

## Social capital in the field of power: the case of Norway

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### Abstract

This paper analyses social capital structures in the field of power, based on data from the Norwegian Power and Democracy Survey on elites. Separating between objectified, institutionalised, embodied, and inherited social capital, and inspired by Bourdieu's approach, we analyse the relations between social capital and the other forms of capital by way of specific multiple correspondence analysis and ascending hierarchical cluster analysis. First, we find that the level of institutionalised social capital varies from one fraction of the Norwegian elite to another. Secondly, the range of networks established through previous work experiences is related to field seniority. Thirdly, the positions of highest endogamy are situated in the religious field, and to a lesser extent, in the scientific field, and in the juridical field. Finally, the 'core of the core' is defined by actors who are strongly interconnected inside what is called 'the tripartite system', with a high level of multipositionality and intersectorial connections.

Certain reliable indications exist that the science of political class is divided into three camps, corresponding to the three sectors that compose it: the first is the sense of energetic volition, the second is economic and the third is intellectual / . . ./. These three groups together constitute the political class, and their interdependence and interaction are such as to obscure often the criteria that distinguish them from one another. They form circles which, though far from coinciding with one another, have points of intersection. To fix the relations of these circles is the most important and most arduous task before us. (Michels (1949). *First Lectures in Political Sociology*: 106–7)

Although the notion of social capital has been an increasingly popular concept since the mid-1990s, and although most analyses focus on network relations and resources, there is no agreed definition of social capital or consensus on how it should be measured. Nor are there many studies that link social capital to social class and elite positions in a comprehensive and systematic way. The purpose of this article is to forge that link, by way of an analysis of the distribution of social capital in the Norwegian field of power. The concept 'field

of power' is derived from Pierre Bourdieu's theory and studies of social space (Bourdieu, 1979), and it denotes the arena where dominant agents in various fields are engaged in struggles that not only affect the continuation or change of the power relations within each field, but also the relations between the different fields (eg Bourdieu and de Saint-Martin, 1978; Bourdieu, 1989). Unlike analyses that ask whether a unified ruling class exists (eg Dogan, 2003), the concept of field of power offers a theoretical framework that permits us to analyse elites as hierarchised and competing within a structured space. In this article we conduct such an analysis by focusing on social capital that is associated with *contacts* between different elite groups or sectors of the field.

This type of social capital is of particular interest not only because of its capacity for mediation and coordination between elites and sectors, but also because it may contribute to the production of an 'elite within the elite', a cross-sectorial core within the field of power and within specific positions in this field. However, social capital may also have the capacity to distinguish between the 'haves and the have-nots' *internally* in specific field positions, and also in various *subfields* of the field of power. For instance, the positions that are the most accessible for 'newcomers' and agents with low volumes of inherited and personal economic or cultural capital, ie leading positions in NGOs, political parties and organisations and the media, generally also have higher volumes of social capital than most other positions in the field (Hjellbrekke *et al.*, 2007). In contrast, positions within the legal system are more homogeneous both in terms of capital volume and composition than most other positions, and tend to represent a 'zone of their own' in the field. Accumulation of particular types of social capital is thus seemingly also linked to the accumulation of specific types of political and/or organisational capital (Bourdieu, 1994: 32–4), but not necessarily to the accumulation of educational capital. This, in turn, may indicate that secondary capital composition principles are at work in the various subfields that constitute the field of power.

The analysis is based on data from the Norwegian Power and Democracy Survey (Gulbrandsen, 2002) and will mainly focus on what we will define as *institutionalised* social capital (or ISC), measured by formal contacts between sectors in the field of power. Following Mills (1956), we find that an institutionally oriented analysis has three main advantages: first, institutions are of crucial importance when defining who holds power. As pointed out by Gerth and Mills, 'whenever a role configuration is . . . guaranteed or stabilized by a 'head' who wields authority over the 'members' who enact the roles, the configuration may be called an institution' (Gerth and Mills, 1953: 23). Secondly, formal relations are more reliably objectified than informal relations. Thirdly, formal relations allow us to move from an individualist perspective to a broader structural analysis. Whereas informal contacts are primarily related to individual trajectories, patterns of formal contacts will depend on the institutionalised relations between the positions in the field. Empirically, the study builds on our previous analyses of the Norwegian field of power

