact of democratization on the political institutions of 16 Western European countries. A more specified statement (Table 3) can be directly retrieved from the last part of his regional grid, the other parts of which we discuss below.

In terms of historical origins, he limited his studies to the areas of the Celtic, Latin and Germanic people (Rokkan 1981a: 72; 1999: 138). He implied that this corresponded to the "Roman Catholic Church part of Europe after the Schism of 1054" (Flora, 1999: 88). Less systematically, he even discussed elements in the ancient world (Rokkan 1973a), but this will not concern us here.

Rokkan (1970b) specified his set of 16 "end-state' polities" as 11 small countries (Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Ireland, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Sweden, Switzerland) and five large ones (France, Germany, Italy, Spain, United Kingdom). He also distinguished "his" area in terms of basic historical events: "the region first to produce differentiated institutions on all three dimensions of our paradigm" (1971: 54; dimensions: economy, territory, culture). It was above all "the region first to produce viable industrial states and to develop institutions for nation-building through mass participation" (Rokkan 1975: 563), that is the first region to produce democratic capitalism.

Finally, the region had a present significance. Rokkan studied the Cold War version of the Western European state system, although he never emphasized this. His studies did not cover the whole historical European state system e.g. before World War I, where Russia played a major role. Rokkan implied a connection to the origins of this state system consolidated in the 1648 Treaty of Westphalia (Rokkan 1981a: 89), but he did not explicitly establish the historical or conceptual links in this respect.

In Table 3, "structuring of alternatives" indicates Rokkan's interest in the development of institutional systems that secure citizen's democratic rights (VI:R), the resilience of these institutions (VI:S), and the kinds of party systems (VI:P) that emerge with reference to the cleavages that characterize the social system. Rokkan (1981b: 124f) defined this as "the macroscopic context of mass politics", while VII taps "the microscopic behaviour at the individual level" within this context.

Put differently, row VI then refers to institutions (laws, norms, organizational rules), while row VII represents the collective actions of the many groups and movements that constitute the "masses" in these emerging democracies. Mass alignments occur when these classes/groups clash along historically distinct cleavage lines ("class/culture conditioning"), mobilizing in ways that transform old or create new institutions.

TABLE 3 *The regional grid. Explicanda: Variations in political response structures 1848–950s*

Aspect	Rights (R)	System alternatives (S)	Party alternatives (P)
(VI) Structuring of alternatives	Sequencing of steps towards <i>universalization of political rights</i>	Frequency/intensity of <i>crises of transition</i> , extent of violent disruptions	Sequencing of steps in formation of <i>system of party alternatives</i>
(VII) Consequent mass alignments. Class/culture conditioning of...	... levels/types of <i>participation</i>	... <i>attitudes to system</i> : acceptance vs rejection	... <i>party choice</i>

Source: Rokkan 1999: 136f, Figure 12, last part.

Stating the goals of his research, Rokkan could, like any good historical sociologist, waver between quite narrow and very broad explanatory goals – but they always related to this specific region.

Paradigms

Comparing the internal principles of a natural science experiment and a social science model, Cartwright (2007: 218, 226) finds strong theory in the former and only “thin concepts” and “meagre theory” in the latter. Rokkan must have experienced that same difference and in his older days mainly used “paradigms” as his term for meagre theories. Aware of the risk that social science might degenerate into “abstract paradigmas and airy models” (1970b: 80), Rokkan never made his paradigms goals in themselves.

Cartwright is only concerned with the economics (general equilibrium) version of meagre theory. Rokkan uses no mathematical formalisms, so his paradigms are less explicitly structured. But they play the same role as internal principles in the experimental model: they define basic concepts at an abstract level. Rokkan needs concepts covering state formation (centre formation), division of territories into states (unification/secession), the various resources involved when elites try to control an area, and so on. Rokkan's (1999: Figure 1–8, 11) paradigms are “conceptual frameworks” that relate concepts to each other, but not in a hierarchical, deductive way. Paradigms are not strong, competing theories, but multiple, overlapping, non-competing. There are no substantive, empirical inputs: no cases, no connections, no outcomes (Table 2).

Rokkan (1976: 1) wrote that progress was likely to be made “through the confrontations of a variety of paradigms” and also by “merger of paradigms”. He considered a paradigm a “set priorities in the search for comparable information about historically given political systems”. It “suggests the general direction of comparative inquiries but does not generate clear-cut questions for the establishment of multivariate profiles for comparative analysis of systems” (Rokkan 1971: 53). Asked how one might best define paradigms, he answered: “meta-models, structures of models” (Rokkan 1974c: 157).

The term “paradigm” was made famous in Thomas Kuhn’s (1962) analysis of scientific revolutions, referring to “general background assumptions”, *not* questioned in normal science. Kuhn (1962) specified two components: “Exemplars” are examples that serve as prototypes via “learning by doing” within research communities sharing the same research methods. “Disciplinary matrixes” are institutions that via education and recruitment socialize researchers into a value system. Furthermore, Kuhn regards “normal science” as defined by the existence of just one paradigm. Rokkan’s conception is different: his paradigms are plural, and social researchers relate consciously to them.

Formalisms and classifications are the main ingredients of Rokkan’s paradigms. We first discuss the formalisms involved. The first and simplest device Rokkan used is that of an axis cross: He used to call the horizontal axis a *functional* one, and the vertical axis a *territorial* one. He also, throughout his writings, used the geometrical/geographical analogy of centre and periphery. Already in the mid-1960s, Rokkan combined the axis cross with Parsons’ scheme of functional imperatives in social systems, the AGIL-scheme (adaptation, goal attainment, integration, latent pattern-maintenance). That scheme relies on the external analogy (Mjøset 2009: 55–56) of a biological system (an organism). But Rokkan did not join Parsons in the search for a “general theory of action”. He mostly focused directly on one subsystem, not that of the polity (the “goal attainment system”), but the integrative subsystem (the public, communities, associations) (Lipset/Rokkan 1967: 7–13; Rokkan 1970a: 97–102). In the Parsonian logic, this system again had four functional imperatives, and Rokkan related A/L to the functional economy/culture-axis, and G/I to the territorial axis.

Some time around 1970, Rokkan abandoned the AGIL-terminology. He shifted to Parsons’ (1966) evolutionary approach to historical differentiation. At the same time, Rokkan (1975: 565–7) tapped into Hirschman’s (1970) “exit, voice, loyalty”-framework, a classification of decision systems. This must be considered an internal analogy (Mjøset 2009: 55–56). Hirschman’s discussion inspired him to think about external boundary building and (dismantling of) internal barriers to communication (mobilization, participation), developing

a more dynamic paradigm. More generally, with Hirschman, Rokkan integrated impulses from the various dependency schools in development theory (notably Rokkan 1973b.)

