



## Innovative governance from public policy unities<sup>☆</sup>



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### ABSTRACT

This study examines which configurations explain the public policy for innovative governance through comparative qualitative analysis (QCA). The research analyzes the sub-system conditions through a case of Vietnam. The results show the minimum configurations of key variable conditions to achieve the outcome.

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## 1. Introduction

The notion of governance connects with two developments that culminate in political and social sciences (March & Olsen, 1989; Voß, 2007; Williamson, 1999). Political sciences increasingly see governance as a reduction of the states' governing capabilities and the loss of legitimacy of state interventions. However, political sciences do not consider the multi-causality of policy conditions and innovative governance. The qualitative comparative analysis (QCA) is helpful to select in the modeling. Three principles guide this research: (1) evidence-based research, (2) academic rigor and independence of analysis, and (3) social legitimacy and a participatory process. These principles involve a substantive research approach with a rigorous and systematic identification of policy conditions on the reform progress in the case of Vietnam. Another way is to move away from obvious case boundaries— from obvious administrative or political–institutional boundaries (e.g. municipalities, districts, states, countries) to boundaries that are more directly relevant in the policy studies (Do, 2008). To examine the policy process of Vietnam, the study draws on data from the Public Administration Performance Index (PAPI).

Following this introductory section, Section 2 presents the theoretical framework. Section 3 offers the research method, including the description of case selection and model specification. Section 4 offers the results. Section 5 presents conclusions.

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## 2. Theoretical framework

To the question of how institutions and mechanisms of governance come into being, the assumption is that overarching organizations of power (the state, the market) put them in place. Governance then includes the creation, maintenance, and transformation of social forms of organization through interventions in and modulation of existing patterns of interaction. These rule-shaping processes (e.g. public policy or organizational management) are institutionally structured themselves. The interest in such 'institutionalized forms of shaping institutions' is great in political science perspectives on governance where the focus is on the organization of policy processes.

Further, political scientists differentiate levels within governance structures, acknowledging its nested character. Ostrom, Gardner, and Walker (1994) distinguish between the "operational level," the "collective level," and a "constitutional level," each with particular interactions and rules in their framework of analysis. In addition, Weale et al. (2003) distinguish between "primary rules" as "policies that are decided," and "secondary rules," which are "rules about rules; they define how the primary rules are made and how they may be changed" (p. 5). Thus, governance demarcates a departure from a narrow understanding of societal steering as unilateral, hierarchical control of the state. In contrast to pure hierarchy or pure anarchy, governance acknowledges a diversity of interaction patterns, rule systems, and rule-making processes that reproduce social order within various policy domains (see Voß, 2007). Eising and Kohler-Koch (1999) stress this open analytical understanding in which governance deals with the structured ways and means in which the divergent preferences of interdependent actors translate into policy choices to allocate values. Mayntz (1997) contributes to a rising perception of government failure in the 1970s and early 1980s. The widening perspective brings new forms of cooperative steering

between public and private actors and self-regulation of private actors into view.

The measurement of governance is complex and manifold and involves many conditions (Guzmán-Cuevas, Cáceres-Carrasco, & Soriano, 2009; Ribeiro-Soriano & Urbano, 2010). Many scholars in Vietnam consider that governance relies on six dimensions including transparency, vertical accountability, participation at local level, control of corruption, public administration procedures, and public service deliveries. In addition, innovative governance is important in its own right but even more for its contribution to the formation of a more fair and equal society (Hellström, 1996, 1998, 2001).

The conditions that this study selects for the outcome of innovative governance come from discussions on governance and the concept of policy capacity. The first condition is the quality of system-wide data collection and data sharing. Information is very critical for policy analysis; thus, evidence-based public policy processes rely on the quality of system-data collection and data sharing. Information, by itself, does not put pressure on policymakers to make changes nor pressures the public to ask for changes. The cutting-edge issues in modern evidence-based policy debates focus on problem-framing, methods for gathering and assessing reliable evidence, communicating and transferring knowledge into decision-making, and evaluating the effectiveness of implementation and program delivery in complex policy areas (Head, 2009). The rational choice agents argue that better data practice leads to more effective policy decisions (Weitzman, Silver, & Brazill, 2006). Therefore, this condition is the efficient sharing of data among data owners and inter- and intra-governmental agencies.

The second condition is the accessibility of data or information to non-state actors. The participation and collaboration of non-state actors into the public policy process depend on their access to data. In Vietnam, non-state actors include mass organization, professional organizations and umbrella organizations, VNGOs, and community-based organizations (Do, 2008, 2009; Norlund, 2007).

