Cross-level sector-based sampling design of elites

Including national, European and global elites within a single sampling framework

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Abstract

We present a systematic methodology for translating the sample design of national elite surveys to the European and global levels. We use as a starting point the sector-based sampling design of the latest German comprehensive large-scaled elite survey (Bürklin & Rebenstorf, 1997) which is composed of leaders working in 12 sectors of activity (i.e., administration, politics, finance and economy, professional associations, church, media, civil society, research, labour union, justice, culture, military). This sector-based sample design is then translated to the European and global levels in such a way as to maximize the comparability of the samples across the three levels of analysis (i.e., national, European and global) and to avoid any overlap between the samples across the three levels of analysis. Up to now, previous attempts at sampling European or global elites focused mainly on one or two sectors of activity such as economy and finance or politics and/or administration. By contrast, our methodology enables us to expand the sample design to a much broader range of societal sectors. Moreover, the inclusion of three levels in the sample methodology enables us to compare positions and characteristics of national elites with those of elites working at both the EU and global levels. The major advantages and drawbacks of our sampling methodology are discussed.

Keywords: sampling design, elite, EU, global, survey

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As a result of denationalization, labour markets and career perspectives are no longer contained within the state borders. Some scholars even claim that globalization is leading to the emergence of a global elite with its own class consciousness (Calhoun, 2002; Robinson & Harris, 2000; Sklair, 2001). Similarly, a European elite class is assumed to be on the rise with the deepening of the European Union integration (Fligstein, 2008). So far, representative studies on the emergence of a global and European elite class have focused on a limited type of elites, such as the European administrative and political elites or global business elites. Empirical evidence of a European and global elite class has thus remained sparse (Hoffmann-Lange, 2012). Further empirical studies that assess the existence of social cohesion and consensual positions among supranational elites are therefore strongly needed to push forward the debate on the emergence of a European and global elite with a supranational outlook.

In this paper, we propose a sample methodology that expands previous sample designs of European and global elites to a broad range of sectors of activity. Moreover, our methodology enables the application of the same sampling design at the global, European and national levels. In developing these representative samples, we strive to maximize the comparability of the sector-based samples across levels and to avoid overlaps between samples across levels. Our sample design is a first attempt to assess quantitatively the emergence of a European and global elite from a various range of sectors of activity. It allows both the comparison of elites at the same level across sectors and elites from the same sector across levels. The integration of three levels within the same sampling design enables the assessment of the relative emergence of supranational elite classes by comparing the characteristics of elites working at different levels. The EU is currently the most institutionalized supranational political order. The extent to which this is associated with the emergence of a European demos has been the focus of the sociology of the European Union (Favell & Guiraudon, 2011). Studies on the existence of a European elite working within and beyond the EU political institutions with its own class consciousness can therefore contribute significantly to this sociological debate. In contrast to the EU, the global political order is much looser and far less institutionalized. By studying global elites with a sampling design that is comparable to the European and national elite samples, our study will assess the extent to which global elites differ from their European and national peers in terms of social cohesion. Such empirical research will in turn push forward the debate on a cosmopolitan global order that has remained so far mainly normative (e.g., Brown & Held, 2010). All in all, the state of the art debates in sociology, EU studies and international relations would strongly benefit from more comprehensive studies comparing elites working at the national, European and global levels. The presentation and discussion of our cross-level comparative sampling design is a first step in this direction. With our contribution, we hope to
launch a new research agenda that aims at assessing in a comprehensive way the emergence of supranational societies.

This paper is structured as follows. First, we will present an overview of existing representative surveys of European and global elites. In a second step, we will discuss the positional approach we applied for sampling elites quantitatively. Third, we will present our general sample design and describe the criteria used to define elites across levels and across sectors of activity. Lastly, we will discuss the advantages and drawbacks of our approach.

1. Representative studies on global and European elites

There have already been several attempts to study the profiles of elites beyond the national level. In this brief literature review, we will solely focus on studies based on a representative sample of elites at either the global or the European level, leaving aside qualitative and ethnographic approaches. At the global level, scholars focused mainly on elites from the economic sector (business and finance). For instance, Sklair (2001) studied the rise of a global capitalist class with a representative survey among the CEO’s of the largest world companies. Besides this study based on interviews, other scholars investigated the emergence of non-national members in the executive board of the world largest companies based on interlocking directorates (Carroll & Fennema, 2002; Kentor & Jang, 2004; see van Veen & Kratzer, 2011 for a similar approach at the EU level). At the European level, the research community focused its attention mainly on elites working at the core of the European political and administrative institutions. For instance, Liesbeth Hooghe (2002) in her pioneer work on the European Commission surveyed top Commission officials in 2001 and 2002. She included in her sample the 250 directors-general, deputy directors-general, directors, principal advisors, and chefs or deputy chefs de cabinet in the European Commission1. More recently, Liesbeth Hooghe with other colleagues extended the sample of European bureaucrats to include all Commission officials regardless their hierarchical level (Kassim, et al., 2013). They drew a stratified sample of 4,621 policy administrators (from a population of over 14,000)2. Besides European bureaucrat elites, scholars also studied European political elites by sampling members of the European Parliament. For instance, the Centre for the Study of Political Change (2007) surveyed per telephone a sample of MEPs (n:169), of top-level officials of the EU commission (n:50) and of the Council of the European Union (n:50). More recently, the European Parliament Research Group conducted an online survey among the MEPs in 2010 (N:270) (Scully, Hix, & Farrell,