As for classifications of social areas, Rokkan always relied on the age-old social science division of social fields: economy – politics – culture (ETC), as well as distinctions between institutional areas. He emphasized that all his models were “multidimensional”, giving equal weight to “economic-technological, political-territorial, and cultural-ethnic-religious dimensions”, with no priority to one or the other (Rokkan 1999: 140). Connecting to his two favourite analogies, Rokkan depicted economy/culture as the functional axis, and centre/periphery as the territorial axis – very often using territory as synonymous with politics. Applying Parsons' (1966) differentiation-paradigm, he looked at differentiation in either three (ETC) or four fields (with T divided into “force” and “law”). Rokkan uses the axis cross in some form in most of his analyses, but with different terminologies.

By the early 1970s, Rokkan's paradigms had grown increasingly complex. They were often presented in three-dimensional figures. There is no space here to provide detailed illustrations, but the interested reader can work through a couple of them (e.g. Rokkan 1999: Fig 7). The complexity is largely due two circumstances. First, Rokkan was eager to combine paradigms drawn from Parsons and Hirschman. Second, he was increasingly keen to equip these combinations with nuanced classification schemes, not just ETC, but also institutional domains. Generally stated, the paradigms were designed to facilitate the analysis of state-formation and nation-building in any world region, with historical preconditions included.

As of 1974–5, Rokkan had differentiated his original axis cross into an arsenal of abstract schemes. He had plotted into them a variety of institutions that could be traced historically as differentiation proceeded. In 1974, three major books in historical sociology were published (Wallerstein 1974, Anderson 1974a, Anderson 1974b). By 1976, Rokkan had drafted a paper that investigated “how far their interpretations can be fitted into my over-all model and what additional dimensions will have to be incorporated in the light of their analyses” (Rokkan 1976: 1). Interestingly, Rokkan did not use Wallerstein and Anderson to add new formal intricacies to his paradigms. Rather, he scaled down on formal elements. He was never interested in Wallerstein's dependencia model. As for Anderson, Rokkan (1981b: 57f) appreciated his combination of Marxist and Weberian impulses, and made use of his typologized discussion of absolutist states in the late study of Nordic developments.

The leading Norwegian historian J. A. Seip (1974) engaged seriously with Rokkan's use of paradigms in the analysis of Norwegian political history,

although the title ironically suggested that Rokkan's models were "tyrants" forcing historical facts to submit. But at times Rokkan wrote as if paradigms were ladders that he could dispense with. Paradigms facilitate "reasoning related to choice of strategy in further analysis", they are "introductions to the real analysis": "we want to be judged not with reference to the accuracy of these considerations, but with reference to the intellectual innovation implied by the modelling and the precision of the operationalization and hypothesis testing" (Rokkan 1975: 132). As a minimum, concepts are needed, and it seems that Rokkan needed less formal structure the more experienced he became. Decisions on variables – as we shall see – emerged in a back and forth movement between suggested paradigms and extensive work with data and historical information. In the end, the paradigm scheme that Rokkan used to guide his broadest variables lists is a simple fourfold table (Table 4 below).

Lists of variables

From the very start of his career in social science, Rokkan had gathered data. However far back in history he looked, he wanted empirical substance to be made available as variables. Via "concretization" he would develop his paradigms into a "grid of potentially comparable variables" (Rokkan 1971: 53). Rokkan noted the dilemma that "the greater the institutional specificity the narrower the regional range of comparison". Devising variables covering the whole world did not make much sense. His solution was to shuttle between an "abstract paradigm" layer ("potentially useful across all regions of the world") and "a series of 'regional transposes' of regionally specific grids of variables" (Rokkan 1971: 54).

In 1975, Rokkan presented a figure (1975: Figure 8–4; 1999: Figure 9), which is a halfway house between his Parsons/Hirschman paradigm and a compilation of European historical materials. The scheme is burdened by over-complexity (15 pairs of secondary "two-way linkages", with added tertiary indicators). Rokkan here tries to do in one step what he would later do in three distinct steps. He was in the process of formulating these as three separate methodological elements (list/grid/maps). Rokkan never returned to that scheme. Some of the paradigms that Rokkan published were dead ends. We now turn to the first element.

Rokkan presented the various versions of his paradigms and analyses of Europe in several papers, but only in one paper he briefly laid out his views on how the rest of the world's countries compared with the European pioneers. Modestly, he offered a "brief and necessarily superficial review of the

possibilities of constructing a corresponding grid of variables for the differentiation of sequences of development in the other regions of the world" (Rokkan 1975: 591f).

He started from a simple paradigm of four master variables (Table 4). It uses economy/culture in the same way as in the two-dimensional axis cross, but it has no centre/periphery territorial axis. Rather, he uses Hirschman's terms to distinguish between open and closed boundaries. His main claim is that dense and independent city networks indicate economic openness (trade), while concentration of primary resources indicates that territorial authorities tend to close the resource base off (cf. Table 7 below: I:E, I:T). Similarly, in the cultural sphere, churches/religions may transcend territorial borders, while some languages close off territorial borders.

The task Rokkan sets himself – nine pages out of a 38 page article – was to point out "the more striking of the overall differences among geocultural areas" with reference to these variables. He reviewed the variables one at a time, establishing four schemes. He attributed regions, but also countries, to the various variable values, in quite sketchy and incomplete ways. This was his only take on such a topic. In order to illustrate this brief effort at defining world regions, we reproduce his culture/voice-cell as Table 5. This seems his best worked-out scheme.

Having specified all his four master variables in tentative variables lists, Rokkan (1975: 596) concluded that his "quick and exceedingly superficial review of major differences among world regions (...) obviously will not take us very far toward the construction of differentiating typologies for use in

TABLE 4 *The master variables*

	Economy	Culture
<i>Exit variables:</i> conditioning openness to cross-system transactions	Independence of city networks: openness to borders	Differentiation of secular-religious institutions: closedness vs. openness towards external influence
<i>Voice variables:</i> conditioning closeness of ties to territorial system	Separateness and concentration of primary resources	Distinctiveness and unification of territorial language

Source: Rokkan 1999: Figure 10, 129.

