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Composition of civil society elites

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Content

Introduction

The following text is a reflection on and description of Thematic Study 1 (TS1) about the composition of civil society elites. TS1 is an integral part of the research program "Civil Society Elites? Comparing elite composition, reproduction, integration and contestation in European civil societies" (https://www.civilsocietyelites.lu.se/civil-society-elites).

Addressing the composition of elites is a task common to many elite studies (Hoffman-Lange 2018). It's about identifying who the elites are and what characterizes them. Accordingly TS1 is about mapping civil society elites in five different contexts: i.e. England, Italy, Poland, Sweden and Brussels (EU-level), and across ten policy fields: i.e. Age, Charity, Culture, Disability, Environment, Gender equality, Human Rights and Democracy, Migration and ethnic groups, Religion, Sports and leisure.

Addressing the composition of civil society elites is seemingly a mere descriptive task. Yet, it requires an operationalization of the elite concept to be applied to the particular sphere of civil society, as well as drawing a boundary between the elite and non-elite which is a notoriously difficult task. For addressing the composition of the elite we need to be able to identify the elite among the large population of individuals that are active in civil society. Elites in other spheres have been identified by specific measures. Business elites for instance have been identified and mapped based on the position they hold in large business organizations (Ellersgaard et al. 2013) while political elites have been identified based on the political position they occupy, e.g. in government or parliament (Best & Higley 2018).

Interpreting elitism as a consequence of people occupying specific powerful positions is common in elite research. Since the work of Robert Michels (2001) on the "oligarchical tendencies of modern democracy" many strands of elite theory have related elitism with top positions in organizations. It was, according to Michels, within the complex, large-scale organizations of the labour movement that individuals monopolized and hoarded organizational means and resources producing an internal stratification that distanced the leaders form the masses. The so-called "positional method" in elite research, which we adopt in this thematic study, is based on a similar perspective/assumption, i.e. that resources and influence are largely tied to positions of leadership in organizations of national relevance (Hoffman-Lange 2007) and that elites are those who can exert influence through their strategic positions in powerful organizations (Higley & Burton 2006). Following this method we choose as our point of departure in this study to focus on formal leaders of civil society organizations of national relevance.

We however still need to address the issue of what it means to be relevant, powerful or influential for a civil society organization. Here we have very little help from elite studies as traditionally they have mostly neglected civil society as a social sphere where elites might arise or be reproduced. This is due to civil society actors being interpreted as not 'powerful' enough and too dependent on the support of other organizations and their members (Hartmann, 2015). Most previous elite survey studies have hence not included CSOs in the sample of organizations. Some studies of political elites have however included trade unions and religious organizations as they are deemed more influential. Political elites are in fact often defined in terms of power and influence as: 'individuals and small, relatively cohesive, and stable groups with disproportionate power to affect national and supranational political outcomes on a continuing basis' (Best & Highly 2018: 3). These are often identified as holding top positions in "large or otherwise pivotal organizations, institutions and social movements…" (Ibid: 3). Among these we of course find also civil society organizations such as political parties, major interest organizations, professional associations, trade unions and religious institutions (Ibid).

In the Nordic countries, there are however examples of elite studies that have included civil society also as a separate sphere comparable with the political, business, media and cultural spheres (e.g. SOU 1990:44, Göransson 2007, Ruostetsaari 2015; in Göransson called "organizational elite"). In the Swedish studies the indicator for the organizational elite that has been used is internal membership. Göransson's study included only national civil society organizations with more than 7000 members (with some exceptions for immigrant organizations and sports organizations).

Looking at theories on civil society and particular on civil society regimes (e.g. Salamon et al. 2004) the focus on membership in the Nordic countries make sense. It is consistent with the associational model of the popular movement tradition that has dominated the Nordic countries which is based on large membership-organizations whose function is to organize and represent societal groups (e.g. workers, immigrants, pensioners, women etc.) vis-á-vis society and the state. In a Nordic context a large membership base and am internal process of representation has been the token of a thriving civil society and hence a marker of status and potentially of influence (see Lundström & Svedberg 2003; Trägårdh 2007; Amnå 2006).

Our cross-national comparative approach however requires us to understand power, status and influence in a multi-dimensional perspective so as to be able to include organizations that do not fit with the norms of the Nordic civil society sector. For instance we might find organizations whose main goal might not be to have many members but to be present with volunteers and offices all over the country, for instance in the case of Caritas. The indicators we choose should be able to grasp power, status and influence in other political contexts where civil society might have more of a service-producing function (e.g. Italy). This strategy for sampling "peak organizations" through a set of

indicators, i.e. taking into account both internal resources and recognition in civil society as well as external recognition by the state, will be discussed later on in the paper.

