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## Elites in transnational policy networks

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**Abstract** *In this framing article for the special issue we contrast the aims and ambitions of three core approaches to elites in transnational policy networks and highlight where they have productive overlaps. The three core approaches to elites and transnational policy networks employ three distinctive theoretical lenses in their investigations: fields, hegemony, and institutions. We discuss how these approaches trace elites in transnational policymaking and associated methods, such as network analysis, sequence analysis and field theory, which highlight different aspects of how elites in transnational policy networks operate. Most of the contributions are concerned with mapping out elite careers and why career trajectories matter for field and network positions in transnational policymaking. While the contributions share this in common, we highlight the different ways in which the approaches can be used to dissect the same issues. Our contributions include pieces on the Trump administration, the professional ecologies of transnational policy elites, the treatment of transboundary political problems, the characteristics of technocratic elites, the racial and gender composition of transnational elites, and professional competition over transnational policy issues.*

**Keywords** ELITES, FIELDS, HEGEMONY, INSTITUTIONAL THEORY, POLICY NETWORKS, TRANSNATIONALISM

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In recent years there has been a resurgence of studies on elites (Davis 2017; Savage 2014; Young et al. 2016). Scholars are increasingly paying attention to the acceleration of inequality in the distribution of wealth and power around select groups. This has prompted political economists and sociologists to again refocus on elites, zeroing in on new ways in which elites influence societies (Savage and Williams 2008). Historically, political economists have focused more on processes of country-level and/or

institutional competition (for example, Morgan 2015), whereas sociologists are typically more interested in the role of family and educational institutions in shaping processes of elite selection and socialization (for example, Toft 2018). These streams of literature are now finding common ground and folding together in a renewed interest around how elites operate transnationally (Cárdenas 2015; Davis 2017; Heemskerk et al. 2016; Smith et al. 2017; van Apeldoorn and de Graaff 2015). This special issue takes stock of this work and sets a research agenda for how research on elites in transnational policy networks can move forward. This introduction foregrounds conceptual and theoretical distinctions to be found in the articles in this special issue. We highlight how fields, hegemony and institutions approaches to elites in transnational policy networks focus on different aspects of elite replication and policy influence; including where elite's influence on policy comes from; how it can be identified; and its overall outcomes.

The grand challenge of studying elites in transnational policy networks is twofold – opacity and complexity. First, the presence and influence of elites in transnational policy networks can be more or less overt. In some cases, elites are visibly present within transnational policy networks and their position and influence in them can readily be traced. In other cases, their presence is less obvious and their influence on policy processes within the networks are inherently difficult to trace. Who exactly is the elite also differs widely – from those considered elites because of their class position and status in a society, to individuals who are considered ‘elite’ within their immediate policy setting because of their mandate and/or expertise? Both are relevant in transnational policy networks.

A further complication in studying elites is identifying how they articulate power. Elite power is exercised through individual as well as organizational action that springs from micro- and meso-level processes (Scott 2008). Those studying elites have stratagems to draw insights from the opaque ways in which power is constituted and exercised, even when a ‘smoking gun’ is not immediately present. For example, recent work has discussed the characteristics of transnational spaces where elites socialize (Igarashi 2015; Koh and Wissink 2018; Mears 2015), as well as the location of transnational elites in particular urban centres like London, New York and Singapore (Baker and Wigan 2017; Beaverstock 2002, 2005; Beaverstock et al. 2013; Fernandez et al. 2016) and their claims to diasporic belonging (Ho 2011). Extensive work has been done on how elites are transnationally reproduced through education programmes at the secondary and tertiary levels (Hall 2011; Waters 2007), with national differences in how elites move across countries as expressions of imperial identities (Go 2011; Power et al. 2013).

Second, elites affect transnational policy networks in institutionally complex ways. Transnational policy networks include actors from intergovernmental organizations like the World Bank, OECD, and others, but are not reducible to them. The library of work on intergovernmental organizations illuminates how public authorities are designed by states seeking to cooperate with or dominate each other, and how they have internal conflicts over political and technocratic interests (Kentikelenis and Seabrooke 2017). But this work rarely includes non-public authorities, which are often important to transnational policy networks, as well as to elites. Explaining and understanding

these complexities has led to finely grained studies of who attends and speaks in policy-making settings, providing investigations of processes rather than outcomes (Block-Lieb and Halliday 2017). Work in this vein has also revealed how elites distinguish themselves among each other, and how policymaking is conducted through international institutions and groups (Kauppi and Madsen 2013). National-level variation in how elites wield power, and engage with transnational networks, complicates matters further (Van Gunten 2015). In sum, tracing the impact of elite power in transnational policy networks requires political economists and sociologists to team up.

