

potential cases which you are going to represent by the research you conduct on your selected cases. For practical reasons, any small scale research for a dissertation is likely to have to use the non-probabilistic method of convenience sampling, as described in Chapter 5, that is, a case or cases which are readily available in countries to which you happen to have access, or where you have contacts. This sampling practice is also followed by more experienced academics like Healey, who in the account of her study of spatial strategy-making in three urban regions in Europe argues that 'The selection of cases for in-depth qualitative research is always more a practical question than the product of systematic choice criteria' (2007: 291), and who states, 'The three cases chosen ... are very diverse and should not be considered in any sense as a "sample" or as exemplars of "good practice"'. They are merely examples of efforts at spatial strategy-making for cities or urban areas' (2007: 32). The consequence of this approach is that you will have to acknowledge that the cases you study may not be 'representative' of the countries in which they are located or of any wider population of interest, and empirical generalisations of the sort associated with probability sampling are not appropriate.

As we saw in Chapter 6 making a causal claim is to make a universal claim, about what will happen when the causal conditions are met. But in social research the context counts (Flyvbjerg, 2001), and at best theory might apply to certain historical periods, and they may also apply only to certain places where contextual conditions are similar. The broader population to which the theory might apply is thus limited in time and space. There has been an influential causal theory which has been of interest to British comparative planning researchers interested in planning in Europe. This theory claims that European integration has led to a change in the agenda of spatial planning in cities – from urban managerialism to urban entrepreneurialism – in order to attract businesses and employment. And as part of this shift there has been accompanying institutional change – from overarching metropolitan authorities (government) to public-private sector partnerships (governance). The first part of the theory suggests that European integration, that is the creation of a single European market during the period from the 1970s to the 2000s has had the effect of changing the objectives of policy in cities (and city regions) from a concern with delivering services to the local population to one focused on attracting jobs and businesses. At the same time, this change of objective has been accompanied by institutional change so that private sector partners have become more prominent in policy formulation and implementation. This theory might be 'ethnocentric', in the sense that it assumes that what has happened in Britain over the last 40 years or so