After identifying the relevant organizations we need to identify the individuals holding key influential positions in the organizations. Studies of business elites have usually included CEOs and board members of large enterprises (Ellersgaard et al. 2013, Larsen & Ellersgaard 2018). A similar approach could be applied to civil society organizations that are usually structured in a similar way with a decision board whose chairperson is often also the highest elected representative of the organization and a secretary general who is in general employed and administratively responsible for the staff and the activities. This double leadership, political and administrative one might say, is common for most large civil society organizations in many different contexts. The presence of one or more decision-making boards is also almost a given. These positions and decision-bodies might have different denominations in different types of organizations and in different contexts but can provide a good starting point for identifying the leaders.

Research questions

This paper will address how these steps for identifying a civil society elite have been tackled in TS1 for the purpose of answering the following research questions:

1. How is organized civil society structured at national level in the four countries and at the EU-level when it comes to positions of leadership?

2. What characterizes the leaders in terms of gender, positions etc.?

3. Can we identify an inner-core group of leaders that accumulate status and influence and what characterizes these leaders?

4. What similarities and differences can be identified between the contexts?

The first question relates to the mapping process in itself. By applying a set of indicators of status, power and influence to different contexts we will get a good picture of the structure of organized civil society including which type of organizations are included and based on which indicators: By studying the power position within the organizations we will be able to address the internal governance structure of the civil society organizations.

The second question will be addressed by coding personal and biographical data about the leaders and by sending out a survey to be answered by the leaders. It will allow us to address what characterizes the leaders but also what seem to be the conditions for becoming a leader in civil society.

The third question is more analytical and will draw on all data collected both at organizational and individual level. It relates to the endless discussion in elite studies about the size of the elite (e.g. Hoffman-Lange 2018; Larsen & Ellersgaard 2017). Drawing the boundaries of the elite is always tricky and subject to ad-hoc decisions. One of the criticism to the positional method is that "the question of elite boundary specification is answered in the methodological design, not empirical observations of elite practices" (Larsen & Ellersgaard 2017: 56). Our approach represents a middle-ground between these two approaches to boundary delimitation: as a departing point we have circumscribed our sample to leaders of peak organizations at national level, identified by multiple indicators (more on this below). In order to minimize the risk of missing out certain groups we have employed an inclusive approach, which led us to a large sample of these leaders. This positional method is to be

complemented by further empirical observations, to identify an inner-core group that might be considered a civil society elite.

The fourth question is related to our cross-national comparative approach. By comparing civil society elites' composition in different contexts we want to find out similarities and differences, and based on our knowledge of each context try to find possible explanations for these patterns.

Drawing the boundaries

As a condition for studying the composition of civil society elites we hence need to identify a population of resource-strong and influential organizations for ten sub-fields in each country. In accordance with the positional method in elite study this will allow us to identify civil society elites among the leaders of these organizations. The biggest challenge of this method, which has been recognized in much elite-research (e.g. Hoffman Lange 2018), is that there are no definite guidelines for specifying the boundaries of the elites. Below we describe how we have drawn the horizontal and the vertical boundaries as part of the sampling process.

Horizontal boundaries

Before discussing what we mean by "peak" organizations (the vertical boundaries) we need to define the horizontal boundaries addressing which types of organizations should be included. Civil society is not a homogeneous field and is populated by many different types of organizations. The internationally recognized definition of civil society organizations (CSOs) (Salamon et al. 2004) is based on a set of five criteria. They should be a) organised, having a permanent and regular organisation which is reflected by elements such as: regular meetings, membership and decision-making procedures; b) private as separate from the state or the public sector, c) not having profit-distributing to managers or owners and commerce as primary purpose; d) self-governing as being able to control their activities and e) voluntary as membership or participation not being compulsory. This definition clearly defines civil society both in relation to the state and the market as a separate sphere or sector. For the purpose of our study it is crucial to distinguish civil society organizations from other spheres such as government and business which are populated by other elite groups such as political elites and business elites. This however does not mean that we are not aware of the possibility of overlaps between the elites identified in the different spheres.

The definition presented above still includes many different types of organizations such as associations, foundations, religious congregations, trade unions, political parties, cooperatives, social movement organizations and interest organizations. Some of these organizations might actually represent the interests of the business sector (for employers' organizations) or the public sector (for associations of municipalities and regions). So far we have excluded the following organizational types: political parties, employers' organizations, organizations representing professions (e.g. lawyers and doctors) and organizations representing sectors of the economy dominated by public organizations or private for-profit organizations. In a classic distinction between "producers", i.e. employers' and workers' organizations and "users", i.e. pensioners' and disability organizations (see Beyers 2004) we have mostly excluded the first category and included the second. One exception has been organizations representing employers in the civil society sector (e.g. welfare service producers, cooperatives, schools). We have also chosen to include two categories as "reference categories". Trade unions have been chosen because of their key role when it comes to mobilization and organization of

workers in civil society historically. Think tanks have been chosen because of their importance in influencing public opinion and politics.