The third condition is the institutional requirements and standards for policy analysis and evaluation. Policymaking follows rules and procedures, and less formal sanctions constrain policymaking (John & Johnson, 2008). For public policy process, rules are necessary (Howlett & Ramesh, 2003). Thus, the rules and procedures of public policy process going along with standards for the policy analysis and evaluation are the key for the governance outcome.

The fourth condition is the policy learning capability. Two separate endogenous and exogenous aspects of subjective and objective policy learning exist (Bennett & Howlett, 1992), thus actors participating in policy evaluation are often also participating in a larger process of policy learning, which seeks to improve policymaking drawing on the assessment of past experience. Other variable exists which may enhance the learning process; for example, when actors learn to trust each other and exchange policy ideas, there is a potential for policy innovation (John, 2012). In Vietnam, the state actors participating in the policy process may increase the capability.

The fifth condition is the inter-government and inter-agency coordination. The notion of policy sub-system is a powerful concept in policy analysis (Howlett & Ramesh, 2003). The coordination of state actors in the sub-system, both at national and sub-national level, is important. The coordination of inter-government refers to different state actors in executive, legislative, and judiciary power branches, as well as within the executive system such as line ministries. However, the coordination of inter-agencies plays a key role for the policy process because of the location in different ministries or localities of functional departments in the Vietnam context. From the PAPI data, this study selects the specific cases that relate to the sub-national policy process.

The sixth condition is the effectiveness of policy network and policy community. According to Howlett and Ramesh (2003), policy network is “being essentially interest-based” (p.151). The policy community consists of tight groups of policy actors or tight-knit sets of policy actors

who share a common idea set (Howlett & Ramesh, 2003; Richardson & Jordan, 1979; Rhodes, 1984). Group or network interactions correspond to the fluid and changeable reality of policymaking much more than the institutional approach (John, 2012). In Vietnam, the effectiveness of network and community policies depends on the sharing of policy process, which leads to innovative governance.

The seventh condition is the clarity in roles and responsibilities of different organizations in policy process. Institutions divide roles and responsibilities between organizations; institutions constrain the choices open to decision makers and play a role in shaping the preferences of those actors (John, 2012).

The eighth condition is the political accountability for policy process. The concept of accountability is complex. Keohane (2003, p. 3) also argues, “Accountability refers to relationships in which principals have the ability to demand answers from agents to questions about their proposed or past behavior, to discern that behavior, and to impose sanctions on agents in the event that they regard the behavior as unsatisfactory.”

Political accountability refers to the responsibility or obligation of government officials to act in the best interests of society or face consequences. Public officials should be responsible for their actions. Accountability ensures that the actions and decisions of public officials are subject to oversight to guarantee that government initiatives meet their objectives and respond to the needs of the community, thereby contributing to better governance and poverty reduction (World Bank, 2010a, 2010b). In Vietnam, parliament and people council are key actors in the “chain of accountability” because they are, along with the judiciary branch, the key institution of horizontal accountability, not only in their own right but also as the institution to which many autonomous accountability institutions report. Civil society organizations and the mass media are also important institutions in vertical accountability.

The ninth condition is the levels of participation of non-state actors in the policy process. Individual and group actors are key explanatory variables (Howlett & Ramesh, 2003) that relate to their levels of participation into the policy process. When engaging transparently with a wide range of state, non-state, and societal actors, participation and inclusiveness in the policy process improve (see DFID & GTZ, 2005; Howlett & Ramesh, 2003; World Bank, 2007). The non-state actors possible are business actors, NGOs, social-political organizations such as unions, mass media, and research think-tanks. However, this research only deals with business actors and NGOs. One important function of civil society organizations (CSOs) is the mobilization of “volunteerism,” which can be for all kinds of social activities and human services. Through the mobilization of constituents and resources, those organizations can influence national policies and their implementation (Ribeiro-Soriano & Castrogiovanni, 2012; Sole Parellada, Ribeiro-Soriano, & Huarng, 2011). In Vietnam, the participation of NGOs and community-based organizations, research institutions, and associations could help in public policy process. Thus, the participation of non-state actors in policy process is a key condition that could produce the positive governance outcome.

### 3. Method

This study uses QCA as method for the analysis because it is a common method in governance studies. Johnson (2005) explained how patterns of institutions and actors operated to produce a change in the municipal charter of USA. Kilburn (2004) worked on the influence of city context on urban regimes across 14 cities. Scouvar et al. (2008) measured the multiple causal interactions in deforestation process in Brazil. Oestreicher et al. (2009) strived to identify core conditions that shape the success or failure of a reduced deforestation scheme. Aubin and Varone (2011) analyzed rivalries between competing users of water resources. Rihoux, Rezsöhazy, and Bol (2011) worked successfully in an empirical study of 11 cases of local water rivalries in Belgium and Switzerland. Huntjens et al. (2011) analyzed policy

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