




# Civil society elites in Europe

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A photograph of a protest in an urban setting. In the foreground, a man with a goatee and a blue t-shirt holds a large white sign with black text. The sign reads: "DEAR 1%, WE FELL ASLEEP FOR A WHILE. JUST WOKE UP. SINCERELY, THE 99%". Below the main text on the sign is the hashtag "#OCCUPYWALLST". In the background, several police officers in dark uniforms with "POLICE" written on their vests are visible. One officer is looking towards the camera. The background also shows a multi-story building with many windows and other people in the crowd.

DEAR 1%,  
WE FELL ASLEEP  
FOR A WHILE.  
JUST WOKE UP.  
SINCERELY, THE 99%

#OCCUPYWALLST





CIVIL SOCIETY

EL SALVADOR

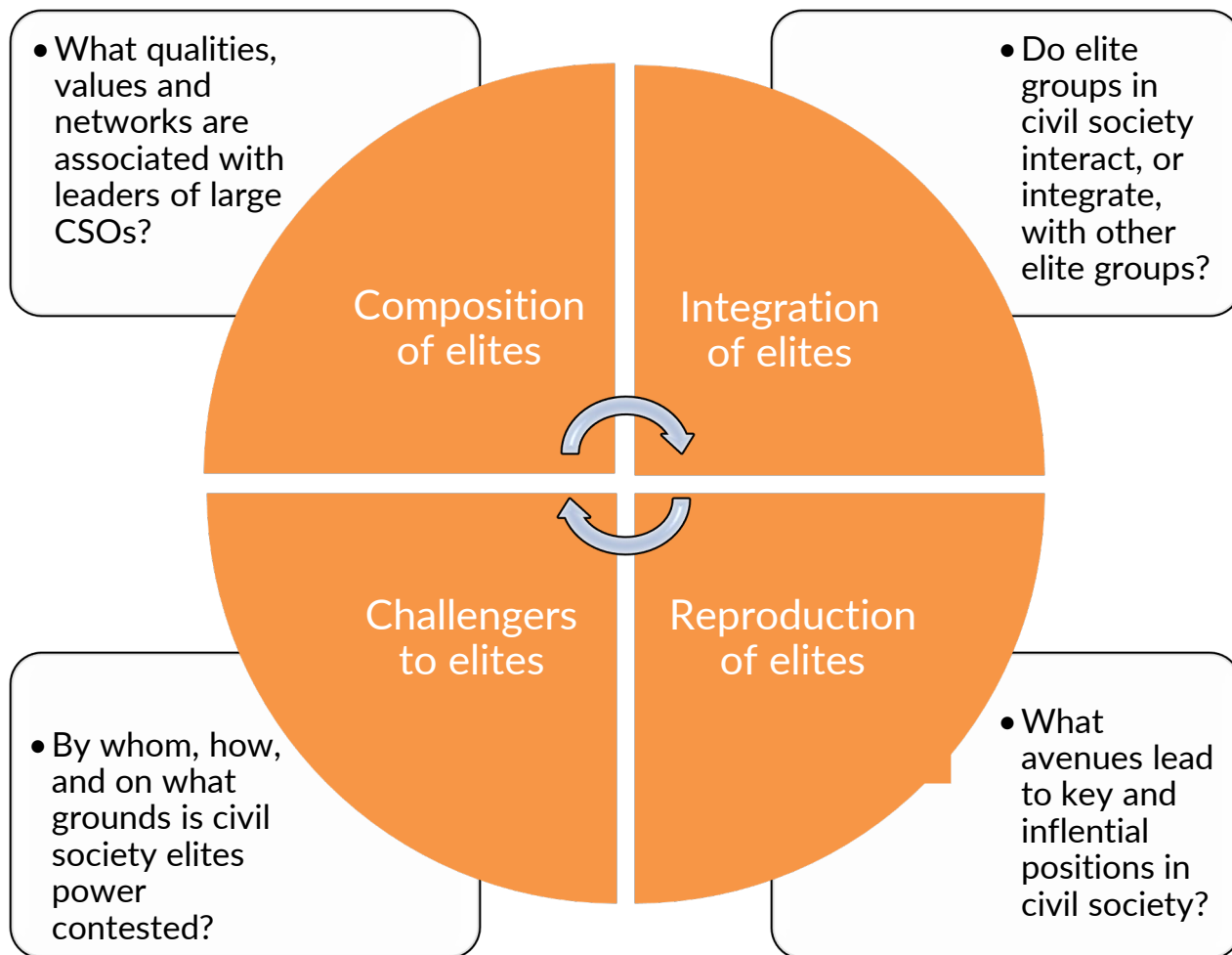
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EGYPT

ECUADOR

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# Thematic studies and research questions



- Comparisons across 'civil society regimes' (Italy, Poland, Sweden, the UK and also EU level)
- Funded by Riksbankens Jubileumsfond (2018-2023) ([www.rj.se](http://www.rj.se)).



# Overview of methods and data

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- **Civil society elite score** - innovative method of resource and power concentration
- **5 comparative surveys** with leaders of major national CSOs
- **Propospopgraphic studies** of elites (short-bios)
- 'Advancement', 'recruitment', 'training', 'crossing', and 'contestation' **interviews** in five contexts (250-300 interviews)
- **Document analyses** of speeches, announcements, talks by political leaders and civil society elites.
- **Field observations** at the UN, EESC, COP26 Glasgow, national leadership events, third sector conferences, public demonstrations (Poland + Italy) etc.