Horizontal boundaries have also been drawn following ten sub-fields corresponding to the following policy areas: Age, Charity, Culture, Disability, Environment, Gender equality, Human Rights and Democracy, Migration and ethnic groups, Religion, Sports and leisure. These policy areas allow us to focus on organizations that are active in specific policy-fields or with specific issues, but have proven difficult to tackle as they are very dependent on the national contexts, both with regards to how the state structures the policy areas and how civil society is organized and coordinated. Furthermore, many organizations are active in more than one of the policy areas described above.

Vertical boundaries

To be able to identify peak organizations in each context we have developed a system of indicators that allows us a broad and complex interpretation of status and recognition in civil society:

Table 1. Indicators for organizations' status and recognition in civil society

	Resources	Participation/political recognition
Internal to civil society	Members, staff, volunteers, budget	Posts in umbrella organisations and networks
External to civil society	Public core funding	Posts in public committees and public consultation

These indicators allow us to capture different dimensions of resource, influence and status in civil society:

Internal to civil society we have besides pure resources that can be used by the organizations to achieve their goals (members, staff, volunteers and money) also participation in umbrella organizations and networks internal to civil society that can give influence of the agenda of the organizations that have the task of representing the sector (within a specific policy field or as a whole). More specifically we aim at including organizations that

1) Have access to extensive resources in terms of members, staff or budget.
2) Hold posts in the board (or similar decision-making bodies) within umbrella organizations in specific policy areas (e.g. culture)
3) Are members in umbrella organizations representing the whole civil society sector

Among external resources we find access to public core funding but also posts in public committees and public consultation which give the organizations access to and possible influence on decision-making in policy processes. More specifically we aim at including organizations that

4) Receive public core funding
5) Are included into policy-specific public committees and consultations
6) Organizations that are represented in public committees for relations between the state and civil society

By using these indicators we aim at identifying what we call "peak organizations" i.e. organizations with access to resources, possibility to influence formal decision-making, and/or legitimacy and recognition. We have chosen to separate umbrella organizations for specific policy fields and umbrella organizations for the whole civil society sector as well as representation in policy specific consultations

from participation in committees for relations between the state and civil society. Some of the indicators are in fact more policy area-specific such as 2 and 4, while 1, 3, 4, and 6 are not directly related to any policy area.

In identifying peak organizations we adopt an "inclusive" approach which aims at a broad population of possible peak organizations, by including all of the organizations that have entered the sample by scoring at least one of the six indicators above. It means that some organizations might enter the sample based on just one or two indicators while others on more or even all of them. At this stage we do not treat any of the indicators as more important than others and thus we see these as different complementary dimensions for grasping status and recognition. More empirical studies into the field and the identified leaders might lead us to understanding of possibly hierarchical relations between the different indicators.

When it comes to trade unions and think tanks they are often not included in civil society umbrella organizations and in registries often not classified as NGOs. As we treat them as separate "reference categories", we have chosen them strategically. Trade unions have been strategically chosen based on level of organization and number of members. All union confederations that include different categories of workers at national level have be included. For each union confederation, we have included those of their members, i.e. the national federations of specific categories of workers (e.g. industrial workers, health care workers) that have most members. Think thanks have been chosen by going through lists of think tanks in each country and assessing which are civil society-based.

In the following sections we present how we have operationalized a strategic sample in the each of the contexts.

Sampling peak organizations

The sampling of organizations has been finalized for the EU, Italy and Sweden while for England and Poland it is still work in progress. The following table shows how we have operationalized the indicators in each of the three contexts for which the sampling has been concluded:

Table 2. Operationalization of the indicators for the sampling of organizations

General strategy	Sweden	Italy	EU
Indicators of internal status and recognition			
Organizations that have access to extensive resources in terms of members, staff or budget.	Organizations that have 50 or more employees		Organizations with a budget of 910,002 euros or with at least 4 employees as FTE
Organizations that hold posts in the board (or similar decision-bodies) within umbrella organizations in specific policy areas (e.g. culture)	Organizations that hold posts in the board of 13 umbrella organizations spanning over 7 policy areas	Organizations that hold posts in the board of 5 third level networks that span across policy areas	

Organizations that are members in umbrella organizations representing the civil society sector	Organizations that are members of 4 umbrella organizations representing the sector	Organizations that are members of 1 fourth level network	Organizations that are members of Civil Society Europe or Civil Society Contact Group
Indicators of external status and recognition			
Organizations that receive public core funding		5 pro 1000 tax deduction	Organizations that receive at least 80,267 euros of EU-funding
Organizations that are included into public consultations in specific policy areas	Organizations included in the remiss system for 10 policy areas (including civil society)	Organizations that are included in the transparency registries or the lists of ministries or have agreement with the state as religious organizations	Organizations that are included in Inter groups or Commission groups Organizations that had at least 7 meetings with EC
Organizations that are represented in public committees for relations state-civil society	Organizations that hold posts in Partsgemensamt forum för dialog	Organizations that hold posts in the Consiglio Nazionale del Terzo Settore	Organizations that hold posts in the Liaison group of the European economic and social committee

As the table shows we have been able to operationalize five out of six indicators in each context, but in different combinations. For Sweden we have not found any coherent national funding system, for Italy we have not been able to access data on organizational resources and for the EU we have not found umbrella organizations at policy level whose members are EU-based organizations (they were always national organizations). It's not surprising that the operationalization of the indicators of internal status and recognition are the ones that have been more similar in each context. It shows that the internal structure of organized civil society is quite similar.