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1 The response rate of her survey was 37.2% A third was surveyed with face-to-face interviews, while the rest answered a questionnaire per post.
2 The response rate from their questionnaire survey was 41%.
Lastly, the European Election Candidate Study is regularly conducted during EU Parliament elections\(^3\) (Giebler & Weßels, 2010). A last recent elite survey is worth mentioning in this brief review: the Transatlantic Trend Survey Leaders (2011)\(^4\) included a sample not only of MEPs and European top bureaucrats but also of business and labour elites, and of elites working in non-governmental groups and media. They sampled high-level executives from institutions and associations with a representation in Brussels, regardless the national or European scope of activities of these institutions. Thus, while the TTS leaders 2011 survey clearly broadens the scope of previous European elite surveys by encompassing elites from a larger range of sectors, they did not use a clear-cut criterion to differentiate the European level from the national level in the sampled elites and their sampling criteria per sector of activity remain relatively unclear.

All in all, and with the exception of the TTS leaders 2011 survey, the scope of previous representative studies on a European elite was limited so far to the main political and administrative EU institutions. Moreover, most of the studies at the global level focused on business and finance elites. By contrast, our attempt to incorporate national, European and global elites from a large range of societal sectors of activity within the same sample design with a systematic approach will greatly contribute to the methodological and empirical debates of the rise of elites beyond the nation state. In doing so, we will follow the positional elite sampling approach. In the next section, we will describe this approach for sampling national elites. Then, we will present our method to transpose this sampling design at levels beyond the national states.

2. Positional elite approach

The first challenge of an elite sample deals with the definition of the target population (Ecker, 1998). This definition choice is essential: depending on our understanding of elites, different sample methods can be used. We follow the positional approach that has been applied by nearly all major comprehensive studies of national elites to identify the target population (Hoffmann-Lange, 2007). Accordingly, elites are persons who possess the resources to influence important societal decisions (Hoffmann-Lange, 1992, p. 19). Such power resources are segmented across societal sectors because of the relative independence of functional subsystems (or sectors) in differentiated modern societies (Machatzke, 1997). Moreover, these power resources are

\(^3\)The last EECS survey was done online and per post and resulted in an overall response rate of 24% for all EU countries (N: 1346)

\(^4\)The 2011 TTS leaders survey was conducted by telephone and online. The response rates range from 4% for journalists to 25.3% for MEP with a total response rate of 10%. The total sample size is 233.
institutionally organised in developed democratic industrial societies: they are available to the holders of the highest positions in the most important organizations within societal sectors (Machatzke, 1997). This conceptualization of positional elites does not consider power as an individual attribute. Rather, it implies that these resources are only available to the persons as long as they hold the corresponding positions (Machatzke, 1997). Accordingly, elites are defined as "incumbents of leadership positions in powerful political institutions and private organizations who, by virtue of their control of intra-organizational power resources, are able to influence important (political) decisions" (Hoffmann-Lange, 2008, p. 53). The positional approach is thus based on an institutional definition of elites and of their power resources. This institutional conceptualization of elites provides a straightforward method to draw representative elite samples. Indeed, defining elites by the type of positions they hold enables to draw clear-cut, reliable and replicable criteria for identifying the target population to be sampled.

The positional elite approach implies two decisions for sampling elites at the national level: the horizontal and vertical delimitations (Hoffmann-Lange, 2007). First, positional elite samples need to be delimited vertically: since power is available to the highest positions in the most important organizations of societal sectors, the highest positions of the most important organizations are sampled, while positions lower in the organizations’ hierarchy as well as less influential organizations are excluded from the sample. This requires a two-steps procedure: first, one selects the highest organizations for each sector, then one selects the highest positions within these organizations (Hoffmann-Lange, 1992, pp. 86-90). The selection of the most important organizations within a sector is based on a consistent criterion, such as sale volumes of companies or market share of newspapers (Machatzke, 1997). Once the most influential organizations have been selected, one samples elites by following a top-down strategy: first sampling the highest positions of the highest organizations within a sector, then going down in the positional hierarchical steps until the sample size is sufficient. Second, one needs to delimit the sample horizontally by sampling a range of societal sectors. Which sectors provide resources to the positional elites that allow them to influence important societal decision making? While positional elites in the political sector possess the direct resources to make