TABLE 5 *Second Master Variable: Linguistic Unification/Distinctiveness*

Linguistic unification/Distinctiveness	Geocultural area
Low-Low	
– Localized languages, little likelihood of standardization, imperial standard shared with several successor states	Tropical Africa, Latin American countries with large proportions of Indians
Low-Medium	
– Localized languages, little likelihood of standardization, imperial standard shared with several successor states	India
Medium-Low	
Imperial or settler standard near-dominant	
– One standard	Arab states, rest of Latin America,
– Several standards	English-speaking settler states Europe: Switzerland, Belgium Canada South Africa
Medium-Medium	
– One endoglossic, one exoglossic standard	Ireland, (Wales) Finland
Medium-High	
Major dialectal varieties,	
– one endoglossic standard	China
– several endoglossic standards	Spain, Norway, Czechoslovakia, Soviet Union
High-Medium	
– Shared endoglossic standard	Austria, Germany, Thailand/Laos
High-High	
	Japan, homogenous European nation-states

Note: Endoglossic standard: an indigenous language counting as the official language of a region/country. Exoglossic standard: a non-indigenous language taking a similarly official position (example: English in Ireland).

Sources: Rokkan 1975: 593f. Rokkan's main sources: Kloss 1968, Rustow 1968.

analyses of the preconditions and sequences of political development". Still, he was able to address a classical topic in the study of economic development, the problem of latecomers, with a focus on the context for emergence of political institutions. He would briefly compare "the typical Western European configurations with those of the other regions of the world", trying to pin down "the decisive contrasts between the early conditions for state- and nation-building and the conditions for the late-comers of the postcolonial era" (Rokkan 1975: 563). He finds that in comparison to Western European cases, later developing "post-colonial polities" face "a cumulation of challenges in a very different world environment", cf Table 6.

Specifying these challenges, Rokkan (1975: 571–2; 1999: 132, Figure 11) uses his distinction between "four time phases" in centre/periphery-relations between state builders and mobilizing masses. I indicates state-building processes (Centre→Periphery, penetration). II indicates inclusion of masses into the system (C→P, standardization). III indicates the emergence of representative organs and mobilizing parties (P→C, participation). IV indicates the expansion of the territorial administrative apparatus (P→C, turning the state into an agency of redistribution, i.e. the welfare state)

For Western Europe's rapid growth of consolidated nation-states, "the low levels of overall mobilisation at the time of state-building" (Rokkan 1975: 597) were important. There were mainly national and local elites, while peasants and urban workers were only gradually integrated. With reference to the emergence of mass democracies, he defines another specificity – with reference to timing – of the European development.

The decisive thrust toward the consolidation of the machineries of territorial control took place before the full monetization of the economy, before the lower strata could articulate any claims for participation. This gave the national elites time to build up efficient organizations before they had to face the next set of challenges: the strengthening of national identity at the mass level (our Phase II), the opening of channels for mass participation (Phase III), the development of a sense of national economic solidarity and the establishment of a workable consensus on the need for a redistribution of resources and benefits (Phase IV). There were important differences in the time sequences of these later crises: (...) the Western nation-states were given a chance to solve some of the worst problems of state-building before they had to face the ordeals of mass politics. (Rokkan 1975: 597f)

This discussion of the Western European region compared to the more recent cases of post-colonial efforts at democratization is not included in the compilation edited by Flora et al. (Rokkan 1999). This is unfortunate, since this theme is one that makes Rokkan's comparative reflection very relevant for analyses of contemporary struggles for democracy and human rights (Rueschemeyer, Stephens and Stephens 1992). Rokkan was too modest when he deemed it superficial. Even the first sketches are more promising than e.g. Wallerstein's (1974) attempt to impose a crude *dependencia* model in the study of socio-economic development.

TABLE 6 Checklist for comparison between Europe and other world regions

Property	16th–18th century Europe	20th century postcolonial systems
<i>Conditions of center formation</i>		
Pressures from major centers outside territory	<i>Low</i> Old empire disintegrated, influences from Rome largely cultural, political only in south	<i>High and diversified</i> London, Paris, Washington, Moscow, Peking
Build-up through wars	<i>Frequent</i>	<i>Rare but exceptions:</i> Vietnam, Israel, Egypt
Center-periphery communications	<i>Slow</i> Short-distance dependencies favouring integration; slowly expanding literacy favouring integration with national center	<i>Rapid</i> Long-distance dependencies weaken national center; increasing exposure of masses to outside communications: radio, films
<i>Cultural unification</i>		
Likelihood of development of national linguistic standard	<i>High</i> Outside standards (Latin, Greek), politically-economically weak	<i>Low</i> Outside standards politically and/or economically strong: role of language of former imperial masters
Elite commitment to unified culture	<i>High</i> Early national universities favoured development of nation-tied competences (careers in law, education)	<i>Low</i> Dependencies on foreign universities, attraction to outside alternatives.

Property	16th–18th century Europe	20th century postcolonial systems
<i>Participation challenge</i>		
Demonstration effects of other regimes	<i>Low</i> All regimes restrictive until American-French revolutions	<i>High</i> Models of universal suffrage politics in Europe and the west
Institutional readiness for mass participation	<i>Varying, but typically high</i> Historically given channels of representation	<i>Low</i>
<i>Distribution challenge</i>		
Demonstration effects	<i>Low</i>	<i>High</i> Welfare states, socialist economies as alternative models
Institutional readiness	<i>High</i> Marked build-up of extractive capabilities, potential instruments of redistribution	<i>Low</i> State machineries overburdened by other tasks
Growth of cultural-national economic solidarity	<i>Marked</i> Increase in willingness to equalize economic conditions within territory	<i>Problematic</i>

Source: Rokkan 1975: 598–9.

The Regional Grid: The Model of Europe

Rokkan had pursued these comparisons between world regions within UNESCO's International Social Science Council (ISSC). But he let it rest and continued to work on Europe only.

The trust of the argument was that the concrete history of any particular attempt at system-building could be analysed chronologically, in terms of time lags versus cumulations of phases; structurally in terms of the persistence versus reversal of initial conditions. The implications of the model were spelled out for only one region of the world: the territory of Western Christendom after the Schisma of 1054. (Rokkan 1973b: 29)

This led to what Rokkan (1981a: 70; 1999: 136f, Figure 12) called his "model of Western Europe". In principle, he implied that similar, but regionally distinct

models could be established for other world regions. We thus suggest the generic term *regional grid*, although Rokkan himself never used this term. This label is all the more relevant since Rokkan (1980a: 125) emphasized that the regional grid is strictly speaking not a model, it is “a systematized list of elements, which belongs to a string of, a *family* of models”.