(Hjellbrekke *et al.*, 2007), which have demonstrated how types of social capital, related to board membership in the private and public sectors, in firms and in various kinds of organisations, combine in particular ways with other forms of capital in structuring the field. For example, we find that low volumes of social and personal educational capital constitute a structural opposition to high volumes of both inherited social and cultural capital. In consequence, because differences in the volume and composition of capital also reflects time invested in the field, this opposition also describes a polarity between the ‘newcomers’ and the ‘established’ field agents.

Three sets of questions are addressed in the analysis:

- 1) How is institutionalised social capital distributed among Norwegian social elites? By distribution of capital we refer both to the volume of capital (the number of sectors to which an individual is linked) and its structure (the pattern of specific sectors to which an individual is linked). The capital structure is of particular interest in this context, as it may refer to, and help us to explore, specific aspects of the overall structure of the field of power across societal formations.
- 2) What is the relation between the structure of the Norwegian field of power and this distribution of institutionalised social capital? To what types of capital is institutionalised social capital primarily related? The possession of social capital depends on membership in one or more groups. Thus, it also presupposes the existence of economic and cultural capital. Social capital is not independent of the other forms of capital, and it is rarely accumulated for itself. Therefore, the analysis of the distribution of social capital must also focus on the conversion of capitals within the field of power.
- 3) Are there positions of higher ‘endogamy’, ie positions that mainly have internal links within the field? And are there figurations of particular *high* volumes of institutionalised social capital? If the field of power is fragmented into a set of relatively autonomous institutional orders (Gerth and Mills, 1953), cohesion implies the existence of coordinating agents. In this respect, positions that relate to politics are of particular interest as ‘passage points’ of mediation. For instance, are the links between politics and business particularly intense?

Before we present the analysis, we will briefly explain our conceptions and measurements of social capital.

## 1. Conceptualisations of social capital

Currently, three main positions can be identified in the general debate over the notion of social capital.

In the approach first outlined by Coleman (1988, 1990), later to be developed by Putnam and favoured by economists in the World Bank (eg Woolcock, 1998; Knack, 2002), social capital is primarily analysed as a source

of social coordination, social integration and norms of reciprocity. As summed up by Putnam (1995, 2000), the emphasis is clearly put on its positive effects: 'life is easier in a community blessed with a substantial stock of social capital' (Putnam, 1995). Social capital is heterogeneously defined as '... a variety of different entities, with two elements in common: they all consist of some aspects of social structure, and they facilitate certain actions of actors – whether persons or corporate actors – within the structure' (Coleman, 1988: 98), and the concept 'refers to features of social organisation such as trust, norms and networks, that can improve efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated actions' (Putnam, 1993: 167).

Putnam's use of the concept has been the subject of theoretical, empirical and historical criticism (eg McLean, Schultz and Steger, [eds] 2002). Leading authors within this tradition have also recognized the theoretical and empirical problems inherent in this conceptual heterogeneity, or even inconsistency; whereas studies have concluded that generalized reciprocity is associated with 'good governmental performance', social connectedness, ie network relations, is not (eg Knack, 2002). Moreover, as Portes (1998) has convincingly pointed out, the Coleman/Putnam approach lacks a clear distinction between those who are capital *holders*, the *sources* of social capital, and the *resources* that may be considered social capital.

