

Summaries

Arnd Bauerkämper, Replacing Rural Elites. Structural Ruptures and Underlying Continuities in the Soviet Zone of Occupation and GDR, 1945–1990

Breaking the dominance of traditional rural elites was among the principal aims of the Communist and then, after April 1946, the Socialist Unity Party (SED) of Germany. The land reform undertaken in September 1945, which expropriated landowners holding more than 100 hectares, indeed broke the dominance of an old elite. Other »large-scale« farmers began to be expropriated in 1948. Collectivisation began in the GDR in 1952 and was officially completed in 1960, seemingly depriving farmers of any influence in rural society. The leading members and particularly the heads of the new cooperatives (*Landwirtschaftliche Produktionsgenossenschaften*, LPG), which by the 1970s had become increasingly large and specialised organisations, were »cadres« and in many places more influential than local mayors. Elite replacement at the structural level, however, concealed underlying continuities. The management of the new cooperatives was unable completely to sweep aside rural traditions. This study, which closes with a brief consideration of continuity and change among agrarian elites in post-1990 eastern Germany, reveals the considerable ramifications as well as the limits, paradoxes and dilemmas of the politically willed replacement of elites in East German rural society.

Marc Buggeln, How Important for Democracy Is Progressive Taxation? On Taxation and Expropriation of Economic Elites in Twentieth-Century Democracies and Dictatorships

To Charles Tilly we owe the insight that during the process of European state formation, democracies tended to emerge particularly where the state financed itself chiefly through taxation. This contribution asks how the actions of democracies and dictatorships in the twentieth century continued to differ fundamentally with regard to taxation. Particular stress is laid on the taxation of elites. Daron Acemoglu and James A. Robinson have argued that the struggle between dictatorship and democracy was ultimately one over taxation. In dictatorships, the elite asserted itself militarily against the people at large, thereby preventing a policy of redistribution at its own expense. By contrast, in democracies the will of the majority was determined by economic considerations, with electoral majorities able to implement redistributive taxation for their benefit. Acemoglu and Robinson argue that communist states and military dictatorships resembled one another with respect to the material benefits enjoyed elites. Yet this study argues that there is a clear difference and that the economic totalitarianism theory of Acemoglu and Robinson turns out, on closer scrutiny, to be untenable. Though the transition to neoliberalism has somewhat levelled differences between dictatorship and democracy, they remain

distinct. Yet the rollback of policies of redistributive taxation shows how democracy itself is under threat.

Valentina Dal Cin, Italian Elites under Napoleonic Rule: A Turning Point

The revolutionary and Napoleonic era had a major impact on Italian society, not least because the state began to define and select social elites, replacing the self-cooptation practices of the *Ancien Régime*. Using two different case studies, this article examines this change both in terms of opportunities for social advancement and new criteria for inclusion – property as well as talent – and their understanding. The example of the territories of the former Republic of Venice, which collapsed after the arrival of the French army in 1797, shows that the considerable presence of the nobility in the new institutions did not necessarily mean a strong social continuity with the *Ancien Régime*. Before 1797, the city of Venice and its nobility dominated the entire region, monopolising ruling positions. Later, nobles from the mainland, *cittadini originari* and members of the bourgeoisie also entered the new Napoleonic institutions. Among them were businessmen who, although rarely appearing in purely administrative bodies, had consolidated their social position through the purchase of national properties or estates sold by indebted nobles. Property was indeed the main pillar of the new regime. However, notables who wanted to become officials also had to demonstrate knowledge and skills. Applications for employment reveal to what extent this was understood by the candidates. A preliminary qualitative and quantitative analysis of sources from the Kingdom of Italy and the Kingdom of Naples shows that the rhetoric used in these applications mixed traditional and new elements, suggesting that the latter were more used by those who were already ›inside the system‹.

Jakob Fesenbeckh, A New Order of Management? On Technical Elites and Their Strategies of Legitimation in the Fascist »Parti populaire français« and under the Vichy Regime

This study addresses the semantics by which technical elites associated with the fascist »Parti populaire français« (PPF) and under the Vichy Regime justified their claim to a leading role in social and political concerns. The example of France in the 1930s and 1940s serves to illustrate the connection between fascism and claims to technocratic leadership. Building on Bourdieu's field theory, the party programmes authored by Robert Loustau, a mining engineer, as well as the semantics of technicians found in the party press are analysed as practices of a symbolic claim to power on the part of a technological elite. As social conflict around the popular front government intensified, so did symbolic struggles between state and business over defining new resources of administrative power. The PPF's corporatist programme advocated the transfer of sovereign powers to specialist elites and adopted semantics of French engineering organisations. The topos of »technology as creation« staked a claim to recognition as the true elite of merit in industrial society, whilst that of the »third power« asserted a mediating role as an objective third

power between capital of labour. The idea of the »leadership of engineers« expressed a sense of political mission which technical engineers derived from their supposed abilities as leaders of men. As the Vichy Regime built a planned economy, raising PPF technocrats to high office, specialist knowledge and leadership were declared key resources of legitimate power in public discourse.