To meet the challenges of opacity and complexity we are particularly informed by two broad strands of scholarship: that on elites, and that on transnational policy networks. It is important to define some terms. In general, *elites are actors who have disproportionately high levels of influence on their social structure*. We understand them as commonly operating across social realms – such as the cultural, economic, and political – to influence social structure. Here social structure can mean an overarching social setting or a more field-specific space. Elites in transnational policy networks are those who have disproportionate influence over policy design and implementation on issues of global importance. This includes influence on agenda-setting, decision-making, and policy content. Policy includes explicit reform programmes, scripts for best practices, as well as regulatory norms and standards.

Of course, not all elites in society have an interest in changing policy. Those who do need an architecture to exercise their influence, which transnational policy networks can provide. This architecture is constraining as well as enabling, as actors and organizations within it have their own agendas to pursue (Seabrooke and Henriksen 2017). Those creating the architecture, elites in policy, are often under the radar in drawing attention from society. We can think of examples of elites in society that have an interest in transnational policy networks. They are the Bill Gates and Angelina Jolies of this world. We may also think of those engaged in policy that have societal recognition and elite status outside of their policy circles. To draw on superficial examples from the popular press, Christine Lagarde appeared in *Vogue* magazine while Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund. *Bloomberg Businessweek*'s popular parodying of Thomas Piketty for his influence on the wealth inequality agenda is another case in point.

The contributors to this special issue adopt different ways to explain how elites in transnational policy networks obtain, manage, and exert power. In what follows we depict the different approaches, which we characterize as fields, hegemony, and institutions. They emphasize different elements of elite power and how it is exercised through transnational policy networks. They also locate the relationship between elites and the state in different ways, including the relationship between national authorities, intergovernmental organizations, and transnational communities. Some of the contributions to this special issue provide details on the relationship between policymakers' careers and their position in transnational policy networks, be it providing them with opportunities to make connections, or to dominate how issues are controlled.

### **The fields approach**

A distinctly Bourdieu-inspired approach to transnational policy networks has evolved over the past decade, specifically in and around the field of European studies (Büttner et al. 2015; Cohen 2011; Georgakakis 2009; Georgakakis and Rowell 2013). This work has emphasized the legal field and the role of legal experts in ‘constitutionalizing Europe’ (Kuus 2011; Vauchez 2008). These scholars argue that political units and processes emerging at the transnational level must be understood in terms of how they are constituted, or at least influenced, by elites that operate in transnational fields (Kauppi and Madsen 2014). The first generation of this scholarship centred on moving ‘beyond reified entities (‘the State’) to analyse the role of elites, networks and agents’ at the transnational level (Cohen 2013: 103), including the formation of ‘transnational guilds’ (Bigo 2016). Among this community of scholars, it was particularly Bourdieu’s theory of fields that was mobilized in order to overcome ‘epistemological obstacles’ (Cohen 2013: 104). Transnational elites, in this terminology, are always field specific. Fields can be thought of as sector or domain specific, such as economic, political, cultural, scientific or administrative. Within these fields is always a struggle for field specific resources, or *capitals*. Much of the work on transnational elites in the Bourdieusian tradition has been to show how specific fields have emerged at a transnational level as arenas of competition between field-specific national elites, involving different kinds of capitals. At an even higher order there is struggle between these various specific fields in the ‘transnational field of power’ where a struggle between opposing ‘strategies to reproduce the specific capitals each of these elites held at the national level.’ (Cohen 2013: 104; Go and Krause 2016).