This is more clearly distinguished and analysed in network theories of social capital, of which Lin's (2001) and Burt's (2005) contributions are the two most important. Despite clear differences, both are inspired by Granovetter's study of labour markets in the US (Granovetter, 1973), and both define social capital primarily in terms of network structures and network assets. As a member of a network, one has access to its embedded resources and gains an advantage that actors outside the network do not have. Network theories therefore emphasize that inequality in social capital may also be linked to social inequality in general (eg Lin, 2001: ch. 7; Burt, 1992a, 2005). Unlike Putnam's approach, both Burt and Lin include a distinct stratifying element between the 'haves and the have-nots'. Within the network, some agents occupy more powerful or central positions than others. In this way, social capital can be analysed as a counterpart to human capital. Whereas human capital approaches focus on individual resources and abilities as a source of inequality, network approaches to social capital primarily focus on the inequality generating capacities of social relations in general. But, whereas Lin formulates a general theory of *social resources* and makes extensive use of Granovetter's original distinction between strong and weak ties, Burt puts much greater emphasis on the *exclusivity* of a given network position with respect to *information access, control or diffusion* (Burt, 2005), or on what he describes as 'network models of range' as contrasted to 'network models of contagion' or 'network models of prominence' (Burt, 2005). Agents located in what Burt conceptualizes as structural holes, ie positions that mediate and control the information and the resources that flow between two otherwise isolated networks, have a competitive advantage over other network members.

In the third perspective, Bourdieu's approach, social capital is considered one of the main forms of capital:

Social capital is the aggregate of actual or potential resources which are linked to the *possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition* – or in other words, *to membership in a group* – which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectivity-owned capital, a 'credential' which entitles them to credit, in the various senses of the word [. . .] The volume of social capital possessed by a given agent thus depends on *the size of the network of connections he can effectively mobilize and on the volume of capital (economic, cultural or symbolic) possessed in his own right by each of those to whom he is connected* (Bourdieu, 1986: 248/249) (italics ours).

There are three reasons why we favour Bourdieu's approach over the others. First, the historical and institutional dimensions are emphasized. Social capital is to a large degree a question of historically established, institutionalised networks and patterns of *recognition*. From one generation to the next, social capital may therefore also be inherited, like the other forms of capital. Furthermore, its value is to a great degree dependent on the level of institutional and symbolic backing. Networks based on memberships or positions held in prestigious and/or powerful institutions, eg elite schools, 'closed' societies and clubs or governmental or state controlled agencies, will generally be of higher value than others.

Secondly, the approach not only demands, but *necessitates* an analysis of the relations between social capital and the other forms of capital, ie economic, cultural and symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1986). Whereas these forms are irreducible to each other, they can be cumulated, converted and transmitted, and what makes social capital sociologically important is precisely its inherent capacity either to be converted into (ie give access to) or to increase returns on the other forms of capital (see also Harvey and Maclean, 2008). This capacity is of particular importance when studying elite formations.

Thirdly, and related to this, Bourdieu's more general theory also includes a theory of group formation and class (cf. Bourdieu, 1987). Unlike its use in the communitarian approach, social capital is not defined as a public good *per se*, but can be analysed as both an individual and a collective asset. Classes or group formations can be hierarchically ranked according to their volumes, values and compositions of social capital, and systematic inequalities between individual agents explained accordingly. An agent's volume of social capital thus not only depends on the number of positions s/he holds in various fields or subfields, but also on the position of these fields in the hierarchy that structures the field of power. When it comes to identifying an 'elite within the elite', what we call 'multipositional' individuals (Boltanski, 1973) are therefore of key importance.

To summarize, social capital is a resource that is related not only to membership in one or more groups whose members are united by objective relations; it is also a resource related to inclusion in a given relational structure in which social capital is unequally distributed. Drawing on Bourdieu's discussion of the states of *cultural capital* (Bourdieu, 1986), we will argue that social capital also manifests itself in different states: as inherited, embodied, objectified or institutionalised social capital. In reality these states are intertwined in various ways, and they have no universally privileged indicators.

In its embodied state, social capital is harder to measure, but can be analysed as long-lasting dispositions in the *habitus* that indicate a familiarity with the practical logic of the field or, to put it differently, a practical competence and knowledge in field struggles, for instance how to capitalize on 'old school ties' etc. But in its *inherited* state, social capital can be operationalised as board, group or network memberships mediated through the family of origin; in its *objectified* (and personal) state, as personal board memberships, memberships in voluntary organisations, exclusive clubs, network memberships, etc.; in its *institutionalised* state as formalised contact patterns and meetings between members in formal positions in organisations, companies, governmental bodies, etc.