Björn Hofmeister, Elites between Social Construction and Professional Specialisation. Diplomats of the GDR, 1949–1990

By establishing its own foreign ministry (*Ministerium für Auswärtige Angelegenheiten*, MfAA) directly on achieving statehood in October 1949, the GDR also built up its own diplomatic corps. A study of the GDR's diplomats, who between 1949 and 1990 constituted a functionary elite numbering approximately 3,000 individuals, provides a specific insight into the construction of an expert elite that was supposed to mark a decisive break with the continuity of traditional and largely aristocratic elites in the old diplomatic service. The traditional ideal of an elite recruited from the aristocracy and the upper middle classes was consciously replaced by a new elite from ranks of the working and lower classes. Beginning in the 1960s, the professionalisation of diplomatic training led to the establishment of a (largely male) functionary elite defined by academic training and area expertise. The lack of suitable cadres felt across the project of remaking the GDR's elites and exacerbated by the pushing aside of traditional elites gave rise to the professionalisation of the diplomatic service through dedicated training in newly founded academies (e. g. *Deutsche Akademie für Staats- und Rechtswissenschaft*, founded in 1953; *Institut für Internationale Beziehungen*, founded in 1963). The completion of the process of building an expert elite of diplomats coincided, in the early 1970s, with the increasing recognition of the GDR on the part of »non-socialist« powers and bolstered the growing »administrative authority« of the MfAA over foreign policy and thus also the role of the GDR's diplomats as key actors in defining diplomatic practice.

Michael Homberg, Creating and Educating Elites. The Role of West German Experts at the Indian Institute of Technology Madras

Support for the Indian Institute of Technology Madras was among Federal Republic of Germany's major projects in international development. A treaty signed in 1959 between the governments in Bonn and New Delhi set the terms for Germany's involvement in what was to become – not least thanks to German aid – one of India's main institutions of elite (re)production. Tertiary education had a key part to play in India's process of post-colonial nation building. However, the IIT Madras was also the product of Cold War competition in international aid. From the outset, it was in competition with its sister institutions in Kanpur, Bombay and Delhi, which were supported by the USA, the USSR and the UK. Besides the material equipment of the institutes, the exchange of expertise was a key element of this support. Its bearers were members of a small cosmopolitan elite of technical and academic experts who

travelled to India with the mission of exporting the knowledge of the »developed« nations to the Global South. Creating and educating elites was thus both the ambition and the precondition of post-1945 global development policy. This contribution considers the founding of the IIT Madras in a transnational perspective and reconstructs disputes between Indians and Germans over programmatic concepts and the practice of creating and educating elites. It analyses the role of West German development experts in the Global South between utopias of technological planning on the one hand and critiques of modernisation on the other, as well as examining the political and socio-economic preconditions, dynamics and consequences of training local functionary elites in India. In so doing, it brings into view interwoven dynamics of elite education in North and South, their patterns of recruitment, self-images, strategies of legitimation and criticism.

Peter Imbusch, What Do We Mean When We Say »Elites«? A Historical and Sociological Critique of the Concept

Elites in a society are not only an ever-present topic of public debate but also one of the key subjects of social analysis. Yet the social sciences have so far answered the question of who or what elites are, what measure of power and influence they possess, and how they justify their dominance and protect their status, largely in selective or highly normative terms. It will also come as a surprise that many analyses of social structure give only little thought to the question of elites, although these groups are by definition among a society's most powerful and important groups. This may also be due to the concept of elites itself, for »elite« has long been understood in such a variety of senses that the concept has gradually become vague and indeed meaningless, something of a catch-all category. My historically informed contribution aims to show a path back to an analytically meaningful, theoretically appropriate and sociologically cogent understanding of elites, systematically reconnecting the concept with relations of power and domination. The critical understanding of elites to be thus regained seems all the more important in times of deepening social inequality, societal regression, and the tendency of societies, much remarked upon in recent years, to become increasingly oligarchic, plutocratic or re-feudalised.

