Netherlands Elites, 2005

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Reviving Elites Research Workshop - Manchester
Research Project

By major newspaper (*de Volkskrant*). Goal: Expose hidden power based on positions in boards, committees, etc., across all sectors.

Parts:
1. Data collection and network analysis of affiliations to all important boards, etc.,
2. Interviews with key informants,
3. Survey among the most central actors.

Today:
1. Initial results: how elites integrate social sectors,
2. Proposal for a longitudinal perspective.
Overlapping social sectors

‘What do interlocks really mean?’

- They help setting the political agenda and they facilitate political processes of change.

Special attention to links between politics/government and other sectors.

Network data:

1. The most important bodies/organizations in each policy domain (n = 674),
2. All members of these bodies (m = 3,936), yielding 5,471 memberships/functions (1 to 12 memberships pro person).
Table – Number of organizations by social sector (Ministry).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social sector</th>
<th># Organizations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture, Nature</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defence</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Affairs (industry)</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education, Science</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finance</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign Affairs</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Affairs (royal house, political parties)</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health, Welfare</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interior (local government, police)</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justice</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Affairs and Employment</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spatial Planning, Environment</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sport</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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A longitudinal perspective

In the case of non-profit organizations, ‘What do interlocks really mean?’

• Social capital: contacts,
• Symbolic capital: prestige.

Importance to social and political change:

• Social capital: access to, persuasion, and activation of key players (‘you owe me’),
• Symbolic capital: authority to make people comply.
• Investigating both types of capital requires a longitudinal approach.
Social capital

Previous contacts and collaborations matter probably more than present ones; a person who is not central (e.g., betweenness centrality) in the present network, may have the widest circle of contacts from previous affiliations.

Network conceptualization: a career as a (directed) sequence of organizations to which a person was affiliated: dated changeovers.
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Symbolic capital

Prestige: a perceived or attributed feature; stake and weapon in the struggle within a field.

Top management and administration as a relatively autonomous (sub)field.

Distribution of symbolic capital is governed by group processes: you want to have what is hard to get and what you have, you make hard to get.

Result: a matching process of persons and organizations according to symbolic capital.

Asymmetry: people tend to changeover to more prestigious organizations.
Dynamic prestige

Main principles:
1. Changeovers and continued affiliations transfer prestige between organizations,
2. Members without previous experience transfer minimum prestige (zero).

From (arbitrary) initial values, prestige scores can be calculated for organizations.

(See: 'Dynamics of artistic prestige' In: Poetics 30/3, 147-167)
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Practical considerations

Main disadvantages of collecting career data:

1. Career data: available but not accurately dated,
2. Distinguish between main positions and sideline activities,
3. How many CVs are needed to obtain a network that is sufficiently connected?