**Figure 1: The fields approach to elites in transnational policy networks**

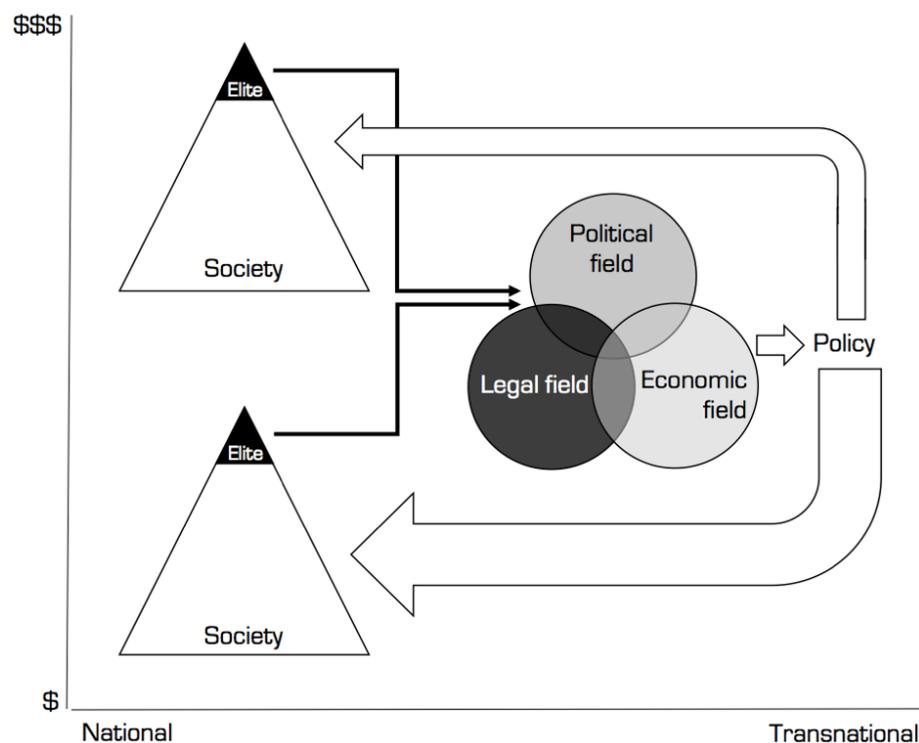


Figure 1 depicts our simplification of the fields approach to elites in transnational policy networks, locating the national and transnational realms on the x-axis, and how powerful and wealthy the societies are on the y-axis. The basic conception here is that national elites have influence and compete within ‘weak’ transnational fields (Mudge and Vauchez 2012). In this framework the elites can ‘rise’ to become prominent beyond their own national field of origin, and thus come to influence other national fields by positioning themselves above them in games of domination. The internationalization of fields is also important and has been demonstrated in cases such as central banking (Lebaron 2008; Mudge and Vauchez 2016). Scholars adopting this approach have specified how national differences matter for elites, with specific career trajectories tied to national understandings of how fields are distinguished (Bühlmann et al. 2018; Gautier Morin and Rossier, this issue). These games are then played transnationally in respective fields, such as the legal, economic, and political fields, as shown in Figure 1. The outcomes of these games lead to policies that have an effect on wealthy states and especially on poorer states (Dezalay and Garth 2002).

A common approach in such scholarship is to investigate how capital used for positioning in domination games is transferred from individuals’ family backgrounds and expanded and reinforced through the acquisition of elite educational diplomas. The concept of habitus – the combination of tastes, style, and experiences that orient how actors engage a field – has been important for scholars concerned with explaining how elite professionals maintain their status in transnational settings (Harrington 2017; Harrington and Seabrooke 2020), as well as how organizations, such as global accounting firms, replicate professional practices (Spence and Carter 2014; Spence et al. 2016).

Within this broader body of scholarship, the typical thinking about fields linked to transnational policy networks is that national elites ‘rise’ to above the nation-state to take on a position of strength within transnational institutions. From there they have an impact on nation-states via feedback loops (Mudge and Vauchez 2012). Fields of power are essentially nationally embedded, yet they loop into transnational spaces as different fields of power struggle to ‘universalize’ themselves. The effect of these struggles disproportionately influences poorer countries, as examined in numerous cases and regions by Yves Dezalay and Bryan Garth (1996, 2002, 2010). Here the transnational is the constructed outcome of competition between national systems of regulation, in which the actors position themselves in transnational institutions to promote the policies, rules and institutions that favour their position in fields at home. Prominent global private actors, like the Big Four global accountancy firms, can also create a transnational field to forge professionalization processes and influence international organizations and governments (Suddaby et al. 2007).

Most recently, field-theoretic scholars have started paying attention to ‘transnational power elites’ that have created some autonomy from national states through meta-institutions such as the European Union (Kauppi and Madsen 2013, 2014), as well as organization beyond the control of the state such as international commercial arbitration (Grisel 2017). The fields approach also prompts us to study the role of ‘symbolic violence’ in enforcing the unequal distribution of resources at the

transnational level, such as through imperial institutions (Go 2008) and international and supranational organizations (Adler-Nissen 2014). Variations in how fields are configured sub- and transnationally are also being investigated, with elites behaving differently depending on the amount of ‘horizontal’ field autonomy present across countries relative to ‘vertical’ autonomy at the national level (Krause 2018).