5 The positional approach is not the only available methodology to sample elites. For instance, the reputational approach is a two-steps sampling method. First, a sample of experts is asked to name the most influential and powerful persons within their sector of activity. In a second step, the mentioned persons are considered as reputational elites and included in the sample. In contrast to the positional method, this approach is highly time-consuming for a large range of sectors of activity and not replicable. Another approach is to consider major societal decision making and sample the most influential persons directly linked to the process of these decision-making. This decisional approach defines elites only in term of active and direct influence and does not consider indirect or informal influence on the process of decision making. By contrast, the positional approach includes both direct and indirect societal influences. (See Hoffmann-Lange, 1992, pp. 354-359 for a further discussion of these different approaches to sample elites).
important societal decisions, positional elites from other sectors of activity, such as economy, civil society or media hold resources to influence indirectly these decision makings (see Machatzke, 1997 for further details). In order to broaden the scope of previous European and global elite surveys, we opted for a broad understanding of influence and took into account societal sectors that provide not only direct, but also indirect influence on making important decisions. We therefore used as a starting point the sector-based sampling design of the Potsdam elite survey (Bürklin & Rebenstorf, 1997) which is the latest comprehensive elite survey with conventional survey research methods carried out in the tradition of the well-established German elite research field (Hoffmann-Lange, 2001). The Potsdam elite survey is composed of leaders working in 12 sectors of activity (i.e., administration, politics, finance and economy, professional associations, church, media, civil society, research, labour union, justice, culture, military). The Potsdam elite survey constitutes the German elite sample with the broadest range of sectors of activity (see Bunsemeyer, Holland Cunz, & Dribbisch, 2013 for a recent replication of the Potsdam elite survey focussing on core elites; see Ecker, 1998 for a comparison of sector-based elite surveys in Germany).

The strategy we adopted for sampling European and global elites is to transpose the sampling frame of the Potsdam elite survey to the European and global levels: we drew a representative sample of leaders working in these 12 sectors of activity (i.e., administration, politics, finance and economy, trade and professional associations, church, media, civil society, research, labour union, justice, culture, police and military) at the European and global levels that matches the national sector-based sampling design as closely as possible. This sampling strategy enabled us to broaden the scope of previous European and global elite surveys by maximizing the range of sectors of activity. Moreover, we strived to sample national, European and global elites within each sector based on similar selection criteria. This enables us to compare positional elites within sectors across the three levels.

3. Combining the vertical, horizontal and cross-level delimitations

The theoretical idea of transposing the sector-based sampling design of the Potsdam elite survey to the European and global levels is straightforward. However, this cross-level sampling strategy raises various challenges from a practical perspective. Indeed, while defining the vertical and horizontal delimitations for sampling elites at the national level is intuitive, it becomes much less clear-cut once we consider elites at the European and global levels. Furthermore, the inclusion of global, European and national elites within the same sampling
frame requires us to consider a cross-level delimitation that is as consistent as possible across sectors.

We defined general rules for the vertical (i.e., number of highest organizations and highest positions to be sampled), horizontal (i.e., delimitation between sectors) and cross-level delimitations that can be applied for sampling each sector at each level. The first challenge concerns the cross-level delimitation: the global, European and national levels need to be defined in such a way as to avoid any overlap of sectors across the three levels. Moreover, while the national level has clear-cut boundaries defined by the borders of nation-states, the global and to a lesser extent the European levels have blurred boundaries. For instance, organizations that might be considered as being part of the global level (e.g., Anheuser-Busch InBev corporation) are not necessarily present in every country around the world. Moreover, while some sectors – such as the political or administrative – have clearly defined borders at the European level (the European Union borders), other sectors such as the cultural or religious sectors at the European level go beyond the European Union borders. In order to determine the levels consistently across sectors, we drew general guidelines regarding the levels that apply to each sector. First, at the national level, we sampled the highest organizations with a national scope, leaving aside organizations with a subnational scope, even though such subnational organizations can be influential in federal nation-states. Sampling solely national organizations allows us to clearly define the upper and lower limits of the national level. Second, we expanded the institutional perspective of the positional approach to determine the limits of the European level. Indeed, the European Union is composed of legislative, executive and judiciary institutions that are similar to the ones of a nation state. We can thus consider the borders of the European Union to determine the European level whenever possible. In other words, we sampled the most influential organizations with a European Union scope. However, this strategy is not applicable for every sector. If the scope of the most influential European organizations within a sector goes beyond the European Union borders, we relaxed our EU borders criterion for the entire sector and sampled the most influential European organizations within the sector, even if they do not meet our EU borders criterion. For the sake of clarity, we will use the term of “European Union” to define organizations that meet the EU borders criterion, while the term of “European” will be applied for European organizations that do not meet this criterion. Third, we sampled the most influential institutions with the largest scope at the global level. The scope of the most influential institutions varies across sectors at the global level: while some sectors – such as the administrative or political - have an effective global scope (i.e., the UN bodies), the scope of other sectors is less global, because the scope of the most influential organizations of these sectors does not encompass all world countries. Our guidelines for the global level
enabled us to strive to sample organizations as global as possible, depending on the characteristics of the sectors.