This is possibly Rokkan's most original methodological innovation. It was first presented in a Paris lecture in June 1974 (Rokkan 1974b; cf 1999: 348), then in Rokkan (1976), and finally, with an even “older” layer of preconditions added in Rokkan (1981a). The 1974 and 1976 versions were never published, so the regional grid was only public to the research community after Rokkan's death, but even then only in two quite exotic publications, a Festschrift for Karl Deutsch (Rokkan 1981b), and an anthology on fascism (Hagtvet/Rokkan 1980). Apart from different introductions, these two publications and the 1976 paper are essentially identical. In addition, the grid was presented in a Paris lecture in 1976, so far only available in a German translation (Rokkan 1980a). Only with the Rokkan 1999 volume, the regional grid was properly published.

The grid is a periodized and stratified variables list, with explanatory factors grouped into ETC. *Outcomes* are produced by the workings of a set of *intervening process variables* on a set of systematically ordered *preconditions*. Preconditions are European developments from the Middle Ages to ca 1800; “intervening process variables” refers to the interaction of the national and industrial revolutions to the 1950s; and outcomes are those specified in Table 3 above.

Most importantly, Rokkan (1981a: 71; 1999: 126) saw the grid an “engine” for the generation of hypotheses. It can generate a large number of typologies, tailor-made for explanations of his outcome variables. In principle, the variables of the grid would emerge from the discussion of master variables applied to world regions, but since these lists were only rough sketches, Rokkan (e.g. 1971: 54, 1975: 591–600) worked the grid out with reference to a number of summary statements on European specificities. The regional grid can be located in between variables lists and typological maps. The grid enriches the Weberian tradition. Weber's work is an enormous catalogue of typologies, but there is nothing there akin to Rokkan's typology-generator.

To Rokkan, the grid was “work in progress”: “Each of the variables retained are indicated in simple keyword style: full explication would take us far beyond the confines of this first statement” (Rokkan 1981a: 73; Hagtvet/Rokkan 1980: 134; omitted in 1999). Although Rokkan used a vocabulary of strength, structure, proximity, homogeneity, heterogeneity, speed, pressures – all terms that indicate a coding of cases on scales – providing robust information on all the variables was a challenge, even for a renowned researcher with his talents for

TABLE 7 *The regional grid. Precondition variables*

Explanatory factors	Period	Economy	Territory	Culture
Pre-condition variables	o Early middle ages	o-E: Predominant agrarian structure: – <i>Atlantic/Celtic bocage</i> – <i>open field (champion) farming: allodial or seigniorial/manorial</i> – <i>Mediterranean type field system</i>	o-T: Extent of incorporation into German-Roman empire – <i>part of core marchland</i> – <i>temporarily within Empire, later transferred to outside control</i> – <i>newer part of Empire</i>	o-C: Ethnic origins of successive territorial populations: – <i>Celtic</i> – <i>Roman</i> – <i>Germanic</i> – <i>Slavic</i> – <i>Finno-Ugric</i> – <i>Arabic/Muslim</i>
	I High middle ages	I-E: Strength/structure of city network	I-T: <i>Geopolitical position:</i> proximity to 'dorsal spine' – seaward – landward	I-C: Homogeneity/heterogeneity of <i>ethnic/linguistic structure</i>
	II 1500–1700	II-E: Change in <i>geo-economic position:</i> breakthrough of 'Atlantic capitalism'	II-T: Extent of <i>periphery control:</i> degree of unification/centralization	II-C: Extent of 'nationalization' of <i>territorial culture:</i> success/failure of Reformation
	III 1648–1789	÷	III-T: Survival of <i>representative institutions</i> versus absolutist rule	÷

Source: Rokkan 1999: 136f, Figure 12, first part.

organization of research collectives. If we search his writings thoroughly, we will surely find highly interesting small condensed discussions that illuminate his choice of labels. But he does not systematically outline operationalization, measures and definitions. Rokkan hardly provides any considerations on validity (how appropriate is the measure) or reliability (whether successive measures over time will be strongly correlated).

We shall note in our conclusion that this under-specification of variables may be a more chronic problem in Rokkan's work. There is anyhow no option here to provide the full explication that Rokkan refrained from. His variables deal with complex institutional patterns related to city networks, religious institutions, linguistic developments, agrarian economic conditions, and so on. Most of the information Rokkan needed would have to be retrieved from historical monographs and synthetic sketches in various local research frontiers (history, economic history, family history, history of languages). Much relied on Rokkan's own historical imagination, his "natural wisdom" (cf above p. 510) or "knowledge by acquaintance".

In the next section, we shall review the variables that Rokkan used for his master map. Here we shall just present one example: I:C, homogeneity/heterogeneity of ethnic/linguistic structures. Table 5 above already contains a classification of at least 10 of Rokkan's case-countries on specifications of linguistic homogeneity and heterogeneity. The following quote is a good example of the kind of small, pointed comparisons scattered around in Rokkan's texts. The analysis is geared towards how institutions – deriving from "vintage" historical turning points – impact on "mass mobilisation and party formation". We have inserted reference to the relevant variables (in Table 3 and Table 7 above). Note also the elegant aside which establishes a comparison to Chinese ideographic script:

(...) we cannot understand the variations in the alliances of the Church and their impact on mass mobilisation [VI:R] and party formation [VI:P] without considering the initial conditions for development of some central standard of linguistic communication within the territory. The *Völkervanderung* and the struggles of the Middle Ages [O:C] had produced very different conditions for linguistic unification in the different territories of Europe. The vast territories of the Chinese Empire were kept together through the medium of ideographic script. The Roman Empire left the heritage of the Latin language but the alphabetic script allowed the vernaculars to rise to the level of literary standards [I:C]; this produced the extraordinary fragmentation of Europe and generated a variety of conflicts between claims for territorial control and claims of national

identity. There was nowhere a complete fit between the 'state' and the 'nation' and the conflicts between the two sets of claims were particularly violent in the central trade-route belt and in Catholic Europe.

The long sequence of migration, centre-building, cultural standardisation, and boundary imposition produced an extraordinary tangle of territorial structures in Europe: some large, some small, some highly centralized, others made up of differentiated networks of self-reliant cities. The alphabet and the city decided the fate of Europe: the emergence of vernacular standards of communication prepared the ground for the later stages of nation-building at the mass level, and the geography of trade routes made for differences in the resources for state-building between east and west. (Rokkan 1973b: 152; 1999: 145)

One must just regret that Rokkan did not live to extend such a sketch into a full fledged analysis of European developments based on comparisons with other regions.

Also the intermediate module (Table 8) of the regional grid deals with huge processes. The combined repercussions of the British industrial and the French national revolutions have been major topics in social science ever since the various disciplines emerged. They have been core topics in historical sociology, both among classics such as Marx and Weber, in modernization theories (Parsons, and others) and later in dependency theories (Wallerstein, and others) that Rokkan related to.