The operationalization of external status and recognition indicators has required more adaptation for each context. In Italy public funding towards civil society is channeled through private donations that are deducted from taxes (Scaramuzzino 2012) while at EU level it is mostly allocated directly by EU-institutions (for instance the commission) (Johansson & Kalm 2019). Swedish civil society is in a comparative perspective very little dependent on the public funding which might explain the lack a comprehensive system (Scaramuzzino 2012). Also public consultations follow different traditions. The remiss-system is typical for Sweden where organizations are invited to comment on drafts of legislations (Lundberg 2013) while the Italian system is characterized by ad-hoc systems for consultation (Ranci et al. 2009) and the EU adopts a more liberal model allowing for organizations to pursue lobbying and meet the Commission in different group settings (cf. Johansson & Kalm 2019). In all three contexts we found a specific committee in which state (or EU)-civil society relations were discussed.

The following table presents the number of indicators on which the organizations have "scored" for entering the database.

Table 3. Sampling of peak organizations (scores and N. org in the databases)

Score	Sweden	Italy	EU
5	1	3	7
4	10	9	6
3	39	29	35
2	72	127	106
1	272	111	154
Total N.	**394**	**279**	**308**

Each indicator shows a dimension of internal or external status and recognition and the accumulation of these indicators can be interpreted as an "elite score" for an organization. The organizations with elite score five and four would be at the top of the pyramid while those with lower score are the base of it. It is interesting to notice a similar structure of the pyramid for all three contexts, except for Italy where the number of organizations with score 1 is smaller than those with score 2.

In its extension we might potentially be able to use the scores in understanding the hierarchical positions among the leaders according to the organizations' elite score. However, empirical observations (among others planned biographical and survey studies) might challenge this linear way of thinking, i.e. that the leaders occupying the most resourceful and influential organizations by definition should belong to the core group of civil society.

The next table shows how many organizations have entered the databases for each indicators.

Table 4. Number of organizations entering the database by indicators (percentage of total N.)

Indicator	Sweden	Italy	EU
Internal resources	57 (14)		197 (64)
Internal recognition (policy area)	106 (27)	47 (17)	
Internal recognition (civil society)	131 (33)	90 (32)	28 (9)
External resources		250 (90)	57 (18)
External recognition (policy area)	269 (68)	78 (28)	227 (74)
External recognition (civil society)	15 (4)	37 (13)	20 (6)

For Sweden we find the by far most inclusive indicator to be external recognition within specific policy areas. It seems to mirror the fact that the Swedish referral system has an inclusive character with many organizations invited to comment on legislation. This is also the most inclusive indicator for the EU-level showing the openness of the European political system to civil society actors. For Italy the most inclusive indicator is instead external resources showing that the system of tax deduction is available for many peak organizations. The fact that almost all the organizations in our sample score on this indicator is the explanation of why organizations with a score of 1 are fewer than those with a score of 2.

The least inclusive indicator in all three context is external recognition by the state for representing the whole civil society sector. It seems in all contexts that these types of committees for state-civil society relations are only open for a few peak organizations.

The inclusiveness of the internal resource indicator for Sweden and the EU differs instead quite much. This might be a consequence of how we set the thresholds for each context (which was based

on availability of information and context-specific information) but might also be a consequence of the low level of professionalization of Swedish civil society organizations.

The high level of inclusiveness of the internal recognition in civil society for Sweden might mirror the fact that we found four different umbrella organizations claiming to represent the sector compared to the EU-level where we found only two. In Italy we find only one umbrella organizations for the sector but it is very inclusive gathering organizations representing very different target groups, activities, ideological and religious orientations and policy issues.

All in all we think that these differences, while being also a product of different operationalization of the indicators, might mirror different structures of civil society. These differences could also be seen as interesting contextual features that might be explanatory for differences in composition of civil society elites' in different countries (as will be discussed later on in the paper).

While we have tried to adopt similar strategies for each context the structure of civil society and the availability of information has required some adaptation. When it comes to Sweden, the lack of clear central coordination of the civil society sector has made the sampling strategy to follow the ten policy-areas chosen. Both the referral system and the umbrella organizations where quite easily placed within the different policy areas.

