

Elite Interviews in the Social Sciences

Third-term Workshop, Academic Year 2021- 2022

Dates:

16 May (9:00 -15:00), Refectory, Badia Fiesolana

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Organisers: David Bokhorst, SPS Research Fellow, david.bokhorst@eui.eu and Steven Ballantyne, PhD Researcher: steven.ballantyne@eui.eu

Sponsoring Professor: Philipp Genschel, Philipp.Genschel@eui.eu

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Workshop worth: 10 credits

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 reflecting on the use and value of interviews as a method. Participants are expected to read the required literature, submit questions for discussion for the morning sessions, and to participate actively in discussions.

This is a two-day workshop with morning (09:00–12:00 with a coffee break at 10:30) and afternoon (13:00–15:00) sessions. In the morning sessions, we will engage with the practicalities of conducting interviews with elites from the beginning of the process to the end: identifying and contacting interviewees; conducting the interview; processing interview data, including the use of software; using interview data in your manuscript/articles. We will critically evaluate and learn from empirical examples of published articles as well as the experiences of academics, an award-winning journalist and a high-level policymaker.

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

Morning Session: Prior to this session, participants should submit one or two discussion questions to an excel sheet on Brightspace. We will discuss why researchers might want to use interviews and go through the practicalities involved during the stages of planning and conducting interviews.

David Bokhorst (Research Fellow, SPS) and Alice Pearson (Research Fellow, Schuman Centre) will reflect on their own experience of conducting interviews in their research, touching on the questions raised from the readings and discussion.

Required reading:

- Berry, J.M. (2002) 'Validity and Reliability Issues in Elite Interviewing', *Political Science & Politics*, 35(4), pp. 679–682.
- 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.

Additional Reading (optional):

- Lilleker, D.G. (2003). Interviewing the political elite: Navigating a potential minefield. *Politics*, 23, 207–214.
- Mikecz, R. (2012) 'Interviewing elites: Addressing methodological issues', *Qualitative inquiry*, 18(6), pp. 482–493.

*Afternoon Panel Session: **What Makes a Good Interview***

Short presentation and panel discussion with Professor [Waltraud Schelkle](#) (professor in Political Economy at LSE and incoming Joint Chair in European Public Policy at the Robert Schuman Centre, [Alessandro Merli](#) (awardwinning journalist and former Frankfurt correspondent, columnist, financial editor and UK correspondent at *Il Sole 24 Ore*, 1985-2017) reflecting on their experiences conducting interviews. [Georgios Papakonstantinou](#) (former Greek Minister of Finance and currently Chair at the School of Transnational Governance) will reflect on his experience of *being interviewed*.

After opening statements, participants will have an opportunity to ask questions during a Q&A session.

Day Two: Processing Interview Data and Use in Your Research

Morning Session: Now that you've conducted the interview, what do you do with the data? In this session, we will focus on how to process the data you gather in interviews. Data triangulation, interviews as part of a mixed-methods research design, citation of interviewees, the need to share written work with interviewees to receive their consent before submitting for publication etc. We will critically evaluate empirical applications. After the coffee break, professor [Karl O'Connor](#) will introduce using interviews as part of a mixed-methods research design and Q Methodology software, followed by a discussion with the group.

Required Reading:

- Radaelli CM. (2009) *Desperately Seeking Regulatory Impact Assessments: Diary of a Reflective Researcher*. *Evaluation*, 15(1), pp. 31-48.
- 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.
- Bremer, B. (2020) 'The Political Economy of the SPD Reconsidered: Evidence from the Great Recession', *German Politics*, 29(3), pp. 441–463.
- Natow, R.S. (2020) 'The use of triangulation in qualitative studies employing elite interviews', *Qualitative Research*, 20(2), pp. 160-173.

Additional Reading (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.
- Radaelli, C.M. & O'Connor, K. (2009) How bureaucratic élites imagine Europe: towards convergence of governance beliefs?, *Journal of European Public Policy*, 16(7), pp. 971-989.

*Afternoon session: **The Role of Interviews in Social Science Research***

Panel members (EUI SPS professors Anton Hemerijck and Philipp Genschel; STG professor Claudio Radaelli) reflect on the use of interview data in research and how it is perceived and valued, followed by general Q&A involving all participant