Although very original in methodological terms, the specification of the grid's variables leaves a lot to desire, partly because it was the last element that Rokkan added. About five years earlier, he had drawn the first versions of his "master map", to which we now turn.

Conceptual, Topological-Typological Maps

The conceptual maps are typologies that plot cases (existing or former states, regions with state-formation ambitions) into a conceptual space in which the variable values (mostly indexes of some sort) are also given a geographical interpretation. Drawing variables from a regional grid, these maps combine a limited number of variables in two dimensions: "a schematized system of co-ordinates generated through the combination of one territorial, one economic and one cultural variable" (Rokkan 1981: 77 (=1976); 1999: 141).

Many models can be created by combining variables from the regional grid. But the mother of all Rokkan's maps combines the variables I:E, I:T, and

TABLE 8 *The regional grid. Intervening process variables: interaction of "national" with "industrial" revolution 1789–1920s*

Explanatory factors	Period	Economy	Territory	Culture
Intervening process variables	IV Intensified nation building	IV-E: Character of <i>rural-urban resource combinations: commercial/military combinations vs. rural-urban conflict</i>	IV-T: Pressures for <i>centralisation/unification</i> versus <i>liberation/secession</i>	IV-C: Extent of <i>periphery-centre strain: ethnic-linguistic mobilization</i>
	V Industrialisation	V-E: Rapidity, localisation of <i>industrial growth</i>	V-T: Pressures for imperial expansion versus movements for <i>détente, peace</i>	V-C: Character of <i>church-state relations: strains, conflicts, alliances</i>

Source: Rokkan 1999: 136f, Figure 12, middle part.

II:C. We call this his *master map* (Table 9 contains the first version). The map combines a horizontal, socio-geographical east/west-gradient (economic and territorial state formation conditions) with a north-south gradient depicting cultural church/state-relations as conditions of nation-building (Protestant, mixed, and Catholic). Rokkan considered the master map crucial, since it reflected

the fundamental asymmetry of the geopolitical structure of Europe: the dominant city network of the politically fragmented trade belt from the Mediterranean toward the north, the strength of the cities in the territories consolidated to the seaward side of this belt, the weakness of the cities in the territories brought together under the strong military centres on the landward marchland. (Rokkan 1999:143)

This is the only map that covers the preconditions phase (I-II-phases, Table 7) exclusively. All the other maps he presented were modifications of that included selected intervening process variables (Table 8).

Rokkan used three terms to characterize his maps: *conceptual*, *typological* and *topological*. They yield types defined by the concepts operationalized in the regional grid. But unlike most typologies (say, a typology of states on a spectrum from totalitarian to democratic), they cannot be used for any region. In the master map, the west/east axis of the map reflects the physical and cultural landscape of Europe: the oceans, (British Chanel, the Baltic, the Mediterranean), coastal plains, the Alps, resource concentrations, the inland marches, combined with physical incarnations of human activity, the structure of city networks (I:E), the "dorsal spine" of the city-belt (I:T) (cf comments on Table 4 above). The north-south axis reflects more purely cultural, institutional and organizational features, the different church organizations after the Catholic/Protestant split.

In Rokkan's main paper on the regional grid, he provides a set of examples of "applications to concrete tasks of explanations" (Rokkan 1981a: 81ff). The outcomes to be explained are listed in the outcome module (Table 3 above, VI:R/S/P). The applications were little more than modified versions of the conceptual map of Europe (Table 9), superimposing intervening process variables (from Table 8) on to the vertical protestant/catholic north/south dimension.

The analysis of the breakdown of democracy into authoritarian/fascist regimes (VI:S), however, was a somewhat longer sketch (6 pages). Five cases are covered: Italy, Spain, Portugal, Germany and Austria. There is no space here to summarize his brief take on a complex topic, except for a brief overview of the systematics. Rokkan finds that the five cases share three basic similarities: an imperial heritage (combining I:T and II:T), "peripheralization" by the development of Atlantic capitalism (II:E, linked to the later V:E), and attempts to recover their international status by deliberate military-industrial alliances (IV:E). But their territory-building histories (IV:T) differed: Austria and Spain were early cases, while empire-building in Portugal was frustrated, and centre-building was late in Germany and Italy.

This macro-analysis led to yet another (Rokkan 1981a: 91; 1999: 241, Figure 26), quite complex modification of the master map. It is the only one in which he does not use II:C as the north/south gradient. Instead, he employs II:T, superimposing IV:T, the timing of unification/secession. By means of this map, Rokkan (1999: 241, Figure 26) seeks additional sources of differentiation: The core countries of the world economy takes up the north-western corner, while the authoritarian cases are found in the periphery to the east and in the

TABLE 9 Rokkan's 'conceptual map' of 16th – 18th century Europe

	Stronger	Weaker	Stronger	Stronger	Stronger	Weaker	Weaker
Strength of cities	Stronger	Weaker	Stronger	Stronger	Stronger	Weaker	Weaker
Strength of conquest centres	Stronger	Weaker	Stronger	Weaker	Stronger	Weaker	Weaker
Geopolitical type	Seaward peripheries	Seaward peripheries	Seaward Empire-Nations	City-State Consociations	Landward Empire-Nations	Landward Peripheries	Landward Peripheries
Beyond reach of Rome:	Iceland: Republic	Iceland: Republic	Viking Empires: later reduced to ethnically homogeneous nation-states: Norway, later under Denmark		← Sweden: State-building 16th C., major empire, 17th C. Turned seaward after 1660 through conquests in West	Finland: Province of Sweden 1809: Grand Duchy of Russia	Finland: Province of Sweden 1809: Grand Duchy of Russia
Protestant	10th C. later under Norway, Denmark	10th C. later under Norway, Denmark	Denmark →				
Territories once under Roman Empire and/or influenced by Roman Law:	Scotland: Monarchy 12th C. united with England 1707	Scotland: Monarchy 12th C. united with England 1707					
Wales:	subjected 16th–17th C.	subjected 16th–17th C.					
Prussia:							
Hanseatic League:	Loose federation of cities around Baltic and North Seas, 13th–16th C.	Loose federation of cities around Baltic and North Seas, 13th–16th C.					
Netherlands:	Northern provinces	Northern provinces					
Switzerland:	Confederation 1291, major	Confederation 1291, major					
Protestant							
Religiously mixed	Ireland: Subjected 16th–17th C.	Ireland: Subjected 16th–17th C.					