When adopting our approach in the Italian context we could rely much more on the internal hierarchical system of organizations and the high levels of coordination between CSOs at national level. The one umbrella organization that aims at representing the whole "third sector" at national level, namely Forum del Terzo Settore (FTS) is a so called "network of fourth level", that includes "networks of second and third level" and is hence at the top of the hierarchy of networks of networks. It has been given strong recognition by the state. In the compact ("agreement") between the Italian government and the Third sector in 1999 it has gained the status of social part and it has hence the right to be consulted when public decisions have to be made on all themes and issues in the "social field". Hence our work with the Italian context has much more relied on the internal structure of the sector. Italian organizations are also less delimited by the policy areas we have chosen especially when it comes to those within volunteering and solidarity even if some organizations represent clearly societal groups (e.g. elderly and disability).

When adopting our approach in the EU-context we have had great use of the Transparency register of the EU (cf. Johansson & Kalm 2019). The register includes all organizations that have registered to represent their interests towards EU-institutions. The register includes not only organizations at EU-level but also national, regional and potentially local organizations that have an interest in advocacy towards the EU-institutions. To be able to identify the organizations that are organized at EU-level (not least to avoid overlapping with our other samples) we have selected only organizations that had an office in Belgium and that had as "level of activity" the European or Global level. We have also used the register's categorization of "areas of interest" to include organizations that are active in our ten policy fields.

The sampling process in all contexts has followed two directions. On the one hand a deductive process of identifying criteria "a priori" to do a systematic screening of the organizations that should give us a sample of reasonable size. By doing this process manually we were able to continuously assess which organizations were included and which excluded. We have also adopted a more inductive approach based on our knowledge of civil society in each context. This process is also supported by continuous search on the organizations' websites to assess their position in the field. The criteria adopted have hence arisen out of this top-down and bottom-up approach which has given us a systematic sample of peak-organizations that is also supported by our previous knowledge of the fields.

Civil society leaders in peak organizations

By using the set of indicators described earlier our approach to the positional method consists of identifying individuals holding key positions in peak organizations in the field. In other words we choose individuals based on the fact that they hold key positions in peak organizations that we identify by means of the indicators discussed above. The positions that we have chosen are based on the governance structure of the organizations. We have found quite similar structures across the contexts we have explored: a board or council with a number of members and a chairperson or president who is often included in the board. Some larger organizations might also have one or more vice chairpersons or presidents and these leaders are often elected. On the administrative side we find often an employed leader, generally a secretary general or director and possibly one or more deputies. In some cases we find also an executive committees or other decision bodies.

We found however some interesting context-specific differences. At EU-level we found a plurality of leadership categories. Even though the overall governance structure of organizations are mostly similar, the label of the leadership positions vary greatly. This plurality of leadership categories could suggest an increased professionalization of the sector of civil society. In the Italian context we found rather a plurality of decision-making bodies with voting rights on different organizational matters some of which however meeting less often than three times a year (Comitato esecutivo; Comitato di Presidenza; Comitato direttivo; Consiglio di amministrazione; Consiglio Nazionale; Assemblea Generale). This proliferation of bodies might mirror complex structures of governance but also of representation e.g. of organizations at sub-national levels or of different stakeholders.

When mapping the leaders we have hence looked into organizations' websites for the following positions:

- Presidents (or the like) and their deputies
- Directors (or the like) and their deputies
- Members of the board and/or other decision-making bodies

The following table presents a preliminary analysis and comparison of the leaders in the three contexts. It might be important to know that not all the organizations have been coded for Sweden.

Table 5. Number of organizations and leaders (including trade unions)

	Sweden	EU	Italy
	Total	Total	Total
Total number of orgs	395	319	300
Number of orgs coded	191	319	297
Number of leaders	1440	3 223	2 493
Average number of leaders/org	8	10	12
Share of female leaders	52%	42%	30%
Share of female presidents	60%	33%	23%
Number of leaders with multiple positions in different CSOs		66	37

We see differences across the three contexts most distinctively in the share of female leaders, where Sweden stands out as having the higher share of female leaders (52%) compared to the EU (42%) and Italy (30%). While the share of female presidents (excluding directors and board members) is even higher at 60 percent in Sweden, in the EU and Italian context female leaders are present to a lesser degree among the presidents (33 and 23 percent respectively). This is an important observation about the social composition of the civil society leaders that should be analyzed further.

Also worth noting is that we have found differences between the CSOs that have higher score on the Elite index and those that have lower score during the data collection process, in terms of the availability of information, governance structure and average number of leader per organization. The organizations with the higher elite score tend to have much more information and clearly structured governance structure available on their homepages as well as a higher average number of leaders per organization. The average number of leaders per organization is the highest in Italy (12) and lowest in Sweden (8, yet this database is incomplete).

Lastly, when it comes to the number of leaders occupying multiple positions in different CSOs thus far 37 persons have been identified in the Italian database, and 66 for the EU. These numbers correspond to about 1-2 percent of all leaders coded in each country. At this stage we do not have any conclusive observations that can motivate that these leaders with multiple positions should belong to the "inner core" or elite in the civil society, but further analysis into these leaders might be fruitful. For Sweden the number is not yet available as only a half of the organizations in the database have been coded thus far.