Habbo Knoch/Enno Schwanke/Kerstin Thiel, »Entire Personalities«, Not »Elites«. The German Academic Scholarship Foundation and the Promotion of Gifted Students in the Twentieth Century

Historical research has largely ignored the role and function of organisations dedicated to the support of gifted students in the emergence of differentiation of functionary elites in the twentieth century. This is true even of German's largest and oldest organisation of this kind, the German Academic Scholarship Foundation (*Studienstiftung des deutschen Volkes*). It was established twice, first in 1925 (before being absorbed into the Nazi *Reichsstudentenwerk* in 1934) and again in 1948. The

present study considers the continuities and discontinuities of the guiding concepts and selection criteria in the support given to gifted students. It foregrounds the two founding periods, in which the *Studienstiftung* cast itself as a project of social policy amid experiences of crisis and processes of democratisation. While thinking of itself as apolitical, the *Studienstiftung* deliberately avoided using the term »elite« in its public statements. Yet this does not mean that providing scholarships for gifted students did not produce and imprint itself upon functionary elites in a social-historical sense. The two periods of the *Studienstiftung*'s foundation display a distinct continuity in terms of aims, criteria for promotion and selection processes. The ideal personality rooted in the norms of the educated middle class remained definitive even as scholarships were awarded to a socially more diverse group of students.

Marko Kreuzmann, The Delegates of the German Federal Convention (1815–1866). The Social Profile and Political Activity of an Inter-State Functionary Elite

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, functionary elites in government and administration had a major part to play in building states and nations as well as in inter-state integration. Founded in 1815, the German Confederation was a confederation of independent states whilst, at the same time, claiming to work towards their national integration. Historians have tended to disregard the German Confederation, finding it to be at odds with the classical model of the national and constitutional state. Recent scholarship, however, has paid more attention to the achievements of the German Confederation in terms of integration and modernisation. It is against this backdrop that the present study considers the Federal Convention, the only organ common to the Confederation, as an inter-state functionary elite. It asks to what extent the delegates, by virtue of their activities, grew together as a functionary elite with a collective awareness of representing the interests not only their respective states, but of the Confederation as a whole. This, in turn, will illuminate the significance of the deputies to processes of integration and modernisation within the German Confederation.

Alina Marktanner, From an Elite of Achievement to an Elite of Money? Management Consultants in the Federal Republic, 1950s to 2000s

Did management consultants in the Federal Republic of Germany in the latter part of the twentieth century belong to a commercial and social »elite«? How did the consultancy business think of itself, what did others think of it, and how did these ascriptions change between the 1950s and the 2000s? This contribution historicises contemporary discourses surrounding elites with regard to the consultancy sector and, taking its cue from Reitmayer's classification, contrasts an elite of »achievement« or »quality« with one of »money« and »power«. In their self-presentations, the management consultants of the early Federal Republic appeared singularly ambitious and resolved to help build the post-war economy. As the Schröder government's »Agenda 2010« cut back the welfare state, however, the »elite« tag became

more polarised: positive self-representations were joined by more critical portrayals in which the consultancy sector found its mission and its self-image challenged. Mainstream media, popular culture and social sciences came to depict management consultants as a privileged elite which was set apart from society at large less by merit than simply by money.

Alexander Mayer, Social Mobility in the »Achievement Society«. A Practice-Theoretical Perspective on the History of Meritocratic Interpretations of Social Inequality

Modern societies are unable to justify social inequality and, in particular, the existence of elites in any other terms than achievement or merit. Historians, however, have so far not satisfactorily established how meritocratic interpretations were able to establish themselves as the dominant self-description of societies. To this end, the present contribution suggests an approach informed by cultural history, drawing on practice-theoretical approaches in order to understand meritocratic interpretations as an element of social practices. Particular attention is to be paid, in this context, to practices of social mobility. To demonstrate the heuristic potential of this approach, this study, focussing on the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, will contrast two patterns of social mobility while examining their assumptions and preconditions: the path to setting up as an independent artisan or tradesman and the idea of »getting ahead« through education. The sources drawn on here are testimonies from members of the lower classes.

Lukas Rathjen, Rhetoric and Communicative Dominance. Conversational Elites in the Early Federal Republic

What seems to have been the general legitimation of intellectual power did not apply to the intellectuals of the early Federal Republic: the idea that intellectuals owe their position of social eminence to their knowledge of a particular field. In fact, West German intellectuals of the 1950s and 1960s were comparatively reluctant to interpret and make sense of the world, to develop grand theories and models. If we take this phase of intellectual reticence seriously, we must ask, with regard to the history of intellectuals, how – if not by producing ideas – the intellectual qua social figure was able to maintain his status during this period. In this study, I seek to show how post-war intellectuals owed their discursive dominance to the practice of interpersonal ›conversation‹. Communicative dominance was secured by such rhetorical skills as a command of humanist modes of expression and behaviour. An examination of the culture of intellectual conversation in the early Federal Republic shows that rhetoric was, on the one hand, the means to keep discourse going in a transitional phase (the »end of history«) and to bridge conflicts within a traumatised society, while also serving as a technique of social distinction. In a nascent society of conversation, in which a conversational elite feared for its dominance, a humanist rhetoric set limits on processes of democratisation and emancipation.