	Stronger	Weaker	Stronger	Stronger	Weaker	Stronger	Weaker
Strength of cities	Stronger	Weaker	Stronger	Stronger	Stronger	Weaker	Weaker
Strength of conquest centres	Stronger	Weaker	Weaker	Stronger	Stronger	Stronger	Weaker
Catholic	Brittany: Subjected 16th C.	France: Consolidated 16th C., empire building frustrated except in Indo-China, Africa	united in fight against Hapsburg: Independence 1648 Belgium: Only in 1830	city-states added 14th C.	Savoy- Piedmont: Independent nucleus for unification of city-state Italy	Bavaria	Bohemia: Subjected by Hapsburg, 1620
Counter-reformation territories	Crusading Empire built up in fight against Moslems; major overseas empires: Portugal, Spain						Aristocratic Border Empires: Poland: divided 18th C. Hungary: Overrun by 16th C., with Habsburgs 1699

Source: Rokkan 1971: 56. Compare Rokkan 1999: 142, Figure 13, and the editors' note 17, 349ff.

southern semi-periphery. Rokkan also refers to France as a quite similar case with a different outcome. His conclusion may be quoted as an example of how the intermediary elements are used to derive tentative, bottom-up generalizations. For the period until 1939,

(the) chances of the *survival* of competitive multiparty politics was greatest within the capitalist *core* of the world economy, that the likelihood of *fascist-type* victories was greatest in the *semi-peripheralized* territories of earlier city-studded empires- and that the probability of *communist-type* victories was greatest in the much more markedly *peripheral* areas of earlier empires of the “agrarian bureaucracy” type, empires with poorly developed commercial-industrial bourgeoisies. (Rokkan 1981a: 93; 1999: 242f)

While this example gives an insight into how Rokkan worked, here improvising on a Barrington Moore (1964) theme, we have not covered his reference to accounting schemes (in his first two applications) in between the regional grid and his modified conceptual maps. At this point, a critical discussion is required.

Accounting Schemes – A Critical Discussion

Rokkan used the term “accounting scheme” already in the 1960s.

Our aim is to reduce to the smallest possible number the range of explanatory variables required to account for the variations in electoral alternatives among our countries. (...) It is easy enough to spin out strings of explanations for one country at a time: the task is to develop an unified scheme of accounting that will hold up across a maximum of empirically extant cases.” (Rokkan 1968: 197; 1970a: 96; 1999: 303)

Both in 1968 and later, Rokkan (1968: 197; 1970a: 96; 1999: 303) hints at an interpretation of accounting schemes as process tracing. He would account “for the marked variations in the timing, the speed, and the scope of the measures taken to institutionalise competitive mass politics”. Presenting his regional grid in 1976, he noted that it would take long “before the model can offer systematized accounting schemes”. It was no longer a question of just present outcome variations, but of accounting “for the variations at each step of the long

historical process" (Rokkan 1976:2, 1981a: 71): outcomes in one period accounting for outcomes in other periods.

Such causal pathways would differ from the conceptual maps, which are no guides to sequences in historical time, despite the fact that the variables have temporal indexes like I and II. The accounting scheme allows Rokkan to move "upstream" (*en amont*) from the post-war territorial unit, that is: backwards into its history, pursuing "retrospective diachronics":

given an observed contrast in the values of variable at time t_i what combinations of variables for earlier phases t_{i-1} , t_{i-2} and so on, can best account for these differences. (Rokkan 1976: 4).

Rokkan places the accounting scheme at an intermediary level between the case level and the "over-all" (revisable) model, paradigms included. In this connection he applied a methodological rule that connected to his quest for "parsimony" (which we will discuss below):

no variable can justify its position in the scheme simply because it helps to describe the conditions in one particular system at one particular stage: to qualify for inclusion in the analysis a variable must specify a necessary or a sufficient condition for a patent difference in later-stage outcomes between at least two distinct systems". (Rokkan 1976; 1a; 1999: 141)

There are reasons to doubt that this rule actually describes the construction of an accounting scheme. The full argument is best provided by way of a comparison with Ragin's QCA-method. In his main paper on the regional grid, Rokkan presented two accounting schemes. Surprisingly, it is impossible to figure out how these schemes are the result of an application of the rule just quoted. Rokkan (1981a: 82, Figures 3.3 and 3.4) often uses a "combinatorics" terminology. This is interesting, given the fact that Ragin (1987: 126) introduced set-theory into social science, partly based on inspiration from Rokkan. One of Ragin's examples of QCA-analysis was a reanalysis of data that Rokkan (1970a: 129–140) also used as the basis for one of these accounting schemes (1981a: Figure 3.4).

Ragin establishes a truth table which yields a number of causal configurations explaining the emergence of party systems with a split left side, discussing them with reference to various assumptions that can be made on the values in the empty outcome cells. Without assumptions, Rokkan's two configurations are reproduced, but with assumptions (applying Boolean minimization

algorithms), they are not. The following differences to Rokkan, however, must be noted. First, Rokkan draws accounting schemes connecting various labels, not *values* of variables. Second, in the few cases where he draws combinatorics schemes between variable values, he ignores the problem of empty outcome cells, so his schemes are not truth tables. Third, those same schemes were not just configurations, they connect variable values through different periods, as noted above.

The main conclusion is that Rokkan did not manage to devise a formal procedure for accounting schemes. What Ragin provided was a formal procedure only for configurations, which are more akin to typological maps. Thus the challenge of retrospective diachronics remained. However, Rokkan already had a means to address that challenge, not a formal procedure, but a way of tapping into the deep case “wisdom” that is contained in historical process tracing.

Comparative Case Reconstructions

In a 1967 paper, Rokkan (1970a: 52f) surveyed paired comparisons, various two-country/case studies, such as Bendix' comparison of public authority systems in Germany/Russia and India/Japan (Bendix 1964). He judged them more promising as “springboards for model building” than pure ad hoc comparisons. At that time, Rokkan's own comparisons were like “streams of comparisons”, not systematically paired comparisons, but rather improvised jumping between pairs in order to come up with suggestions of more general patterns.