The second challenge of our sampling frame concerns the horizontal delimitation (i.e., delimitation between sectors). Some sectors have already clear-cut horizontal limits at the European and global levels, such as the political and administration European sectors with the European Parliament and the Commission or with the UN institutions. By contrast, defining other sectors at the European and global levels is less straightforward. Indeed, a European society is still on the making (Favell & Guiraudon, 2011) and several societal sectors are still at early stages of their European development (see for instance Hartmann, 2011 for the European business class; or Koopmans & Statham, 2010 for the European public sphere). Furthermore, while we can already find some evidence of a European society on the rise, the institutionalization of sectors at the global level is even less developed. Hence, the development of these sectors at the European and global levels is an ongoing process. Even if challenging, mapping the horizontal borders of these sectors at the European and global levels is nevertheless highly relevant: it can indeed shed light on the existing and missing components for the rise of European and global societies. Moreover, the extent to which elites working at the European and global levels in these sectors consider themselves as being part of a European or global elite is a question that can only be assessed empirically by the means of survey data.

Sampling and surveying less institutionalized sectors at the European and global levels can therefore contribute to the academic debate on the emergence of European and global societies. The specific sampling strategy for every sector across the three levels will be detailed in the next section. We describe, nevertheless, in this section the general guidelines we followed. For the horizontal delimitation, we strived to maximize the comparability of the sectors across levels. This means that we prioritized the comparability of the sectors across levels even if it implies some deviations from the sampling frame of the Potsdam elite survey. Moreover, we applied an institutional approach for the definition of the sectors across levels whenever it was possible: we favoured sampling highly influential institutionalized organizations over highly influential organizations that lack an institutional structure. For instance, for the labour union sectors we sampled European and global labour union federations that have been officially recognized by respectively the European Commission and UN bodies as social partners. By contrast, we left out other supranational labour union federations that lack this institutional recognition.

Lastly, for the vertical delimitation (i.e., number of highest organizations and highest positions to be sampled) we decided against weighting the sample size of sectors, in contrast to the Potsdam elite survey. Indeed, weighting the sample size of sectors at the European and global
level would have been hazardous given the little knowledge available on specific European and
global sectors such as the cultural or religious ones. Rather, we use a similar sample size
optimum for each sector (n=300). Only when it was not possible to sample 300 top elites for one
sector (because of a too restricted number of influential organizations), did we reduce the
sample size of the specific sector in order to avoid sampling persons holding lower positions
than the sampled position of the other sectors. This strategy enabled us to maximize the
comparability of positions across sectors.

4. Definition of the sectors across levels

In this section, we present the criteria we used to delimit the sectors horizontally (i.e., between
sectors) and across levels. Moreover, we describe briefly the most influential organizations for
each of the 12 sectors across the three levels.

The political sector

We delimited the political sector horizontally by sampling positions with a policy-making
function in the most important legislative and executive institutions. Positions with a policy-
making competence constitute a selection criterion that is consistent across levels. By contrast,
the selection of elected representative positions for the political sample would not have been
applicable at the global level. With regard to the cross-level delimitation, the political sector is
divided distinctly: The national level is composed of national legislative and executives
organizations. The European level is constituted by the legislative and executive EU institutions.
Given these institutionalised structures at EU level, we excluded Europe-wide institutions, such
as the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities which go beyond the 27 member states.
Lastly, the UN is the IO that is most similar to the state and EU structures: we therefore
considered the UN as a global state-like regime with a legislative, executive and judiciary
apparatus for the entire sample. The global level encompasses the permanent missions to the
UN. For both the European and global levels, we only selected permanent positions and
excluded EU and UN positions that are subsidiary to a national position, in order to minimize
the overlaps between levels. For instance, we included the president of the European Council
but excluded the national heads of state.

6 We will not discuss the vertical delimitation in this section, since the vertical delimitation is constant across
sectors: we sampled the 300 highest positions among the mentioned most influential organizations within
each sector at each level.
The political sector

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Organizations</th>
<th>Positions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td>National legislature and executive organizations</td>
<td>Highest positions with policy-making function</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European</td>
<td>EU legislature and executive organizations e.g. EU Parliament, European Council, Council of the EU, European Commission</td>
<td>Highest positions with policy-making function if they are not subsidiary to a national position.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global</td>
<td>Permanent missions to the UN</td>
<td>Highest positions with policy-making function if they are not subsidiary to a national position.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The administrative sector

The administrative sector is delimited horizontally by sampling positions with the function to prepare and implement legislations. In contrast to the political elites, administrative elites do not hold policy-making functions. We sampled officials without policy-making function working in government and ministries in the administrative sample. Since political and administrative personnel tends to work side-by-side in the same organizations or political bodies, there is an overlap of the organizations in the political and administrative sample, yet not so in the positions sampled within them. The cross-level delimitation is more straightforward: we included national ministries for the national level; the major administrative bodies of the EU with an EU scope for the EU level and the main administrative bodies of the UN for the global level.

