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Title of the Workshop: “Elites in Times of Crisis”

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WORKSHOP-CONTRIBUTIONS

Contribution 1:

“Are the Swiss MPs more representative of the Swiss population today than yesterday?”

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Abstract

Recent research found that the democratization of the recruitment of the Swiss Members of Parliament (MPs) has remained rather limited in terms of social origin and educational background (Pilotti, Mach, and Mazzoleni 2010; Pilotti 2012). However, this observation has not yet been related to the whole population. Yet, as the social structure underwent an upward shift as a consequence of educational expansion, tertiarization and feminization, (Oesch 2006) we can wonder to what extent there has been an increasing convergence between the profile of MPs with that of the whole population in Switzerland over recent years. Furthermore, little research has so far analysed (1) trends in the strength of link between social origin and educational attainment, and (2) those between educational attainment and the occupation of the Swiss MPs as compared to the Swiss population. Thus, we aim to fill this gap in order to assess whether the recruitment of Swiss MPs has become increasingly meritocratic. Finally, our research should also address issues of partisanship specificities by carrying out analysis on subsamples according to the four main political parties.

Statistical analysis will be undertaken using a dataset on Swiss Elites that contains historical information for six cohorts of Swiss MPs: 1910, 1937, 1957, 1980, 2000 and 2010. This dataset will be compared to the Swiss population using a tailor made dataset that combines 12 surveys collected between 1975 and 2009. (cf. data used in Falcon 2012) This dataset not only has the advantage to contain social origin information, but it also enables us to reconstruct historical trends of the Swiss social structure through its division into 8 birth-cohorts: 1912-1935, 1936-1940, 1941-1945, 1946-1950, 1951-1955, 1956-1960, 1961-1965, 1966-1974. Of course, inherent limits of comparability between these two data sources will be discussed accordingly.

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Pilotti, Andrea, André Mach, and Oscar Mazzoleni. 2010. "Les parlementaires suisses entre démocratisation et professionnalisation, 1910–2000." *Swiss Political Science Review* 16(2):211–245.

Contribution 2:

"How the emerging transnational elite shapes the policy field in order to increase its power"

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Abstract

As a consequence of the process of globalization there has been a growing interest in the emergence of a transnational elite, also called transnational capitalist class. The research has focused mainly on two fields: transnational corporations and international organizations (institutions and think tanks). In the field of corporations the main line of inquiry was into interlocking directorates (a well-established field of research for national elites) and the internationalization of ownership of big corporations. Regarding the more political field of international organizations the research has focused on the emergence of a transnational level of institutions (European Union, World Trade Organization etc.) which have contributed to the erosion of the importance and of the sovereignty of nation-states. On the other hand some researchers have taken an in-depth look at the rising importance of less official organizations, e.g. think tanks, like the Mont Pèlerin Society, the Trilateral Commission or the European Round Table of Industrialists.

What has been missing so far is a systematic look at whether – and if yes how – the emerging transnational elite has managed to influence the national policy-making process in order to shape the political order in a way that is above all beneficial to their proper interests. This is based on the

assumption that it is not enough to demonstrate the existence of networks between key members of national elites on an international level – in order to speak of the emergence of a truly transnational elite, it must be possible to show that they are able to enforce their interests against the interests of the middle-class on one hand and the interests of national elite members who are not part of the transnational elite. In order to do this I am focusing in my Ph.D project on a number of crucially important policy fields like financial regulation, labour market regulation or taxes and aim to demonstrate that since the beginning of the 1970s we have witnessed a concentrated effort of the emerging transnational elite to shape the policy-making process in accordance with their interests on the one hand through international treaties (Maastricht, Schengen, WTO, GATT etc.) and on the other hand through a direct influence on the national policy-making processes.

For the workshop I would like to focus on the example of Switzerland. In a first step I would like to present evidence from literature that the emerging transnational elite has had a transforming effect on the structure of the Swiss elite. In a second step I would like to present my own research concerning the influence of the transnational elite on the policy making process. More precisely I would like to analyse the bilateral agreements between Switzerland and the European Union. My hypothesis is that the treaties have focused on legislation which reshape the political system in order to provide benefits for the emerging transnational elite while both the Swiss middle class as well as those members of the Swiss elite which do not become part of the transnational elite are the most obvious losers of this process. Examples of policies could include easier foreign ownership of corporations, less protectionism in international trade, more mobility for foreign workers etc.