Identifying civil society elites among leaders

According to classical authors on elite theory, a main issue within the study of elites is its definition and differentiation from other social groups whom may hold a certain degree of power but who, nevertheless, are not elites (Scott, 2008: 28-29). A relevant question in our case is to what extent we should see the thousands of leaders occupying a variety of positions in peak organizations that we have identified as a civil society elite. As previously discussed we have chosen an inclusive approach to identifying the peak organizations which leaves us with a large population of leaders that may hold a certain degree of power but may not be defined as elites. This gives us the opportunity to complement our positional approach to elite identification based on indicators at organizational level, with empirical observations at individual level among the leaders we have identified (cf. Larsen & Ellersgaard 2017: 56).

Our understanding of the concept of elite is inspired by set-theoretical perspective. When we refer to concepts as "sets" we imply that there are boundaries that delimit what is included and what is excluded. Cases might fit within the boundaries of the set and hence have membership in it or not (Schneider & Wagemann 2012). It means that we use membership in the set of civil society elites in order to define whether a particular leader can be described as a civil society elite. Operationalizing such a concept means to define the necessary and/or sufficient conditions for membership in the civil society elite. By using necessary conditions we have defined a series of sub-sets that we think brings us closer to identifying the set of civil society elites. As when opening a Russian doll we have moved from a broader understanding of civil society leaders to the leaders of civil society organizations (by sampling organizations) and further to the leaders of peak civil society organizations (by sampling based on our indicators) as presented in the figure below.

Figure 1. Set-theoretic understanding of civil society elites (organizational leader as necessary condition)
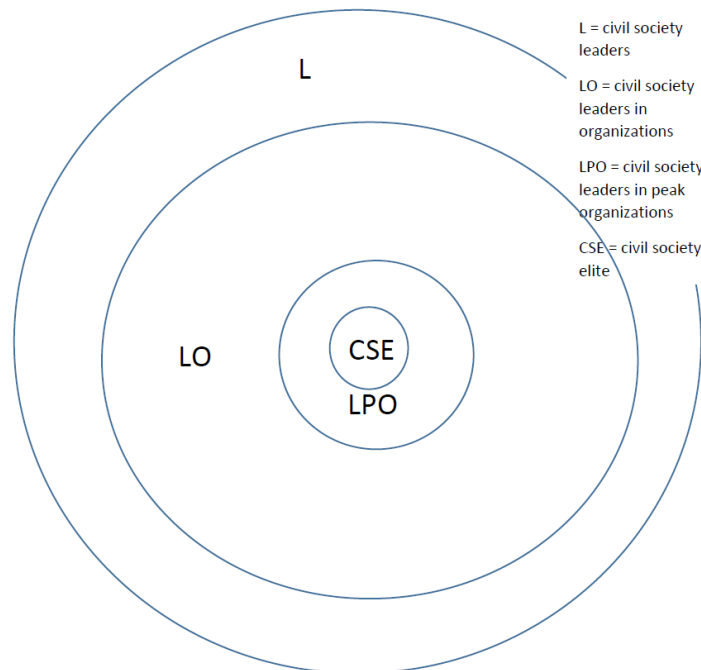
What might be the conditions, besides being a leader of a peak civil society organizations, for being part of the set of civil society elites? The literature on elites (see Lopez 2013 for an overview) gives us important insights regarding what kinds of conditions might be applicable: holding multiple positions, having access to important resources, having influence in the field, being at the centre of networks of actors etc. If we acknowledge that not all resources are necessarily bound to organizations and that power networks might include also collective actors that are not formal organizations, we should consider the possibility that being a leader of a civil society organization might not be a necessary condition but rather part of a set of combination of conditions for being part of a civil society elite. There might be positions outside organizations, in networks, movements and other collective actors that might also function as conditions for being a civil society elite. We can hence understand leadership position in a peak organization as part of a possible combination of conditions that might be sufficient but not necessary as we might also find civil society elites outside organizations. Then the model should be redrawn presenting the set of civil society elites as including also leaders outside organizations (see Figure 2 on the next page).

Our set-theoretical approach allows us to have an empirical approach to identifying civil society elites and hence adopting an exploratory approach to the elite concept. Our departing point has clearly been that we assume being a leader of an organization as a necessary condition, but we do not exclude the possibility that there can be civil society elites without organizational leadership position. This is an empirical question to be explored. It might be that we find important non-organizational factors, networks or arenas where different groups of individuals are identified compared to the leaders in our databases. This openness towards identifying what matters in the field of civil society in terms of status, resources and influence implies that we might be able to generate theories concerning the civil society elites. Can we identify conditions, specific to civils society that can be understood as forming of "civic capital", besides political and economic capital?