The administrative sector

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Organizations</th>
<th>Positions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td>National ministries</td>
<td>Highest administrative positions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European</td>
<td>Major bodies of the EU which include high-ranking administrative positions e.g., Directorates-Generals of the European Commission, European Agencies, European External Action Service, European Economic and Social Committee, Council of the European Union</td>
<td>Highest permanent administrative positions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global</td>
<td>Main bodies of the UN which include high-ranking administrative positions e.g., Permanent Missions to the United Nations Headquarters in New York and in Geneva, Secretariat of the UN, specialised agencies of the UN, UN programs and funds</td>
<td>Highest permanent administrative positions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The sector of justice

The sample for the sector of justice is composed of organizations that interpret and apply the law in the name of the state, the EU or IO. Within these organizations, we sampled judges and prosecutors.

With regard to the cross-level delimitation, we selected courts with a national jurisdiction for the national level. At the EU level, we only included courts with a jurisdiction over the EU. We therefore excluded the European Court of Human Rights from the EU sample, since its jurisdiction goes beyond the EU member states. At the global level, we selected courts composed of independent judges with a jurisdiction at the global or quasi-global levels that issue (quasi) binding decisions.

The sector of justice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Organizations</th>
<th>Positions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td>Highest Courts with national scope</td>
<td>Judges and prosecutors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European</td>
<td>Courts with jurisdiction over the EU</td>
<td>Judges and prosecutors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I.e., the Court of Justice of the European Union which is divided composed of the Court of Justice, the General Court and the Civil Service Tribunal.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global</td>
<td>Courts with (quasi) global scope, (quasi) binding decisions and independent judges E.g., International Criminal Court, International Court of Justice, International Court for the Law of the Sea, ILO Tribunal, IMF Administrative Tribunal, World Bank Administrative Tribunal, UN Dispute Tribunal, UN Appeals Tribunal</td>
<td>Judges and prosecutors</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The sector of military and police

The horizontal delimitation for the sector of military and police is done by sampling organizations authorized by the state, the EU or the UN to use force. At the national level, we sampled the military and police forces. At the European level, we considered EU agencies that coordinate the military and police forces. Since the member states of the European Union remain the main actors regarding the European foreign and security policy, the European institutions’ main task is to coordinate and supervise cooperation in this policy field between the different member states. Nevertheless, these EU coordinating agencies have a significant impact on European military and police policies and measures and therefore possess crucial decision making influences. At the global level, we selected the Peacekeeping Department of the UN
The sector of military and police

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Organizations</th>
<th>Positions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td>Military and police at the national level</td>
<td>Highest ranks in military; highest positions in police</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European</td>
<td>EU agencies that coordinate the military and police forces</td>
<td>Highest positions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>i.e, EUROPOL, FRONTEX, European Defence Agency, Political and Security Committee, European Union Military Committee, Crisis Management and Planning Directorate, European Union Military Staff, Civilian Planning and Conduct Capability</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global</td>
<td>Peacekeeping Department of the UN</td>
<td>Highest positions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The labour union sector

Following our institutional guideline to define the sectors horizontally at the three levels, we considered organizations representing the interests of workers and employees that are recognized as social partners by the national state, the European Union or by the UN (through either the International Labour Organization or the Economic and Social Council). Thus, at the national level, we selected the largest labour unions in terms of number of members. At the European and global levels, we sampled trade union organizations that can claim a high degree of either European or global representativeness in terms of their capacity to aggregate, articulate and advance employee interests vis-à-vis respectively the EU and the UN (Platzer & Müller, 2011, p. 20). For both the European and global levels, we only selected permanent positions and excluded positions at the European or global level that are subsidiary to a national position, in order to minimize the overlaps between levels.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Organizations</th>
<th>Positions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td>National labour unions with the largest number of members</td>
<td>Highest positions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European</td>
<td>Labour union organizations that are recognized as social partners by the European Union i.e, the cross-sectorial European Trade Union Confederation, its affiliated member organizations; the 5 sectorial trade union organizations that are considered as social partners by the European Commission¹</td>
<td>Permanent staff with highest positions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global</td>
<td>Labour union organizations that are recognized as social partners by the International Labour Organization or the Economic and Social Council</td>
<td>Permanent staff with highest positions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
i.e., Member organizations of the Council of Global Unions and the World Federation of Trade Unions²

¹ European Confederation of Independent Trade Unions, European Cockpit Association, European group of the International Federation of Actors, European group of the International Federation of Musicians and International Federation of Professional Footballers’ Associations (see European Commission, 2013).
² See United Nations Economic and Social Council (2013).