# Positional method of mapping elite CSOs

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Indicators of internal status and recognition	Indicators of external status and recognition
1 access to extensive resources (budget and staff size)	4 receive significant public core funding
2 umbrella organizations in specific policy areas or posts on their boards	5 included in public consultations in specific policy areas (frequent access)
3 umbrella organisations representing the civil society sector or posts on their boards	6 represented in public committees for state-civil society relations



# Composition of civil society elites (TSI)

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- Highly educated, urban elites across countries (elite education in the UK)
- Men more represented (exception Sweden)
- 50+ age
- Ethnic and racial homogeneity
- Left leaning and progressive attitudes
- *Privileged backgrounds, but counter-elite ethos*



# Elite compositions

	Sweden	Italy	Poland	UK	EU
Age (mean)	57	<b>59</b>	51	57	53
Gender (% women)	58	<b>27</b>	49	40	44
Level of education (% higher education)	75	74	<b>94</b>	85	90
Economic reimbursement main source of income (% yes)	65	76	73	<b>89</b>	<b>88</b>
Years in the position (mean)	<b>9</b>	<b>9</b>	5	6	6
Years in the organisation (mean)	<b>21</b>	<b>17</b>	14	11	11
Monthly income in EUR (mean)	5,872	5,758	1,453	<b>13,614</b>	5,717





# Civil society elite reproduction (TSII)

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- Reproduced like other elites:  
Education (Oxbridge); Consecration (Honours and presidential medals)
- Meritocracy gaining impetus, yet passion for the cause is key
- Long insider routes dominant in Sweden, Italy and to some extent in Poland. Almost as long external, professional route in the UK.
- Legitimation of elites across country and organisational differences
  - Personalization at the top, charismatic leaders to match status of top CSO.
- Elites' reproduction strategies:
  - Downward closure and cloning mechanisms



# Patterns of elite reproduction – significance of Oxbridge?

	University education	Oxbridge degree	Russell Group degree
<b>Civil society elites</b>	<b>93.5</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>58.3</b>
Business elites (FTSE 350 CEOs)	95	15	36
Politics (Members of Parliament)	88	24	54
Politics (Cabinet and Shadow Cabinet)	100	57	87
Public sector (senior civil servants at Whitehall: Permanent Secretaries)	100	56	82
General population	19	<1%*	6

Data: Civil society elite short bio database, The Sutton Trust and Social Mobility Commission (2019), \*Undergraduate data, 18-year old (2018).

# Civil society elite integration (TSIII)

- Country differences: most frequent crossers in UK, least in Poland.
- Most often from private sector, less from public positions.
- Public sector mobility a two-way street, private sector one-way street
- Mobility driving elitization and seniority
- Leader capital gains/losses:
  - Business elites take a pay cut to 'do good'
  - Political elites gain additional political influence

Boundary crossers	Sweden	Italy	UK	Poland	EU
<b>Public (%)</b>	36,6	27	<b>49,6</b>	13,7	28,2
<b>Total N.</b>	290	115	<b>115</b>	168	149
<b>Private (%)</b>	35,1	31,6	<b>60,3</b>	23,8	30,9
<b>Total N.</b>	290	122	<b>120</b>	170	151



# Contestation of civil society elites (TSIV)

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- Challengers from within and from outside civil society
- In Poland, UK and Italy **government contestation** of prominent CSOs' agendas
- Challengers from within – **conservative groups** challenging gender equality internationally and in Poland, migration and refugees CSOs (Italy) and 'wokery' of CS elites in the UK
- In UK – challengers from within civil society contesting the reproduction of civil society elites (class, ethnic and racial homogeneity).

## CHARITY SO WHITE



95% OF  
CHARITY  
TRUSTEES  
ARE WHITE

CHARITY COMMISSION, 2017

CHARITY SO WHITE

The language of anti-racism  
is co-opted by white  
leaders cos it makes them  
look good

CHARITY SO WHITE



# Contribution and concluding remarks

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- The **concept of civil society** elites itself
- **Comparative** mapping of civil society elites
- Dynamic and relational theorising of **elite practices**
- Challenging the idea of civil society elites as a counter elite
- **CS elites combining Mills and Michels logics** – different degree of integration in power elite vs. organizational oligarchy



# Outputs and further information

- Published in e.g. *JCMS*, *European Societies*, *BJPIR*, *Voluntas*, *Mobilization*, *Interest Groups and Advocacy*, *Journal of Civil Society*; *Social Politics*; *Global Discourse*
- Ongoing monographs (tentative titles): ‘Civil society elite mobility’; ‘Elite stratification and integration in European civil societies’; ‘Civil society Elites and Ruling Classes in Italy’
- More info on the research team and publications: <https://www.civilsocietyelites.lu.se/>



# Who are we?



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# Response rate and sampling procedure

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	<b>Italy</b>	<b>Poland</b>	<b>Sweden</b>	<b>UK</b>	<b>EU</b>
Organisations (N)	293	434	394	434	307
Leader sample (N)	680	961	835	1005	944
Responses (N)	133	175	308	123	158
Response rate (%)	19	18	37	12	15



# Values of the elite

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	Sweden	Italy	Poland	UK	EU
Political orientation (mean 0 left; 10 right)	4,5	<b>3,1</b>	4,4	4,2	4,0
Generalized trust (mean 0 low trust; 10 high trust)	<b>7,6</b>	6,8	6,6	6,9	6,5
Satisfied with democracy (mean 0 dissatisfied; 10 satisfied)	6,1	5,1	<b>3,3</b>	4,6	4,8
Gays and lesbians free to live life as they wish (mean 1 agree; 5 disagree)	<b>1,2</b>	1,5	1,5	1,3	1,3

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