## **2. Data and methods**

The data set originates from 'The Leadership survey 2000', a project which was part of the Norwegian Power and Democracy survey 1998–2003 (Gulbrandsen *et al.*, 2002). The questionnaire was distributed to the highest ranking leaders in ten societal sectors ( $n = 1710$ ). It includes generals, bishops, leading university officials, top civil servants, leading politicians, supreme court judges, leaders of NGOs, and the CEOs, NCEOs and board chairmen of the largest private and public companies in Norway, including the cooperatives. Data from public registers, for instance data on income and property, have been added. Not surprisingly, the position holders are well educated. Their income levels are well above the average for the population, and their social background is also clearly skewed. Judged from the univariate distributions, a certain degree of diversity can thus be found (see Gulbrandsen *et al.*, 2002).

As indicators of field centrality, the data set includes variables on regular formal contacts that make it possible to identify both structural characteristics in arenas for coordination, and multipositional individuals with the capacity to mediate between positions and sectors in the field of power.

The methodology used in this paper consists of 3 steps.

First, we constructed the *space of the elite* by means of a variant of Multiple Correspondence Analysis (MCA) (Le Roux *et al.*, 2010). For the construction of the cloud of the members of the elite, we used 31 variables with a

total of 77 categories (after coding) as capital indicators (see Hjellbrekke *et al.*, 2007).

Second, we study the social capital profiles of these individuals; on the one hand by constructing indicators of social capital, on the other hand by performing a clustering of these individuals on the basis of the formal contacts they have with leaders in 13 institutions or societal sectors.

Finally, these indicators are projected (as supplementary elements) on the space of the elite and the clusters of individuals are visualized in the space of the elite.

The basic data set for MCA is an Individuals X Categorical variables. MCA provides a geometric model of data, ie it represents individuals by points and summarizes the relations between categorical variables. Methodologically, MCA is the counterpart of Principal Component Analysis (PCA) for categorical variables. The essence of MCA lies in the definition of the distance between individuals. The distance between two individuals is created by the variables for which their responses are different. If for a question one individual answers  $k$  and the other one answers  $k'$ , the part of the squared distance due to this variable is equal to  $(1/f_k + 1/f_{k'})$ , where  $f_k$  denotes the relative frequency of  $k$ . For the questions for which they share the same response, the part of distance is null. The overall squared distance is the mean of the squared distances over all variables. In this article, we used a variant of MCA, called specific MCA, which ignores 'missing categories' when determining the distance between individuals. Once the cloud of individuals is constructed, its principal axes are determined (Le Roux and Rouanet, 2010).

*Clusters of individuals* have been identified by way of ascending hierarchical clustering (AHC) on the 13 dichotomous variables on formal contacts with sectors (see Table 1). The Euclidean distance between two individuals  $i$  and  $i'$  is defined by:  $d^2(i, i') = \frac{1}{13} \sum \frac{1}{f_s(1-f_s)}$  by summing over the sectors for which either  $i$  or  $i'$  have contacts, but *not* both. The aggregation is based on the variance index (Ward's method, see eg Le Roux and Rouanet, 2004, pp. 106–15).

### 3. Closure in the field of power

At a general level, multipositionality can also be analysed as an indicator that distinguishes between 'local' and 'general' power in the field. 'Endogamous' individuals, ie individuals without formal contacts outside their own sector, are more likely to exert 'local power' than multipositional individuals with many, or a set of exclusive, highly valued formal contacts. In this way, hierarchies both within and between positions, the distribution of the global volume of social capital, and the composition of institutionalised social capital across the field of power can be studied.

**Table 1** Degree of closure in the field of power. Percentage of respondents who only meet with people from same sector on a regular basis

	«Endogamous» individuals	Total number of individuals in sector	Degree of closure
Church	31	107	0.29
University	20	146	0.14
Police justice	16	126	0.13
Private Business	37	297	0.12
Military	8	68	0.12
Directorates	20	197	0.10
Media	11	116	0.09
Trade Unions	7	94	0.07
NGOs	2	37	0.05
Managerial organisations	2	54	0.04
MPS	5	301	0.02
Political parties	0	190	0
Public business	0	51	0

Table 1 gives a first overview of the degree of sectorial and positional closure in the field.