The sector “trade and professional associations”

Similarly to the labour union sector, we followed our institutional guideline to define horizontally the sector of trade and professional associations. Those are non-profit voluntary associations that represent the interests of occupational elites from various professions (Evan, 1974) and of different types of business and industry. For the national level, we included the largest trade and professional associations in terms of number of members. For the European level, we sampled the trade and professional associations with an EU scope that are registered in the European Union Encyclopedia and Directory 2011 (Europa Publications, 2010). At the global level, we selected the trade and professional associations that have a consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council. Here again we only considered permanent positions at the European and global levels in order to minimize the overlaps between levels.

Sector “trade and professional associations”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Organizations</th>
<th>Positions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td>Largest trade and professional associations with a national scope</td>
<td>Highest positions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European</td>
<td>Trade and professional associations with an EU scope registered in the European Union Encyclopedia and Directory 2011</td>
<td>Permanent staff with highest positions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global</td>
<td>Trade and professional associations with consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council</td>
<td>Permanent staff with highest positions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The finance and economy sector

The cross-level delimitation for the finance and economy sector is not straightforward. Indeed, corporations have their headquarters within a nation state. Therefore, the list of the largest world or European corporations will entirely overlap with the list of the largest national corporations. Moreover, with the exception of few corporations such as Airbus and Eurostar, very few companies have so far their headquarters in several European countries. Therefore, the delimitation of this sector across levels cannot be as clear-cut as for the other sectors. In order to avoid dropping out this sector from our sample, we decided to relax the rule of cross-level consistency in the delimitation of the sector. Indeed, the criterion we used for defining the most influential organizations at the European level differs from the criterion we used for identifying the most influential national and global organizations. For the global level, we used the 2012 list of the world’s top 100 non-financial transnational corporations published by the UNCTAD (2013a). The transnationality index used by UNCTAD for its corporates ranking is calculated as the average of the following three ratios: foreign assets to total assets, foreign sales to total sales and foreign employment to total employment. This index measures the intensity of foreign activities in relation to domestic activities (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, 2007, p. 13). Moreover, we selected the top 50 financial transnational corporations published by the UNCTAD (2013b). This ranking of the largest financial transnational corporations is computed with the geographically spread index. This index is calculated as the square root of the Internationalization Index multiplied by the number of host countries. The Internalization Index in turn is computed as the number of foreign affiliates divided by the number of all affiliates (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, 2009, p. 234). The ranking of the top 50 financial and top 100 non-financial transnational corporations published by the UNCTAD lists thus the most globalized (or “transnational”) world corporations and constitutes our finance and economic sample at the global level. At the national level, we selected the largest financial and non-financial corporations that are included in the national stock market indexes, as long as these corporations are not listed in the UNCTAD transnational corporation ranking. The use of the UNCTAD top transnational corporations list and the national stock market indexes for building the finance and economic sectors at the national and global level enabled us to delimit the national and global levels for these sectors in a meaningful way. However, we can not disentangle the European from the global levels by using corporations’ transnationalization characteristics: the most Europeanized corporations also belong to the UNCTAD list of the top transnational corporations. Therefore, we decided to include the corporations’ departments for EU public affairs that are registered in the European public affairs directory 2010 (Dod’s European companion, 2010). Moreover, in order to avoid any overlap across levels, we sampled the CEO’s and Members of the Executive Committee for
the national and global levels, and the heads of the departments for EU public affairs for the EU level.

The finance and economy sector

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Organizations</th>
<th>Positions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td>Corporations of the national stock market indexes if they do not belong to the top 50 financial and top 100 non-financial transnational corporations published by the UNCTAD</td>
<td>CEO’s and Members of the Executive Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European</td>
<td>Departments for EU public affairs of the corporations that are registered in the European public affairs directory 2010</td>
<td>Heads of the departments for EU public affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global</td>
<td>top 50 financial and top 100 non-financial transnational corporations published by the UNCTAD</td>
<td>CEO’s and Members of the Executive Committee</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The research sector

