



Policy letter 2

Research design for case studies

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Introduction

The Team 'Leren en Doorgroeien' from the city of Rotterdam would like to study cases and systematically compare them, in order to draw lessons and develop perspectives of action for Rotterdam and her citizens. The research is a coproduction of the Municipality of Rotterdam and Vital Cities Vital Citizens/ EUR. The (inter)national network of the municipality of Rotterdam and the EUR will be utilized to collect data for the specific cases.

The research design will also be used to analyse secondary cases that have been publicised in the recent literature with regards to the Covid-19 outbreak.

Research questions

The key question is: *Through which working methods and activities have cities been able to emerge stronger out of the Covid-19 crisis?*

There are three sub-questions:

1. How has the city become more resilient against a second Covid-19 outbreak?
2. How and to what extent can the city (in the case of a next time) climb out of the predicament faster?
3. How and to what extent was the city able to embrace new opportunities and structures?

We refer to policy letter 1 for a brief summary of the conditions for urban resiliency.

Case study selection

We intend to look for cases that are comparable to the city of Rotterdam and the current crisis and where we can gain access to the data relatively fast building on our contacts. The criteria for the selection include:

1. The city adopts relevant and innovative working methods (including networks) and activities to build back stronger. The result(s) may differ (i.e. successful or less successful or unsuccessful).
2. The city needs to be comparable with Rotterdam in terms of size, income, economy and governance.

3. A comparable crisis, with characteristics that include a deep crisis that affected all facets of urban governance and all citizens and companies where, at the same time, the world economy was collapsing. Preferably an epidemic as well.
4. In order to reveal whether the city has come back stronger, , , the crisis needs to have occurred a considerable time ago and there must be access to primary or secondary data.

Both the Covid-19 pandemic as well as Rotterdam are unique, and therefore we need to look for cities that approximate the criteria as closely as possible. For example:

- The firework disaster in Enschede entirely meets the first requirement, and partially meets the other requirements.
- Cities that have been hit by the pandemic first typically fulfil requirement 1 and 3, and possibly requirement 2.
- Rotterdam during and after the financial crisis in 2008 meets requirements 1, 2 and 4.

We propose a funnel model, with a broad but fast literature review/ quick scan that is able to identify 20+ case studies. The most relevant and informative cases will subsequently be included in an in-depth study.

Operationalisation

The variables will be operationalised as follows, where not every sub-variable in each case needs to be relevant. The list of indicators can be used when making checklists, interview guides/questionnaires and/or a method of analysis of secondary data.

Table 1: Context variables (to determine the relevance of cases)

Variables	Indicators
Crisis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Type of shock • Depth of the shock (medical, economical, social, governmental) • Duration of the stock • Sectors affected • Effect on the world economy
City	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Population • GDP • Amount of staff and the budget of the city council • Good governance
Governance and activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Innovative working methods utilized • Crisis protocol present • Project/ project/project/program approach • Collaborative activities/multi-actor collaboration

Data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Availability of data and contacts

Table 2: Independent variables

Variables	Sub-variables	Indicators
Working methods	Fast out of the predicament / during the crisis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crisis management: Involvement of the public, private and societal actors and different governmental layers and sectors • Roles and tasks: Leadership • Horizontal and vertical joint ventures • Monitoring and evaluation • Data management • What works/worked and what does/did not? • What are/were the most important activities? • Resources (financial, manpower) • What are/were the critical services during the crisis
	Stronger / Innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Above mentioned indicators, but in regard to innovation / transformation after the crisis
Activities	Fast out of the predicament / during the crisis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are/were the most important activities and their sequence of events? • Was the crisis predicted? • Is/was there support for the vulnerable groups? • Is/were there sufficient medical amenities? • Is/was there economic support? Is/was it enough? • What sort of social safety nets are/were set up?
	Innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality present to innovate within governance and the city • Who innovates? • Experiment(s)/pilot trial(s) • Supporting and initiating activities

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aid given for upscaling and mainstreaming of the approach, assurance of lessons
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Table 3: Dependent variable “emerging stronger out of the crisis”

Variables	Sub-variables	Indicators
Prepared for the next crisis	Better able to predict	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New system(s) for prediction • Risks have been mapped
	Reserves created	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial, manpower, organizational, medical reserves created
	Working methods set up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crisis teams strengthened • Plans are ready, capacity, data collected, and networks present over multiple levels • Governmental flexibility and learning ability increased • New joint ventures within and outside of government structures • New data management systems • New monitoring systems • New social safety net
	Economy and society more resilient	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diversity of the economy has changed • Self-steering initiatives have changed • Local commercial chains have changed • Modularity has changed • Labour market flexibility • Medical world more prepared
Innovations	Working methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Innovations and creativity within the government, in networks and other organisations • Scale of innovations
	Social & economic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social and frugal innovations in the city • Economic innovations/changes • Medical innovations • Scale of innovations
	Transitions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Systematic changes in work and life/routines

Step-by-step plan for data collection and analysis

1. Agree on a clear division of tasks
2. A quick scan of the literature/websites that leads to a schematic overview of 20+ international cases that are possibly pertinent.
3. A selection of 3 to 5 relevant cases for further in-depth study. Determining the definitive indicators and research instruments
4. Per case, data collection through mixed methods (secondary data, open interviews, analysis of available documents). We are looking for a narrative form in historical sequence.
5. Separate analysis of each case.
6. Comparison between case studies: What explains the differences in how strong cities come out of a crisis? What are the generic patterns, lessons and conclusions?

Results

1. Schematic overview of 20+ relevant cases
2. Three to five brief case study reports in a narrative analytical form
3. Report of the comparison of case studies
4. Policy letters with the most important patterns, conclusions and lessons learned for Rotterdam
5. Academic (inter)national publication.