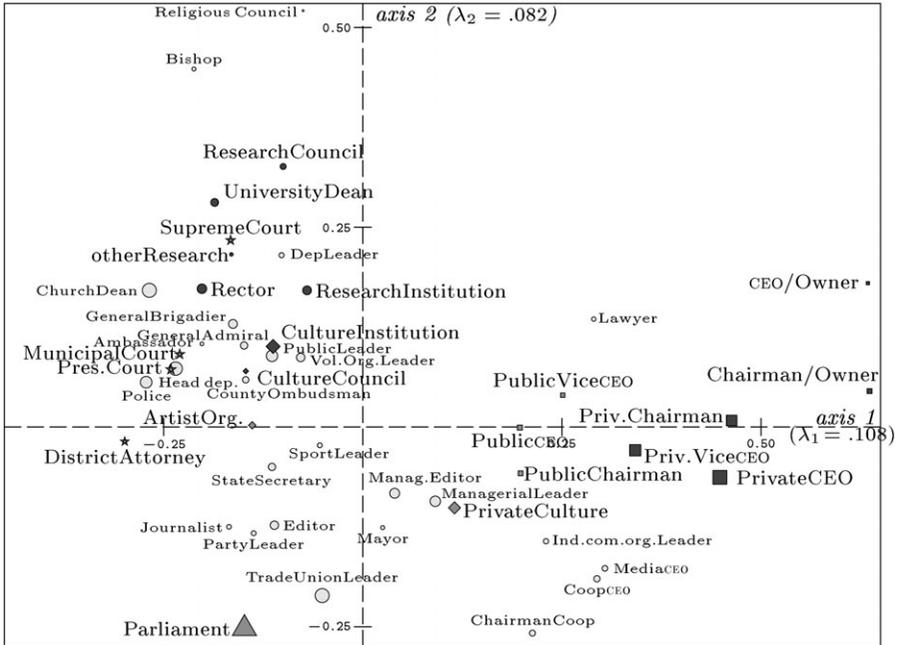
In general, the degree of field closure seems limited: most position holders *do* meet on a regular basis with leaders from other sectors. But even so, differences can be found. Whereas almost one in three leaders in the church do not interact formally with leaders outside their own sector, there are no 'endogamous' individuals in the political parties or in public business positions.

In order to address the questions regarding *global* capital volumes, capital *composition* and also *intermediary* positions in the field, a more advanced statistical analysis must be undertaken, which reveals the relations between the global space of elite positions and the distribution of institutionalised social capital.

#### 4. Social capital volumes in the space of positions

Three main axes were revealed. Taking the position variable as a structuring factor for each of the 45 positions, we consider the subcloud of individuals who share this position and we construct the 45 mean points of these subclouds shown in the principal plane 1-2 (Figure 1) and the principal plane 2-3 (Figure 2).

In plane 1-2, three poles are found 1) business positions, 2) political and organisational positions, and 3) university, religious and the highest legal positions. Whereas axis 1 is primarily an *economic capital axis*, with high volumes to the right and low volumes to the left, (with women consistently to the left),