Bibliography

No Bibliography

Contribution 3:

“European Business Elites: Convergence through internationalisation?”

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Abstract

Traditionally, comparative research on European business elites has been dominated by a “national career models” approach. This school of thoughts contends that each country has a specific career pattern for top managers, shaped by its particular educational system and national cultures of identifying excellence. In recent years, however, this line of argument has been increasingly challenged. Certain scholars posit that the increasing international circulation of top managers has led to a decline of national career models and at the same time to a rise of a new, convergent international career model.

In order to study this question we will draw on a database of 916 top managers of stock-listed firms in four European countries with different economic structures and different degrees of internationalisation: Germany, Switzerland, France and Britain. Our analysis will be based on a loosely Bourdieusian field-analytical framework and the use of multiple correspondence analysis (MCA). This combination will allow us to relate specific configurations of resources and capitals with different career trajectories and career outcomes of European top managers.

Specifically three questions will be addressed: can we, first, identify particular national educational profiles and career patterns across the four countries? Or can we observe career mechanisms that are valid across all four countries and in this sense are not due to specific national contexts? Second, can we draw a clear line between “national” and “international” managers? Do international manager have in common certain specific, converging characteristics that set them apart from their “national” colleagues? Or to the contrary, do international managers adapt to national career fields and take on characteristic features that enjoy legitimate authority in the respective countries? Thirdly, do international top managers contribute to the decline of national career models? Can we identify a convergence towards a common international career model?

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Contribution 4:

D'une globalisation à l'autre: Transformations du profil des élites économiques suisses dans la longue durée (1910-2010)

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Abstract

Au cours des vingt dernières années, la proportion de dirigeants étrangers à la tête des grandes entreprises suisses a considérablement progressé pour atteindre un niveau unique en Europe. Outre

la nationalité, le type de formation, les carrières suivies ou encore les rapports aux autorités politiques suisses des dirigeants de grandes entreprises se sont également considérablement modifiés durant cette même période. L'ampleur de ces changements n'a pas de précédents historiques. Toutefois, la fin du 19^e siècle et le début du 20^e ont aussi été marqués par la présence de nombreux étrangers à la tête des grandes sociétés helvétiques.

Notre contribution vise à fournir une première analyse mettant en évidence ce qui différencie les élites économiques à un siècle d'intervalle et l'évolution de leur profil dans la longue durée. A partir d'une base de données portant sur les dirigeants des 110 plus grandes entreprises suisses pour six dates couvrant l'ensemble du 20^e siècle (1910, 1937, 1957, 1980, 2000 et 2010), nous analysons différentes dimensions des élites économiques, telles que la nationalité, le type de formation, leur carrière ainsi que leurs liens avec les autorités politiques.

Bibliography

No Bibliography

Contribution 5:

The reconfiguration of elites in the Swiss banking field (1980-2010)

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Abstract

Since the 1980s, the Swiss banking field has experienced an unprecedented growth and a profound transformation of its structure. This can be observed through the domestic banking concentration, the internationalisation of labour market and the depreciation of traditional banking activities to the benefit of financially-oriented careers. While research has been conducted to understand the historical evolution of the banking field from the late 19th century to the 60s, little is known about how the changes during the last thirty years have affected the composition of banking elites.

Considering this gap, we seek to explore the recent evolution of the structure of the banking field (1) and the resource endowment of banking elites (2). More specifically, we will address the following questions: what are the different fractions within the banking field that we can observe? How are the resources distributed among the elites of each fraction of the field? Can we observe endowment differences according to the fraction of the field where elites are positioned?

In order to tackle these questions, we will use an already existing database on Swiss elites in the 20th century that we are currently extending by collecting additional data on banking elites. For this contribution, we will focus on a sample of Swiss banks for which we already have exploratory results.

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