Similarly to the finance and economy sector, drawing clear-cut boundaries between the three levels for the research sector turned out to be a challenging task. Indeed, the world leading universities are embedded in nation states. For instance, the use of ranking such as the Shanghai ranking would enable us to determine the most influential research institutions at either the global or the European level. However, this strategy would lead to huge overlaps in the research elite samples across the three levels. Moreover, sampling the highest ranked journals at the national, European and global levels would also have led to such overlaps between sectors. In order to avoid cross-level overlaps, we deviated from the sampling design of the Potsdam elite survey for delimiting horizontally the research sector. Instead of selecting universities and research funding agencies (see Machatzke, 1997 for further details on the research sample of the Potsdam elite survey), we opted for sampling the only existing research institutions with clear-cut national, European and international boundaries: the research associations and the journals they publish. Indeed, national, European and international associations exist for each scientific discipline. A research association is an organization that aims at promoting research and scientific knowledge within its own discipline. Moreover most of these research associations publish their own journals. The presidents of these associations and editors of their journals tend to be established and recognized researchers in their discipline. These positions can thus be considered as prestigious. We therefore sampled national, European and international research associations as well as the journals they publish. In order to avoid any social sciences bias in the selection of the scientific subdisciplines, we sampled the research
associations and their journals of all subdisciplines funded by the German Research Foundation (Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, 2012). Moreover, we weighted the sample in order to select an equivalent number of association and journals from humanities, social sciences, life sciences, natural sciences and engineering sciences.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research sector</th>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Organizations</th>
<th>Positions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>National</td>
<td>National research associations of subdisciplines in humanities, social sciences, life sciences, natural sciences and engineering sciences. The journals published by these research associations</td>
<td>Executive Committee Members of the national research associations, editors of the national scientific journals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>European</td>
<td>European research associations of subdisciplines in humanities, social sciences, life sciences, natural sciences and engineering sciences. The journals published by these research associations</td>
<td>Executive Committee Members of the European research associations, editors of the national scientific journals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Global</td>
<td>International research associations of subdisciplines in humanities, social sciences, life sciences, natural sciences and engineering sciences. The journals published by these research associations</td>
<td>Executive Committee Members of the international research associations, editors of the national scientific journals</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The religious sector

At the national level, we sampled the religious denominations with the highest numbers of adherents. For each of these religious denominations, we selected the highest organizations that represent the adherents nationally. However, with the exception of the Catholic Church, most religions are not hierarchically structured beyond the national level. This means that we cannot apply the same sample criterion for the EU and global levels as the ones used at the national level. At the European level, national organizations from the same religious denominations have built European federations. Some of these European religious federations are official dialogue partners of the European Commission and therefore have a permanent mission to the EU (European Commission, 2010). However, these religious federations are not restricted to EU member states, but also comprise other European countries outside of the EU (such as Switzerland). While these religious federations are not necessarily limited to EU countries, they have nevertheless a EU scope in representing their followers to the European Commission. For the European level, we sampled the EU permanent missions of these European religious federations if they are present in at least two EU member state.

At the global level, we selected the religious denominations present in at least two countries with the largest number of adherents around the world. We sampled the global organizations of
these “world religions” that aim at promoting the religion’s interests in general. These global religious organizations have a consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (e.g., Muslim World League and World Muslim Congress) (United Nations Economic and Social Council, 2013). For the European and global levels, we only selected permanent positions to avoid cross-level overlaps.

The religious sector

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<th>Positions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td>Organizations of the main national religious denominations that represent the followers nationally</td>
<td>Highest positions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European</td>
<td>EU permanent missions of European religious federations</td>
<td>Highest permanent positions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global</td>
<td>Global organizations of religious denominations with the largest number of adherents around the world e.g., Muslim World League, World Fellowship of Buddhists, Commission of the Churches of International Affairs</td>
<td>Highest permanent positions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The sector of civil society

Civil society can be defined as the intermediate realm between the private sphere, the market and the state, where particular and universal non-economic interests organise publically and interact with each other and the other sectors. We delimited the sample horizontally by focussing on "organized" civil society in form of interest groups that are non-state organizations (although potentially obtaining funding from state sources), not-for-profit and not directly business- or industry-related. Since trade unions and professional associations are separate sectors in our sample they were excluded from the civil society sample. Our civil society definition bears resemblance to Hegel’s bourgeois definition as the intermediary arena of ethical life between the other sectors, as well as to Tocqueville’s ideas about associationalism and to more recent ideas about the “Third Sector” (compare for instance: John Hoppkins Center for Civil Society Studies). Regarding the cross-level delimitation, we sampled registered civil society associations with a national scope. For the European level, we followed our institution-oriented guideline and sampled the eight umbrella organizations that consult with the EU institutions, namely those composing the EU Civil Society Contact Group (EU Civil Society Contact Group, 2013). Those umbrella organizations are large rights- and value-based NGO’s in the following sectors: culture, environment, education, development, human rights, public health, social and women. In a second step, we included all NGOs with an EU or European Office
that are members of these umbrella organizations. Excluding NGOs without a EU or European office enabled us to avoid overlaps between on one hand the national and the European levels and on the other one between the European and global levels. At the European level, the sampled organizations have thus a EU scope but might be also active in European non-EU member countries. Within the sampled NGO’s, we selected the permanent staff with the highest positions working in the EU office. At the global level, we selected the civil society organizations that have a consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (United Nations Economic and Social Council, 2013). Similarly to the European level, we then sampled the permanent staff with the highest positions working in the international offices of these organizations.