However, in a 1970 study, Rokkan made use of paired comparisons in a much more systematic way. He started by presenting his two main research foci (VI:R, mobilization trajectory, where he had an “institutionalization model”, and VI:P, variations in party alternatives, where he had a “cleavage expression model”). He then noted the need for a more dynamic “unified model” covering the interaction between these two processes. Not only should it account for the post-war outcomes (VI:R and VI:P), but also “for variations in the sequences of interactions between pressures for democratization and efforts to establish organized control of the mobilization markets through the formation of parties”. He then noted the ideographic/nomothetic “quandary” (see above, p. 510–511), suggesting paired comparisons of national developmental sequences a “possible procedure” (1970b: 66) to overcome it:

(...) I start out from the distinctions in the original models and then check through for each pair how many of the actual differences in sequences

and structures can be roughly accounted for in these terms and how many require further differentiations. The essence of the method is to stay at the level of cross-national comparisons of similarities and differences at every step: to reconcile the need for maximal information about concrete developments with the need for conceptual parsimony in the model of explanation. (1970b: 66)

He first provided a two page comparison of Denmark and Sweden, noting different historical trajectories from absolutism into the 19th century, showing how this helps to account for differences in party structures. Then, over seven pages, he compared Finland and Ireland, the "latest units to reach independent status within "pluralist" Europe" (1970b: 68). However short, these are impressively dense comparisons. We have no space to sum up the analysis. Note, however, that in the final five pages of the paper, Rokkan (1970b: 75ff) sketches a "unified model", which is actually a highly detailed – again, one might say over-complex – precursor to his later regional grid for Europe.

Rokkan was weakened by health problems the last few years of his life. But he was able to complete a study of the five Nordic countries, addressing his main outcomes (VI:R/P). Together with the 1970 comparison and the very brief analysis of breakdown into fascist/authoritarian regimes (see above p. 533ff), this late work stands as the best examples of Rokkan's capacity to pursue substantive comparative analysis.

In the 1970 analysis, Rokkan moved directly to paired comparisons on the basis of his two disjunct models. The Nordic paper starts from the master map (Table 9), which resulted from the integration of the two earlier models. First, he isolated the Northern area of that map. The fact that Rokkan's grid and maps were geographically contextualized, allowed him to vary what he took to be the given context. This indicates how far he had moved away from his first commitment to general theory. He was still searching for general patterns, but within specified world regions or sub-regions. He noted that the scope and focus of the comparison would influence the weight of the variables needed: "they are functions of the geocultural range of the comparison, the time spans they cover, and the analytical distance to the dependent variables". Conclusions on "minimal configurations" would require fewer variables "the more the cases have in common through joint historical experiences":

you need fewer variables to account for differences among the Nordic countries than for differences among all Protestant countries, fewer for an analysis of variations among Protestant countries than among all Christian countries, fewer for differences among Christian countries

than among all political systems initially formed under the impact of one of the world religions. (Rokkan 1975: 570)

Importantly, now that Rokkan had developed his intermediate elements, the trade-off between context and generalization was reduced. He excelled at formulating minimum configurations in specified geo-cultural areas, and these were also compatible with extensive reliance on historical process tracing.

Having isolated the Norden part of his maps, Rokkan proceeded with a paired comparison of Denmark and Sweden as two European great powers in the preconditions phase. Finally, he compared the interaction between mobilization trajectories and formation of party systems across the group of five nation states – two old and three “new” nations – in the period after the Napoleonic wars. He finished with brief remarks on the present, commenting on the inflationary 1970s, with controversies on EU-membership, corporatism and inflation. Again, we have no space to sum up this analysis, but this 26 page paper stand as probably the densest analysis ever published on the units of the Nordic state system. The analysis is analytic all the way through, and all cases, including small Iceland, are given equal attention. The conclusions are both carefully contextualized generalizations and explanations of the main differences between the five singular cases.

Rather than the term paired comparisons, we suggest that the common features of these analyses are best covered by the term *comparative case-reconstructions*. Partly, the reason is that one can pursue such an analysis with any small-n cluster, preferably based on grounded theory “theoretical sampling” (Glaser & Strauss 1967). But a more important reason follows from our criticism of Rokkan’s accounting schemes. Such reconstructions can provide retrospective diachronics where the accounting schemes failed to deliver.

Comparative case reconstructions differ from what Gerring calls (historical) process tracing (see above p. 510). The latter is entirely singular, not related to other cases. Rokkan relates several cases of political mobilization/party formation to each other. By means of the regional grid and the master map, he has analytically prepared the set of properties across which he will compare his cases. Compared to process tracing within the discipline of history, Rokkan’s intermediary elements allow the researcher to draw on systematic (although not historically fully specified) knowledge about several other cases.

In contrast to the mainstream historian, Rokkan has a method for *strong comparisons*. With reference to analytically specified properties of the cases (he used the term dimensions), he can specify both the timing of turning points (critical junctures), differences across outcomes at turning points, and differences in institutional evolution between turning points. While his goal

was always to explain outcome differences, this explanation also yields deep understanding of the specificities of the singular case developments. Some historians have a bad habit of postulating a "Sonderweg" on the basis only of descriptive familiarity with one case. Rokkan's strong alternative is to use information about the other cases, provided through conceptual, typological maps, getting to the specificity of each one case in this roundabout way. In contrast to historians' process tracing, this approach shows more precisely than single case history what constitutes the differing "Sonderwege".

In the debate with the Norwegian historian Jens Arup Seip, it is clear that while Seip (1974) personalized the research frontier in Norwegian political history, Rokkan benefitted greatly from his systematic political-historical knowledge of 15 other countries. However brilliant his studies of Norway, Seip would never have been able to produce comparative research at the level of sophistication Rokkan (1981b) displayed. On the other hand, one might speculate that Seip's own account of Norwegian political history would have been even sharper had it been informed by the systematic comparisons laid out by Rokkan.

The concept of counterfactuals is invoked both in historians' discussions of explanation, and in statisticians' reflections on causality. There is no room for an extended discussion here, but note that Rokkan obviously preferred comparative case reconstruction to counterfactual arguments. He used cases of the same as analogies: understanding a network of differences facilitates understanding of the historical individuality of each distinct case. As long as cases are contextualized by means of list/grid/map, they serve as real existing analogies to other "cases of the same". It is possible to produce several maps, both for the same outcomes, and for slight variations in the outcome module. In the fascism-analysis (above, p. 536), Rokkan uses France as a real "counterfactual" to the five cases in which democracy broke down. With this in mind, the following statement by Rokkan no longer sounds mysterious:

It is easy enough to develop typologies in ignorance of the information lost out through the choice of attributes and the assignment of codes: our task is to develop and test alternative typologies in full awareness of the information lost through each such effort. (Rokkan 1968: 174)

Historical process tracings are likely to give access to information lost when various types are defined. Process tracing knowledge can thus productively inform comparative case reconstructions. And luckily, Rokkan did leave some – however short – such reconstructions. They are exemplars through which we can learn how the intermediary elements can be used together with historical process tracings.

