

SSA Congress 2013
University of Bern
Institute of Sociology
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Call for Papers (Workshop)

Elites in Times of Crisis

Abstract

To understand social inequalities it is of foremost importance to shed light on the group of actors who possess political and economic power and who therefore are able to shape social structures, hierarchies and positions – the elites. The aim of this workshop is to examine the changes the Swiss and international elites are undergoing in the course of the recent financial crisis.

The recent wave of elite research in Switzerland shows that traditional forms of corporatism, especially in the form of networks of interlocking directorates, are clearly in decline since the 1980s (Mach et al., 2011). In addition, also the recruiting pools of Swiss elites seem evolve: the number of elite members holding a degree in law, the traditional Swiss elite profession, decrease clearly. Other disciplines (business studies) and other universities (St. Gallen) train an ever larger proportion of the economic and also political elites. At the same time, we observe a rather dramatic internationalisation of the Swiss business elite that goes together with a devaluation of traditional national forms of capital (army, political mandates, extra-parliamentary commissions) and a gain of importance of what could be called “cosmopolitan capital”. International degrees, language knowledge, international career become symbolically more and more important to accede to the apex of large Swiss companies (David et al., 2012).

Based on these insights we invite contributions that address one of the following issues:

- Professions of power (law, economics, engineering, etc.) in and their transformation in the last decades
- Elites and the dynamics of internationalisation
- New elites and new forms of elite coordination
- Contributions on under-researched elite groups (religious elites, cultural elites, academic elites)
- Elites in a comparative perspective
- Methodological innovation in elite research

We are looking forward to a large array of contributions from different theoretical and methodological orientations. Contributions in English, German and French are welcome. Proposals (max. 250 words) can be sent until February 15th 2013 to the workshop organizers. You will be informed about the decision by March 15th 2013.

Workshop organizer(s)

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