Figure 2. Set-theoretic understanding of civil society elites (organizational leader as non-sufficient condition)

L = civil society leaders

LO = civil society leaders in organizations

LPO = civil society leaders in peak organizations

CSE = civil society elite
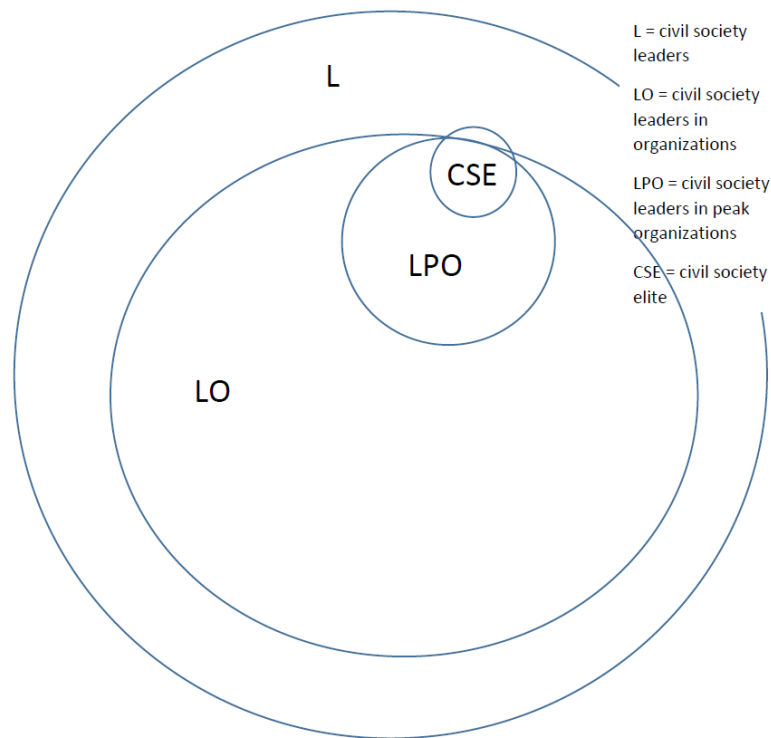
Empirical studies planned

To be able to answer the research questions outlined in the beginning of the paper, thematic study 1 will draw on the results from three sub-studies:

1) Mapping of leaders (large N.)
2) Survey study (large N. stratified sample)
3) Short bios study (medium size N. strategic sample)

Mapping of leaders

This sub-study has already been described and aims at giving a broader picture of civil society leaders in the four contexts. It also provides the population from which the samples for the other two sub-studies are drawn.

Based on this large database we can also look at the structure of civil society leadership in terms of different leadership positions, gender distribution among leaders in different parts of civil society and multiple positions (presidents, directors and board members) within the same policy field or across. We can also compare our database with other lists of leaders. We can for instance look at participants and speakers in relevant civil society meetings, conferences dialogues and panels to see if we find other people with different affiliations or with no affiliation. We can also compare with lists of present and past leaders in corporate boards or in parliament to explore overlap but also movement from business and politics into civil society (Domhoff 2013).

Survey study

The second sub-study follows a tradition common in elite studies of carrying out surveys among elite populations (see Rodriguez-Teruel & Daloz 2018 for an overview). Many elite surveys explore the attitudes of elites towards different issues (e.g. the European integration as in Best et al. 2012) rather than to explore power and stratification between and within elite groups (see Göransson 2007 for an exception). As we are not assuming that all of the leaders in our sample are part of a civil society elite we aim at introducing questions that might function as measures or indicators for resources, influence and/or centrality. The survey will be structured around different themes:

1) Position and role as a leader of a CSO
2) Leadership training and values connected to leadership
3) Career and positions in other organizations
4) Experience of challenges in leading a CSO
5) Perception of power and influence in society (own and others)
6) Background, personal networks, political views and orientation

In the sampling for the survey we will include both elected presidents/chairpersons and employed directors/general secretaries as well as their deputies. We will hence exclude board members that do not have a clear leading position as presidents or directors. The number of relevant individuals/leaders per organization we estimate varies between approx. 2 and 4. With 300 organizations it would give us a sample of between 600 and 1200 leaders.

While we aim for an inclusive approach we still want to use the fact that our indicators might be seen as a measure of organizational status and influence in the field. As we have seen some organizations have entered the sample based on just one or two indicators while others on more or even all of them. This indicator-based "score" can hence be used to produce sub-samples for each country depending on how many indicators the organizations have fulfilled. This allows us to relate the leaders' responses to our criteria of selection in the sampling (indicators), to test if there are significant differences between the leaders' responses to our survey questions, depending on if the leaders have entered our sample based on an organization with a higher or lower score. Such analyses will in turn tell us more about the relevance of the different status and resource indicators we used in the sampling process.

The questions and related variables that we will include in the survey will measure elite status in different ways: i.e. influence in policy processes, access to personal networks, mobility across social spheres and accumulation of positions and awards: We will also include questions that allow us to complement the positional approach with a reputational approach (e.g. Edling et al. 2015) by asking the leaders to name the people that they deem as most influential in their field and the people with which they collaborate on a daily basis.