As with other approaches discussed here, the fields approach to elites in transnational policy networks is also developing more computational methods to trace its subjects of analysis, including the mapping of social networks to assist the identification of fields (Larsen and Ellersgaard 2017) as well as content analysis to distinguish positions within fields (Ban and Patenaude 2018). The development of multiple correspondence analysis is also particularly important in this approach, which emphasizes how actors can be distinguished in a field (Gautier Morin and Rossier, this issue).

### **The hegemony approach**

The hegemony approach builds on Marxist and Gramscian scholarship, and essentially takes a class-based historical materialist approach to explaining the formation of transnational elites and their prominence in policy. Van der Pijl (1984) and Cox (1987: 271) were among the first scholars to talk about what became known as a ‘transnational capitalist class’ (TCC) (Carroll 2013). With reference to this work, Sklair defined the transnational capitalist class as ‘the characteristic institutional form of political transnational practices in the global capitalist system’ (Sklair 2009: 499, see also Gill 2017). Sklair also identified four intersecting fractions of the transnational capitalist class (1) TNC executives; (2) globalizing bureaucrats; (3) globalizing politicians and professionals; (4) consumerist elites (merchants and media). These actors are unified through their global worldview, their transnational identities, and common lifestyles; exemplified by similarities in training at elite schools and consumption of luxury goods (see also Overbeek 2000).

The identification of class elites has been important for the hegemony approach, locating elites as both a class category and a collective actor. The hegemony approach has been especially developed via the ‘Amsterdam School’ (see, most recently, Jessop and Overbeek 2019). Within this vein, van Apeldoorn’s work has been important in emphasizing ‘the constitutive power of transnational (economic) structures, while at the same time reclaiming the role of class agency’ (van Apeldoorn 2004: 142). A large share of this research has focused on Europe as a site for class struggles. Research has identified groups such as the European Round Table of Industrialists (van Apeldoorn 2003), cartel formation among transnational corporations (Buch-Hansen 2012), as well as transnational corporations’ influence on labour conditions via European Works Councils (Bieler 2006). From this perspective the European Union is a neoliberal state project that is being guided by a transnational capitalist class to the detriment of the working class (Cafruny and Ryner 2003; Horn 2012), with Eastern Europe enfolded into this regime and restructured accordingly (Bohle 2006; Shields 2015).

Another important concept for this literature is the development of transnational

‘power blocs’ in which elites are prominent in steering policy outcomes. Ougaard (2016) points to how economic elites in emerging economies will not simply align with the TCC in the North but that there is a crisis in hegemony and ongoing conflict in transnational power blocs. These include struggles between finance and productive capital, ‘green’ (environmental) and ‘black’ (old industrial) capital, and between the North and the South. At the same time as this struggle unfolds there is a transnational power bloc comprised of the Group of Twenty states that have allied with intergovernmental organizations and transnational corporations to promote infrastructure investments that seek to address some deficiencies created by neoliberalism (Ougaard 2018). Similarly, other work in this tradition has analysed how other organizations are expressions of power blocs intent on accumulating resources for elites. This includes organizations such as think tanks and philanthropic foundations (Parmar 2012), as well as international organizations like the World Bank (Plehwe 2007).