Conclusion

Let us sum up: *Paradigms* are frameworks of formal concepts (centre/periphery, boundaries, etc.) that are relevant in the analysis of macro-units. *Lists of variables* organize empirical information according to dimensions given by paradigms, distinguishing world regions (geocultural areas). A *regional grid* provides a periodized and classified list of factors, covering one geocultural area (Rokkan: Western Europe). By means of the grid, a number of *conceptual maps* can be generated, mapping selected cases with reference to both conceptual distinctions and the region's geography. Finally, selecting a smaller number of cases from these maps, the researcher can conduct *comparative case reconstructions*, drawing both on social science data and historical process tracing.

This is an ambitious, but reasonable program for systematic comparative research on macro-units. It was developed by Rokkan in order to explain features and results of democratization processes (Table 3), but it makes sense to discuss its usefulness also with reference to other major outcome variables (Mjøset 2015). However, two major challenges stand out. One is empirical, the other relates to justification in philosophy of science terms. Discussing them, we shall distinguish two ways in which Rokkan's approach may be revised.

The empirical challenge consists of two interconnected problems: under-specification of variables and institutional legacies. The regional grid, Rokkan (1981a: 73; 1999: 139) wrote, "reduces the great complexity of territorial histories to a series of concatenated constellations of variables over time". But these variables are only presented as keywords. Rokkan knew everything about collecting data, and he was an optimist. But the further he penetrated older layers of his chosen region's history, he was forced to compromise. In some of the comparative case reconstructions he had to allow himself a "margin of imprecision" (Rokkan 1976; 1981 a; 1999: 237). Maybe he had the disturbing experience that comparative case reconstructions moves to a level "beneath" the necessarily restricted amount of information that can be included into the definition of the variable. In that case, Rokkan must allow a mixed methods relationship with disciplines that belong to the case-study tradition within the humanities: history, area studies, and ethnography.

As for institutional legacies, the quick labels in Tables 7 and 8 are best specified as institutions. Even the "oldest" variables in these schemes are to be related to 20th century outcomes (Table 3). Any study that aims to include the roots of recent configurations by reaching back many centuries, must consider institutional change. Institutions emerge under influence of specific patterns

of social forces, and Rokkan is interested in institutions that define long-term contexts. But through the centuries up to the interwar/post-war outcome period, they are also bound to change. For instance, Rokkan emphasized the long term political consequences of the Protestant/Catholic divide in Europe. However, taking the Nordic protestant countries as our example, it is clear that by the 19th and 20th century, the impact of this factor must be related to the coevolution between the state churches, educational institutions, revivalist movements, and so on.

In philosophy of science terms, the main challenge can be related to Rokkan's favourite term "parsimony". As noted above, Rokkan tried to account for his increasingly case-oriented research within his own version of the standard framework, and the term parsimonious played a decisive role. Summing up his layers from paradigms and "down" to empirical sources (as in Table 2), the intermediate elements fit in as high (list, grid), middle (maps), and low (comparative case reconstructions) levels. We can then sample sentences and paragraphs in which he uses the term "parsimonious". When we relate the term to the various layers, we realise that always when Rokkan uses the term, he connects at least two of these levels, e.g. formal and low, high and middle, etc. The specific meaning of parsimony in Rokkan, is thus a "systematization" of variables generated by comparative analysis that moves between the intermediary elements. He suggests that the best systematization results from applying an Occam's razor "principle of parsimony of comparative explanations":

I retain only variables that contribute to the explanation of at least one difference between two countries, I omit all variables that are only relevant to the analysis of internal differences within one country or are only of interest with reference to one singular developmental trajectory. (Rokkan 1980a: 125)

In one of his last papers, he remained convinced that he could progress towards "higher level of systematization – if not strict formalization – of the basic dimensions of macro-history" (Rokkan 1976: 26; 1981a: 93). But this progress could develop along two quite different paths.

On the one hand, the standard understanding of "unified theory" (parsimony, systematization) would be a set of "law-like regularities" in line with the experimental template. In the standard view, formal theory must in some way directly be turned into substantive theory (Mjøset 2009: 56; the distinction is from Glaser & Strauss 1967, 34). If Rokkan wants to retain his standard framework, he can not give up the quest for a synthesis. He needs to find a way in which the accounting scheme technique will work, and he must work with

fully specified variables. This would liberate him from the burdensome task of relating to historical process tracings.

But in his optimistic statement, Rokkan (1976: 26; 1981a: 93) noted that he would move “toward the construction of a unified theory of socio-cultural, economic and political change, at least for the territories of Europe once under the domination of the Roman Empire or the Church of Rome”. In this case, “unified theory” (parsimony) is a “systematization” that only has explanatory power within the West European context, which Rokkan has “built” by means of his intermediate elements (list/grid/maps). He emphasizes that results of such analyses should feed back, inspiring revisions of the paradigms involved, but this will not make the paradigms (formal theory) *substantive*. They will remain formal, so if we want to apply Rokkan’s approach to another region, he only provides us with a set of loose heuristic paradigms. There is no way we can escape the time-consuming task of building, say, the Middle East context by specifying variables lists for that geocultural region, then trying to develop a regional grid, deriving from it conceptual maps that can guide clustered comparisons that draw closely on historians’ process tracing accounts.

More principally, Rokkan’s concept of a unified theory – in such a contextualist reading (Mjøset 2000, 2009) – comes close to the concept of the best (most simple) *explanation* of case-specific processes. This would be in line with Cartwright’s (2007) reasoning on the “meagre” nature of social science theory. One need not require that formal theory be made substantive. The possibility of synthesis is rejected, a combination – now often called mixed methods – is preferable. This would not be a single outcome explanation, since the specificity of the singular macro-cases, as noted, are established by means of analytic procedures involving the whole set of elements from paradigms down to comparative case reconstructions. But it would also rely on interdisciplinary interaction in which the craftwork of historians’ process tracings would be appreciated. This would be in line with Rokkan’s (1976: 26; 1981a: 93) hope that his “efforts of systematization and of schematization be taken seriously by work-a-day historians and data-handling social scientists” alike.

Given our emphasis on the successful paired and clustered comparisons (Rokkan 1970b; 1981ab), it should be clear that we regard this contextualist option as the most promising way to reformulate Rokkan’s methodology. This solution integrates Rokkan’s intermediary elements into a methodological strategy that allows full integration of historical process tracings. The challenge will be to upgrade the list/grid/maps and generate new ones for other regions. More concern about the limits to specification of variables will also be required. This approach accepts that the “Methodenstreit” dualism can only be approached through mixed methods. It thus requires real interdisciplinarity

where social science works with the discipline of history in order also to relate to what is "outside of the codings", as Rokkan stated.

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