

Third-term Workshop, Academic Year 2023 – 2024

Elite Interviews in the Social Sciences

Dates and venue:

8 May, 13:00 – 18:30, Emeroteca, Badia Fiesolana

9 May, 13:00 – 18:30, Sala del Capitolo, Badia Fiesolana

Organisers: David Bokhorst, SPS Research Fellow, david.bokhorst@eui.eu and Jane Arroyo, SPS PhD Researcher, jane.arroyo@eui.eu

Supervising professor: Anton Hemerijck, anton.hemerijck@eui.eu

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Credits: 10

Workshop objectives

The purpose of this workshop is to develop an understanding of best practices for conducting elite interviews in the social sciences in addition to reflect on the use and value of elite interviews as a method.

This workshop consists of different types of sessions. In the training sessions, we engage with the practicalities of conducting elite interviews from the beginning of the process to the end. In the panel discussions, we further reflect on these topics with experts in the field. This double immersion in the whys and wherefores of elite interviewing allows to critically evaluate and learn from empirical examples of published articles as well as to hear from and discuss with academics, journalists, and policymakers about their own experience.

Participants are expected to read the required literature and to participate actively in all the sessions. To prepare the sessions, they should also submit questions for discussion on the dedicated Brightspace section, as well as via email to david.bokhorst@eui.eu & jane.arroyo@eui.eu , by Friday 3 May, 17:00 CET.

Day One: The Why, What, When, and How of Elite Interviews

During Day One, we will discuss why researchers might want to use elite interviews in their design and dive into the practicalities of the different stages of planning and conducting interviews.

Required readings:

- Harvey, W.S. (2011) 'Strategies for conducting elite interviews', *Qualitative research*, 11(4), pp. 431–441.
- Rathbun, B.C. (2008) 'Interviewing and qualitative field methods: pragmatism and practicalities', in *The Oxford handbook of political methodology*, pp. 1-15.
- Berry, J.M. (2002) 'Validity and Reliability Issues in Elite Interviewing', *Political Science & Politics*, 35(4), pp. 679–682.

Additional readings (optional):

- Lilleker, D.G. (2003). Interviewing the political elite: Navigating a potential minefield. *Politics*, 23, 207–214.

13:00 – 16:00 Practical training: Elite interview techniques

In this practical training, David Bokhorst (Research Fellow, EUI SPS) will reflect on his own experience of conducting interviews in his research to guide the participants through the different techniques of elite interviews. The training will be based on the readings and the questions submitted beforehand by participants, and will provide ample space for discussion and interaction.

16:00 – 16:30 Coffee break

16:30 – 18:30 Panel discussion: What makes a good elite interview?

- Caroline de Gruyter (European Affairs correspondent and columnist for NRC Handelsblad, regular contributor to Foreign Policy, EUobserver, and De Standaard)
- Stephanie Hofmann (Joint Chair in International Relations, SPS Department and Robert Schuman Centre, EUI)
- George Papaconstantinou (former Greek Minister of Finance and currently Acting Director and Chair of International Political Economy, School of Transnational Governance, EUI)

Panel members will reflect on their experience of interviewing and being interviewed to draw insights on what makes a good elite interview. The discussion will be followed by a Q&A for which active participation of all workshop participants is expected.

Day Two: Processing and Using Elite Interview Data in Your Research

Now that you have conducted the interview, what do you do with data? During Day Two, we will focus on how to process and use the data gathered during the interview. We will discuss issues such as data triangulation, citation of interviewees, ethical considerations, trade-offs between confidentiality and transparency... This will be done through a practical training inviting participants to reflect on empirical applications and a panel discussion with academics demonstrating extensive experience with this method.

Required readings

Empirical applications: these papers will be used in the practical training session as examples of how to operationalise elite interview data. In preparation for the session, you can scan through them and observe the different ways in which they cite or quote interviews.

- Bokhorst, D., & Corti, F. (2023). Governing Europe's recovery and resilience facility: between discipline and discretion. *Government and Opposition*, 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.1017/gov.2023.14>
- Harrison, J., Barbu, M., Campling, L., Richardson, B., & Smith, A. (2019). Governing Labour Standards through Free Trade Agreements: Limits of the European Union's Trade and Sustainable Development Chapters. *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies*, 57(2), 260–277. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jcms.12715>

Additional readings (optional):

- Aberbach, J.D. and Rockman, B.A. (1976) 'Clashing Beliefs Within the Executive Branch: The Nixon Administration Bureaucracy', *The American Political Science Review*, 70(2), pp. 456–468.
- Fastenrath, F. et al. (2021) 'Why is it so difficult to tax the rich? Evidence from German policy-makers', *Journal of European Public Policy*, pp. 1–20.
- Leech, B. L., Baumgartner, F. R., Berry, J. M., Hojnacki, M., & Kimball, D. C. (2013). Lessons from the "Lobbying and Policy Change" Project. In *Interview Research in Political Science*. Cornell University Press.
- O'Connor, K., Janenova, S. and Knox, C. (2019) 'Open government in authoritarian regimes', *International Review of Public Policy*, 1(1: 1), pp. 65–82.
- Mikecz, R. (2012) 'Interviewing elites: Addressing methodological issues', *Qualitative inquiry*, 18(6), pp. 482–493.

13:00 – 16:00 Practical training: Ethics, transparency, and the use of data in elite interviewing

In this practical training, David Bokhorst (Research Fellow, EUI SPS) will discuss the use of elite interview data and reflect on ethical and transparency challenges that may appear during the research process, such as informed consent. Jane Arroyo (PhD Researcher, SPS) will then discuss the use and reliability of elite interview data in practice (e.g. citation and quoting), and Alice Pearson (Research Fellow, Schuman Centre) will present on ethnographic approaches to elite interviews and gender aspects. This session aims to be interactive and will benefit from the questions submitted beforehand by participants.

16:00 – 16:30 Coffee break

16:30 – 18:30 Panel discussion: The Do's and Don'ts of Using Elite Interview Data

- Anton Hemerijck (Professor of Political Science and Sociology, SPS, EUI)
- Jeffrey Checkel (Chair in International Politics, SPS, EUI)
- Kristin Fabbe (TBC, Chair in Business and Comparative Politics, STG, EUI)

Panel members will further reflect on the use of interview data in research and how it is perceived and valued. The discussion will be followed by a Q&A involving all workshop participants.