**Figure 2: The hegemony approach to elites in transnational policy networks**

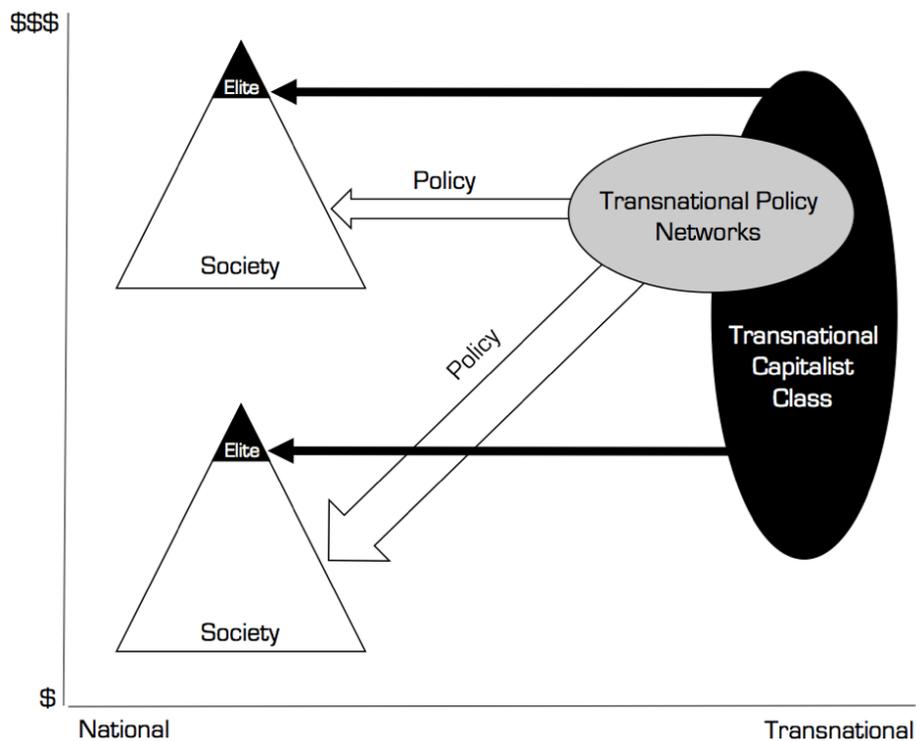


Figure 2 depicts the hegemony approach to elites in transnational policy networks. The basic dynamic at play here is that the ruling transnational capitalist class dominate national elites, and that the transnational capitalist class embed their hegemonic agenda into transnational policy networks that exercise ideological power over national systems. The effects of these policies fall disproportionately on poorer states, with the

logic of capitalist accumulation the driving force in both cases.

Within the hegemony approach a long-standing means of establishing how transnational capital is organized has been through the development of network analysis, especially on corporate boards (Buch-Hansen 2014). Fennema's (1982) work on international banks and industry established how such networks are articulated on a transnational scale. Later this perspective was expanded through work on transnational business communities and elites (Carroll and Fennema 2002), leading to a series of studies on how global board director networks were important for exercising market power (Buch-Hansen and Henriksen 2019; Heemskerk et al. 2015) as well as embedding the transnational capitalist class in transnational policy networks. A common argument in this work is that the networks enabled normative class integration and coordination of unified political action (Carroll and Carson 2003; Carroll and Sapinsky 2010; Carroll et al. 2010; Kaup 2013; Heemskerk et al. 2015). A similar argument has been prominent in American organizational sociology that locates how the corporate elite cohere (Useem 1984; cf. Mizruchi 2013). This literature examines how interlocks are created and reflect a transnational capitalist class, but has been less explicit about ties to policy planning.

The role of networks has been addressed in more contemporary research. Carroll and Carson (2003) located five top transnational policy-planning groups in the 'larger structure of corporate power that is constituted through interlocking directorates among the world's largest corporations.' They found that the network was tied together by a few select 'cosmopolitan managers' that, via policy groups, 'pull the directorates of the world's major corporations together, and collaterally integrate the lifeworld of the global corporate elite' to promote neoliberalism (Carroll and Carson 2003: 29). Carroll and Sapinsky (2010: 501) later expanded the study to involve more policy-planning groups at the transnational level, and found a consolidated 'North Atlantic ruling class' remaining 'at the centre of the process of transnational capitalist class formation'. Van Apeldoorn and de Graaff (2015, and also their contribution to this issue) point to corporate elite networks and their ties to transnational policy planning networks, tracing how they influence US foreign policy from Clinton to Bush, Obama, and Trump. In terms of the respective administrations embedding in corporate board and policy planning networks, the authors point to considerable continuities and they argue that 'the continuities of post-Cold War US grand strategy ... can be explained in terms of the continuing dominance of the most transnationally oriented sections of US capital' (van Apeldoorn and de Graaff 2015: 29). Trump's administration and its elites broke this continuity, as de Graaff and van Apeldoorn show in this issue.

### **The institutions approach**

The institutions approach to elites in transnational policy networks draws from a Weberian premise: that actors seek to propel their political and economic interests through institutions and organizations. These actors are driven by two factors. The first is a rationalization process that favours cooperation to share knowledge. The second is that they are in perpetual conflict to control what information should be judged as

appropriate for the issue at hand. These kinds of cooperation–conflict dynamics are explored in various ways by scholars with a focus on institutions in transnational policy making. This includes: World Polity models of how world cultural norms spread through rationalization processes; recursive theories of how organizations interact to produce transnational policy scripts; and theories on how professionals exert influence through networks. In all cases elites are treated as important for decision-making processes. Elites typically refers to political elites within organizations and governments or, more commonly, policy elites who are regarded as the expert authority on policy issues.