The sector of civil society

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<th>Organizations</th>
<th>Positions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td>Registered civil society association with a national scope</td>
<td>Highest positions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European</td>
<td>European civil society organizations member of the EU Civil Society Contact Group</td>
<td>Permanent staff working in EU office of the selected organizations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global</td>
<td>Civil society organizations that have a consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council</td>
<td>Permanent staff with the highest positions working in the international offices of the selected organizations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The cultural sector

For the horizontal delimitation, we considered visual arts, film, theatre, literature and music as part of the cultural sector. This restrictive definition of the cultural sector avoids overlaps with other sectors such as the civil society. In order to delimit the cultural sector across levels, we applied an institutionalized approach and selected the most important events and associations/organizations of each cultural field at each level. These events and associations include: a) national, European and international awards, b) national, European and international festivals, c) national, European and international fairs and exhibitions, d) national, European and international associations. For each of these events and associations, we selected the leading organizational and artistic positions (e.g. award winners, jury members, presidents, executive directors).
The cultural sector

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Organizations</th>
<th>Positions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td>Main national awards, festivals, fairs, exhibitions and associations in visual arts, film, theatre, literature and music</td>
<td>Leading organizational and artistic positions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European</td>
<td>Main European awards, festivals, fairs, exhibitions and associations in visual arts, film, theatre, literature and music</td>
<td>Leading organizational and artistic positions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global</td>
<td>Main international awards, festivals, fairs, exhibitions and associations in visual arts, film, theatre, literature and music</td>
<td>Leading organizational and artistic positions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The sector of media

We restricted this sector to news media, in order to avoid any overlaps with the cultural sector. We include print media (newspapers and newsmagazine), broadcast news (radio and television) as well as internet. At the national level, we sampled news media organizations (print, broadcast and internet) with the highest market share. For each news media organization, we selected the chief editor, editor and managing director. Moreover, we included laureates of national journalism awards. This sampling strategy can not be applied at the European level, since with a few exceptions there are so far no European media (Koopmans & Statham, 2010). We therefore opted for an institutional approach and selected all European journalists with an EU accreditation. We also included the laureates of EU journalism awards. Similarly, we selected journalists with an UN accreditation for the global level. We also included the laureates of international journalism awards.

The sector of media

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Organizations</th>
<th>Positions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td>National print, broadcast and internet news media with highest market share. National journalism awards.</td>
<td>Chief editor, editor and managing director of each selected news media. Laureates of national journalism awards.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European</td>
<td>News media with an EU accreditation. EU journalism awards</td>
<td>Journalists with EU accreditation. Laureates of EU journalism awards.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global</td>
<td>News media with an UN accreditation. International journalism awards</td>
<td>Journalists with UN accreditation. Laureates of international journalism awards.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conclusion

So far, studies on the rise of European and global elites have largely remained restricted to global economic elites and the European political and administrative elites. Thus, the current debate on the emergence of European and global elite classes lacks empirical foundations especially for all other types of elites. Our contribution aims at filling in this gap by presenting a first attempt to systematize representative sector-based elite samples beyond the national level. More precisely, we built comparative samples of elites from 12 sectors of activity at the global, European and national levels. In doing so, we strived to maximize the comparability of the sector-based samples across levels while avoiding overlaps between samples across levels. With few exceptions, our design allows both the comparison of elites at the same level across sectors and elites from the same sector across levels. Our methodological approach enables a significant empirical contribution to the debates in sociology, EU studies and international relations. Therefore, we hope with this contribution to help launch a research agenda that aims at assessing in a comprehensive way the emergence of supranational societies. As a first attempt of drawing a cross-level sector-based sampling design of elites, the methodological approach we presented in this paper necessarily suffers from limitations. First of all, we could not design samples for the finance and economy sector that are comparable across levels. Due to the characteristics of this sector, we were forced to deviate from a universal selection criterion across all levels. Furthermore, the European and global societies are still in the making. This ongoing process implies that the boundaries of some sectors at the global and –to a lesser extent– at the European levels are still fluid and not as clear-cut as their national counterparts. In these cases, we strived to follow an institutional (EU or UN oriented) approach in delimiting these sectors from other sectors and across levels. However, these limits we set for these sectors at the European and global levels might appear artificial and may be contested. Whether supranational elites from these sectors identify as members of the European and global elites remains nevertheless an open empirical question. The analysis of survey data based on such a cross-level sector-based sampling design needs to take into account the differentiated development of sectors at the supranational level. Lastly, further institutionalization of these less developed sectors at both the European and global levels will enable future studies to refine our definition and sampling approach. Such studies would contribute to moving beyond the methodological nationalism underlying previous elite studies.
References