A pilot survey study has been conducted in Sweden in 2017 among organizations active at national and regional level in the social welfare integration policy area. At national level 83 organizations were included in the sample and 211 leaders. The survey had a response rate of 50.2 percent (106 answers).

Short bios study

Another common method in elite studies is the collection analysis of data from secondary sources on the individual features of those people considered part of the elite group also called prosopographical research (Rodriguez-Teruel & Daloz 2017). Different almanacs (e.g. Who is who?)

have been used (see Ellersgaard et al. 2012) but also biographies (Georgakakis & Lebaron 2018) to get information about leaders background, career, income, place of residence, positions, networks etc.

By adopting such method, we aim at gathering secondary information on a stratified sample of leaders. Based on our indicators we will develop a set of sub-samples to cover leaders for organizations with different "scores" (1-6 indicators) and also different policy areas. We aim at including both presidents and directors. Taking the EU as an example, a possible sample could look as in the table below:

Table 6. Sample for short bio study for the EU

Score	Organizations (N)	Relative size of sub-sample (%)	Organizations in sub-sample (N.)
5	7	100	7
4	6	100	6
3	35	50	12
2	106	10	10
1	154	7	10
Total N	**308**		**45**

With a sample of 45 organizations and including both presidents and directors (i.e. elected and recruited leaders) we will end up with a sample of ca. 70 leaders (not all organizations will have a director, especially among those with low score).

The sources that we will use are the following (where available): the organization's webpage, LinkedIn, Wikipedia and any professional profile/CV from own webpage or other employees. The data that will be coded include the following information:

Table 7. Information for short bios

Dimension	Variable
Organizational position	CSO position
	Type of elite score
	Institutional position
	Policy field
Socio-demographic	Age
	Gender
	Birth place
	Languages
Educational	Highest level of education
	Subject
Multi-positionality in CS	Posts in CSOs outside ones policy area
	Posts in umbrella organization in ones policy areas
	More than one position in same organization
	Posts at different levels in similar policy area
	Non-organizational posts
Mobility across sectors	Political posts, elected positions
	Executive positions in public authorities
	Executive positions in corporations

Career	Current occupation
	Time in current position
	Previous occupations
	Time in current elected post
	Previous elected posts (presidencies)
Public recognition	Social media activities (Twitter, number of followers)
	Publications
	Wikipedia page
	LinkedIn number of connections
	Media coverage

The data collected in this sub-study can be analyzed for instance using multiple correspondence analysis (MCA), which allows us to "quantify and visualize the main structuring dimensions and internal oppositions of a field or a social space" (Cousin et al. 2018, p. 237). The method is especially well-suited for the particular data type of biographic information which inherently contain missing data.

Identifying elites and paths to elite positions – two different but related aims?

The main aim of this thematic study is to analyze the composition of civil society elites. Our identification of civil society elites however requires a process of concept-building that can only partly rely on elite-theories developed in the study of political or business elites. We need to explore what resources and positions that could define an elite in civil society, to be able to relate specific observations/cases of civil society leaders to the concept of civil society elites. Therefore, our empirical strategy inevitably carries the task of defining the attributes of the individuals who can be considered elites in the civil society sphere. As Goertz (2006: 27) puts it, to develop a concept is more than providing a definition, it is rather about "deciding what is important about an entity". In our study we on one hand pre-define some of the constituent parts of the concept civil society elites by departing from a set of indicators to identify the organizations where we expect to find the civil society elites. On the other hand, by collecting answers to survey questions and biographic information of the leaders in our databases we attempt to identify further constituent attributes of the civil society elites.

Defining the constituent attributes of civil society elites inevitably brings us closer to being able to identify different paths to elite positions. This is because "…one cannot neatly separate the ontology of a concept from the role it plays in causal theories and explanations" (Goertz 2006: 28). Our expectation is that we will be able to identify one or more combinations of necessary and sufficient conditions for a leader to be part of a civil society elite. While the same concept of civil society elite should be applied to all contexts and policy areas we will compare the leaders in each context to see if we find different conditions for becoming a leader in each context. As an example we could say that our mapping of leaders (table 5) shows that being a male leader is not a necessary condition for being a leader in civil society in any context. It seems however that in the Italian context such condition has more "coverage" or "strength" than in the European or the Swedish context. As the share of female leaders seem to shrink moving towards the top (in Italy as well as in the EU) we might find that to be within the core or inner circle it is almost a necessary condition to be a male leader. Such analysis could be done on other indicators such as being born in the country, having a

specific education or having a certain social background. It means that the context (whether it is policy area or country) might matter for which conditions explains why some people end up being part of a civil society elite. The assumption of "causal complexity", i.e. that there are often several combinations of conditions that explain a certain outcome, as described by Charles Ragin (2008) in his work on qualitative comparative analysis (QCA) fits well with our ambition of exploring elites in heterogeneous and fragmented field as civil society.

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