**Figure 3: The institutions approach to elites in transnational policy networks**

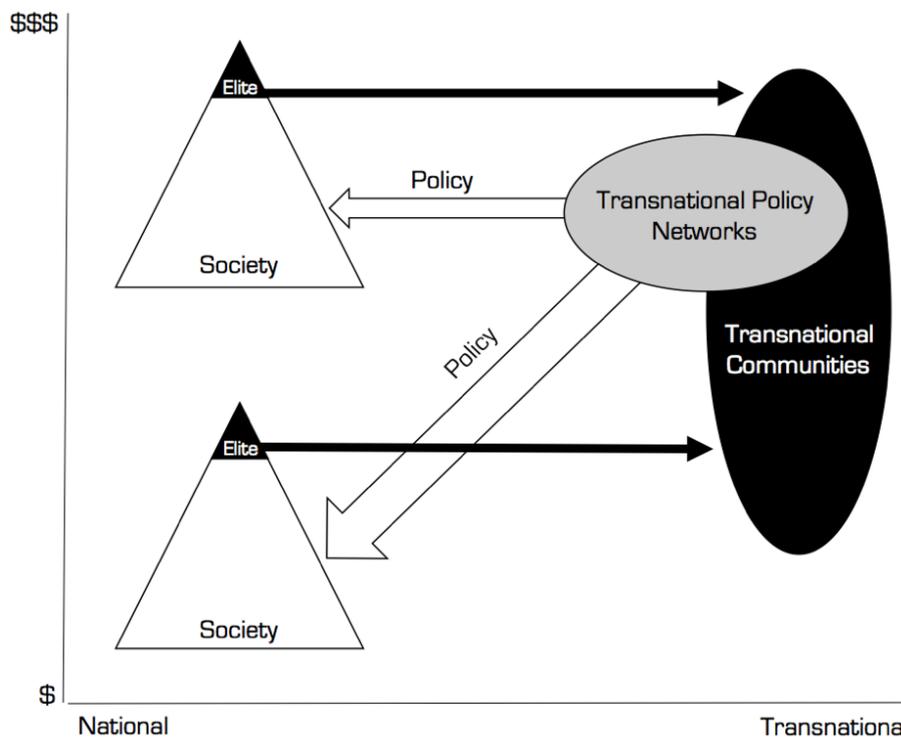


Figure 3 illustrates the institutions approach to elites in transnational policy networks. In its simplest form it is similar to the hegemony approach but with the arrows from the elites to the transnational social setting reversed. In the hegemony approach the transnational capitalist class form their own distinct group that inform elites in poor and rich societies. For the institutions approach elites within societies feed into transnational communities. This does not mean that there is no bias in the selection of elites. On the contrary, a number of studies have pointed to the elite Anglo-American higher education of staff in organizations responsible for transnational policies (Chwieroth 2015).

For the institutions approach the emphasis is on how elites inform transnational communities that create and share an identity, typically around a common cause (Djelic and Quack 2010; Morgan 2001). Often the purpose has been to foster scientific knowledge to improve policy-making (Haas 1992). The link between the transnational community and the transnational policy networks emerges when elites become engaged in policy-making via organizations. These organizations may be intergovernmental, NGOs, think tanks, or mixes thereof. Stone refers to these organizations as ‘spaces of assembly in the global agora ... a means for civic engagement and a vehicle for expanding participation’ (Stone 2008: 31). Who has access to the marketplace for knowledge and ideas on transnational policy networks is an important question (Stone 2015). Elites can form ‘clubs’ in transnational policy networks, where they can have disproportionate influence on standards and regulations (Tsingou 2015). They maintain their position in such clubs and policy fora through esteem and recognition of each other’s ideas and careers (Baker 2017). As such, the distinction between transnational clubs and the transnational capitalist class comes down to the emphasis placed on how autonomous the group is from national and capitalist interests. Those active in transnational clubs have emerged from specific careers in public and private national and international organizations, and may return to them (see Seabrooke and Tsingou, this issue). Based on assumptions made about actors and their behaviour, the institutions approach sits between the fields approach, which suggests elites and their forms of capital are always nationally embedded (Dezalay and Garth 2002), and the hegemony approach where transnational class agency is present (Sklair 2001).

Within the institutions approach there is a range of ways to explain how elites influence transnational policy making. World Polity scholars devote attention to how the structure of world society reflects inequalities from what polities are able to establish international governmental and non-governmental organizations (Beckfield 2003; Boli and Thomas 1997; Kentikelenis and Seabrooke 2017). Elites have a prominent role in establishing the content of rationalization and scientization processes that are promoted by such organizations (Meyer et al. 1997). They have a particular interest in creating higher schooling that trains elites to proselytize the importance of human rights and neoliberal economics – which then affirms the power of transnational policy networks and undercuts local claims to elite status (Broome and Seabrooke 2015; Fourcade 2006; Schofer and Meyer 2005: 917).