Morten Reitmayer, »It Is Possible to Get Away with an Awful Lot If You Can Convince the People That You Don't Actually Exist.« On the Current State of the Study of Elites

This contribution discusses recent publications on political and economic elites in the fields of contemporary history and the social sciences. To this end, it briefly harks back to debates in which the actions of elites have been invested with considerable explanatory power: the end of the Weimar Republic, studies of the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie, the continuity of German business elites in the twentieth century and National Socialist elites. The study then introduces the principal subjects and research interests of the international sociology of elites. It concludes with an overview of current trends in the historical study of elites in Germany, which is concerned above all with money elites and with forms of »leadership« as a specific mode of elite action. Overall, this study finds the greatest potential of the study of elites to consist in attempts to obtain insights into the areas in which elites make key decisions by examining their social profile, attitudes, internal structure, relations with other groups of actors, and their specific cultures of decision-making.

Michael A. Strebel/Baptiste Antoniazza/André Mach, Getting Rid of Their Ties. The Long-Term Evolution of Elite Networks and Profiles in the Three Largest Swiss Cities, 1890–2020

Recently, there has been a resurgence in prosopographical studies of (national) elites. In this paper, we complement this research with a long-term perspective on urban elites from different social spheres in three Swiss city-regions. City-regions are the main geographical hubs of power and the local level often serves as an entry point for accessing elite networks at larger scales. Assessing the evolution of local elite networks' inclusiveness is thus crucial for our understanding of past and current inequalities and power structures. Using a positional approach, we identify academic, cultural, economic and political elites in Basel, Geneva and Zurich from 1890 to 2020. In our analysis, we first assess elites' multi-positionality in city-regional organizations. We observe a gradual disintegration of local elite networks over the course of the twentieth century and their almost complete disappearance to the present day. In a second step, we present the profiles of the core elite, i.e. the 400 actors who hold positions in two social spheres at once. Old Swiss men form a rather cohesive and exclusive core elite throughout the period, and descendants of patrician families dominate Basel and Geneva's (but not Zurich's) local networks until the beginning of the twentieth century. These results have implications for our understanding of the functioning of local economies and for our conception of the local level as an entry point for newcomers to elite positions.

Marco Swiniartzki, Subcultural Elites. Self-Stylisation, Social Practice and Postmodern Aestheticisation in Norwegian Black Metal

This contribution argues in favour of expanding the discussion of elites in contemporary history to include pop culture, since innovative subcultural cores provide

leadership and coordination (which are perceived as indispensable) to stylistically exclusive international social systems (subcultures, lifestyles etc.). Taking its cue from the postulate of a »postmodern dispositive of creativity« (Andreas Reckwitz), which – beginning in the 1980s – introduced an emotional and performative aestheticisation of what was distinctive and new, this study, drawing on the example of the Norwegian Black Metal subculture, describes four methods by which its key actors contributed decisively to their self-stylisation as an elite and established its radical social practice in the early 1990s. Besides product-oriented creativity and a radical desire for distinction, this includes the artists' physical self-performance and the transgression of social boundaries. As sub- and counter-cultures become increasingly fused with »bourgeois« and capitalist notions of work and marketing, such subcultural elites can no longer be interpreted in purely subcultural terms and are instead described as those exclusive groups which are particularly successful in keeping their audience's attention focussed on their innovatively marketed and aesthetic self-performance which, uncoupled from instrumental rationality, consists above all in emphasising a sense of difference that keeps reinventing itself.

Nikolai Wehrs, Elite Rule in the Age of ›Mass Democracy‹. Civil Service and the Political Culture of Twentieth-Century Great Britain

Looking at the example of British ministerial bureaucracy, this essay considers the changing role of professionalised administrative elites in the political culture of liberal western democracies in the twentieth century. As the key aspects of its administrative history, it analyses the social structure and corporative social culture of the British Civil Service from the perspective of a sociology of elites as well as considering the forms of its political influence and the effects of public criticism on the influence of the ministerial bureaucracy. In its »classical phase« in the mid-twentieth century, the British Civil Service combined recruitment from a social elite with a decidedly humanist educational culture. In political terms, the resulting corporative identity of Whitehall's administrative elite produced a sense of superiority over the political class, known simply as »Westminster«. The political influence of these unelected officials rested above all on the principle of the ministerial bureaucracy's permanence, which ensured that Civil Servants had an advantage in terms of experience over politicians who might come and go. The 1960s, however, saw mounting criticism of the Civil, the effects of which on its subsequent development this essay analyses. Considering the example of party-political special advisers, it shows how negative stereotypes about the Civil Service were deployed with the aim of expanding zones of party-political influence in Whitehall. What had begun as a discourse critical of elites led, it is argued, to a partial loss of control within the British political system by the early twenty-first century, a point essential to understanding the Brexit Crisis.