Scholars developing recursive models of transnational policy discuss how norm-making comes from conflict between and within organizations. This approach stresses the importance of national elites in providing input to what kinds of policies can be considered legitimate (Halliday et al. 2009). From this perspective transnational law-making emerges from interactions between exogenous actors at the global level, such as intergovernmental organizations, states, and international professional associations, and endogenous actors at the national level, such as ministries, professionals and creditors. Pressures from exogenous processes affect how formal law and law in practice change (Halliday and Carruthers 2007). These recursive cycles of global law-making can have different national results from tensions in how law is interpreted, the fit between global laws and national circumstances, as well as clashes over ideology

and expertise (Halliday and Carruthers 2009). Recursive cycles of law-making may include a strategic component where tactics are played out, but also include incremental innovations from professionals (Quack 2007). Scholars working in this vein have distinguished how recursivity differs according to the types of organizational forms and issue-areas (Malets and Quack 2017), as well as the presence of antagonisms within these cycles (Mallard 2018; Broome and Seabrooke 2020).

A further line of research zooms in on how elites operate in transnational policy networks, treating their career backgrounds and manoeuvring within professional networks as important for how they establish power. Elites in this research are professionals who have particular claims to expertise on an issue and who are typically well integrated into networks where the content of regulation or standards around the issue are discussed (Block-Lieb and Halliday 2017; Sending 2015). These professionals may work in international organizations, NGOs, or firms – and mobility between these organizational forms is viewed as a way to improve their centrality in networks (Henriksen and Seabrooke 2016). These transnational professionals have more autonomy than traditional nation state-bound professions while also having a disproportionate influence on how professional practices are evolving within them (Harrington and Seabrooke 2020). The careers of these professionals have been studied in detail to establish if there are patterns in who is prominent in professional networks and who can make claims to elite status in transnational policy-making (Ban et al. 2016; Helgadóttir 2016; Henriksen 2015; as well as contributions from Christensen, Kortendiek, and Seabrooke and Tsingou, and Young, Goldman, O’Connor and Chuluun in this issue). How these professionals establish ‘linked ecologies’ to gain influence has been a persistent theme (Blok et al. 2018; Fourcade and Khurana 2013; Seabrooke and Tsingou 2015; Stone 2013), with an emphasis on how professional elites not only cooperate to influence transnational policy but also how they compete for authoritative positions that enable issue control (Seabrooke and Tsingou 2014). Such competition can be seen by viewing organizational and professional networks as a two-level network in which elite professionals and experts seek to control issues through various strategies (Seabrooke and Henriksen 2017). Elites within these networks have greater opportunities to traverse networks and influence agendas. They also have the capacity to engage in ‘epistemic arbitrage’ between different pools of professional knowledge (Seabrooke 2014), as a number of cases on transnational policies now demonstrate (Eskelinen and Ylonen 2017; Holzscheiter 2017; Thistlethwaite and Paterson 2016). Importantly, prominent organizational forms, such as global professional service firms, can also foster particular types of elite professionals to influence these networks (Beaverstock 2018; Seabrooke and Sending 2020). Issues of elite expert power in colonial/postcolonial state formation processes have also been studied through a Foucauldian understanding of institutions (Mitchell 2002).

### **Identifying elites in transnational policy networks**

Table 1, below, summarizes the fields, hegemony, and institutions approach according to their sources of power, how elites maintain their position, how those positions are

mediated and expressed, the methods employed to identify elites, and the scholarly origins and contemporary exemplars of the approach.

**Table 1: Comparison of elite and transnational policy network approaches**

<i>Elites type</i>	<i>Source of power</i>	<i>Maintained by</i>	<i>Mediated by</i>	<i>Expressed through</i>	<i>Identified by</i>	<i>Scholarly origins and contemporary examples</i>
‘Fields’	Forms of capital	Education / Families / Ideology	Habitus	Boundaries of distinction	Field / Multiple correspondence analysis	Bourdieu / Mudge and Vauchez (2016)
‘Hegemony’	Transnational class system	Class system / Ideology	Common sense	Distribution of wealth	Cases / Biographies / Network analysis	Marx / Carroll and Sapinski (2010)
‘Institutions’	Political / Corporate	Careers / Clubs / Ideology	Community-based socialization	Cooperation and competition	Cases / Career sequences / Network analysis	Weber / Djelic and Quack (2010)

A key difference in the approaches is the emphasis on reproduction among elites, or how they are connected to others. The fields approach stresses nationally embedded groups who then compete for dominance within their respective transnational fields. The hegemony approach emphasizes how agents of the transnational capitalist class replicate hegemony through networks. The institutions approach focuses on how actors and organizations actively network to change norms in transnational policy-making.

A key challenge for all three approaches to elites has been to identify who the elite is and how the elite is constituted as a political agent. Despite the theoretical differences, the response to this methodological challenge has been remarkably similar across all three approaches – namely relational methods. The fields, hegemony, and institutions approaches have all developed a strong interest in prosopography, the study of biographies within groups and their particular context (Hasselbalch and Seabrooke 2020), as well as the study of networks. These networks are used for different purposes. They can be used to identify the structure of the network, a topographical endeavour, or to distinguish who is important within the network and the characteristics of those who are influential.

Bourdieu-inspired scholars developed multiple correspondence analysis to identify differences in the capital endowments of elite individuals in a field (see Gautier Morin and Rossier, this issue). Such scholarship is also being combined with social network analysis (Larsen and Ellersgaard 2018) and career sequence analysis (Bühlman et al.

2018). These methods make distinctions about elites and record the observable social ties that constitute actual interactions between and within social groups. Young, Goldman, O'Connor and Chuluun (this issue) draws network analytic techniques for identifying network cores to identify a global 'power elite' and its diversity profile (focusing on race and gender). Comparing the core and the periphery of the global elite reveals that the most central, influential players are white male leaders. This kind of research is also delving into different national cases where local 'endogenous elite circulation' is still more important than internationalization for elite reproduction, such as in Beijing's Red Circle of corporate law firms (Zhu et al. 2020).

Within the hegemony approach there is a very long history of network analysis, dating back to early-twentieth-century work on interlocking directorates (Jeidels 1905). These observations became central to the argument put forward by Rudolf Hilferding's in his *Finance Capital* (Hilferding 1981[1910]). This work on corporate elites continued with seminal studies by Mills (1956), Porter (1956) and Domhoff (1967) setting the scene. When computer-assisted network analysis appeared on the scene in the early 1970s, it was first applied to corporate interlock networks by researchers in the Netherlands and the USA (Fennema and Heemskerk 2018; Fennema and Schijf 1978). Since then a rich research tradition has emerged with hundreds of studies on corporate interlock networks (Buch-Hansen 2014). The main bulk of this work, traces corporate elites and classes' political action in terms of their unified normative formulation of policies (Burriss and Staples 2012), with some studies also tracing the position of corporate elites in actual policy planning networks (see de Graaff and van Apeldoorn, this issue).

The institutions approach also has a strong interest in both careers and social networks. Sequence analysis has followed Andrew Abbott's work (for example, Abbott and Hrycak 1990) and applied it to a range of transnational issues where careers inform who has access to networks and who has credible claims to authority within them (Henriksen and Seabrooke 2016; Seabrooke and Nilsson 2015; see also Christensen, this issue). Network analysis has been used to identify normative alignment in transnational institutional building (Lazega et al. 2017), as well as to identify the micro-foundations involved in diffusing policies through networks (Henriksen and Stahl 2014; Paterson et al. 2014). In general, the identification of elites in transnational policy networks through computational methods is advancing, with scholars maintaining that interviews and observations are critical for establishing power and influence, as well as cultural positioning within networks (Harrington 2017; Legrand 2016; Spence et al. 2017).

Finally, the future study of elites in transnational policy networks should see much more cooperation across the approaches discussed above. While the fields, hegemony, and institutions approaches have developed within their respective channels, sociologists and political economists have a great deal to benefit from cross-fertilization. Fostering a vivid research community on elites in transnational policy networks is more important than ever, especially as many societies are experiencing crises of democratic governance that are tied to difficult transborder problems. This is not only for issues starkly facing us now – such as a deep recession from a global

pandemic – but for ongoing problems with the transnational governance of energy, environmental, financial, health, and migration issues, among many others. To face these challenges, we need firm empirical studies of what elites actually drive transnational policy networks, how policy agendas emerge, and how elites influence them. Making elite agency in transnational policy networks more visible is an important task for this research community. So is refuting common conspiracies about elite power. Sociologists and political economists must work together to combine their theories, data, and methods to render elite power more visible.

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