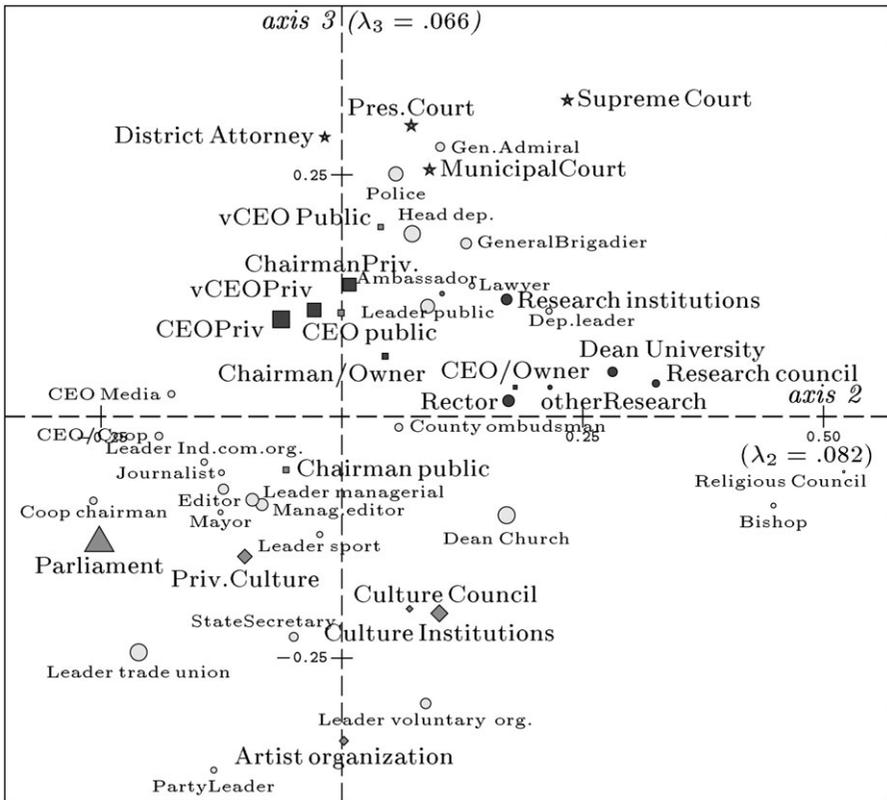


**Figure 1** The 45 mean points of the subclouds associated with the 45 positions in the plane 1-2 of the field of the elite (cloud of individuals) The positions are divided into seven groups that are identified by different sym-bols: Public business (■), Private business (■) Public culture (◆), Private culture (◆), Parliament (▲), Justice (★), University & Research (●), all others positions are written in smaller size letters and designated by (○)

axis 2 differentiates between high volumes (Figure 1, top) and low volumes (bottom) of both personal and inherited educational and social capital. Axis 2 can thus be interpreted as a *field seniority axis*. Whereas ‘newcomers’ in the field can more easily gain field access through the political and organisational sectors,<sup>1</sup> the ‘inheritors’ are more often found in religious, research and the highest legal positions.

Axis 3 is an axis of *professional experience*, opposing experience in organisations, trade unions, the media and politics to experience in justice, and lower educational levels to higher ones. Axis 3 reveals a clear-cut polarity between the political and organisational positions (Figure 2 bottom) and the legal and military positions (top). Following Weber (1922), it underlines the difference between positions whose power is based on charismatic and positions whose power is based on legal authority.

As indicators of *institutionalized* social capital, 13 variables pertain to contacts with particular sectors.<sup>2</sup> As indicators of formalised relations between the



**Figure 2** The mean points associated with the subclouds of the 45 positions in the the plane 2-3 of the field of the elite (cloud of individuals)

various sectors in the field of power, they are also robust indicators of central structural positions in this field. At the same time, institutionalised social capital presupposes the other states of social capital. In order to take part in formal meetings between sectors, individuals must usually also have a minimum of objectified social capital. Recruitment to these arenas will most likely also be related to the individuals' volumes of inherited social capital. To sum up, it can be argued that, of the various states of social capital, institutionalised social capital gives the best overall summary of social capital in the field of power.

Social capital can be conceptualised either by focusing on the total *volume* of relations, or by focusing on the rareness of relations and the opportunities these relations provide. By adding the number of sectors a respondent has been in regular contact with in formal meetings, we constructed a general indicator of the volume of institutional social capital (hereafter ISC) ranging from 0 to 13. To capture the idea of intermediarity – social capital as depending on the ability of some actors to coordinate the activity of the others – we developed an indicator close to Burt's 'exclusive relations' (Burt, 1992b: 190).<sup>3</sup>

The two indicators, one on the global volume and one on intermediarity, turned out to be strongly correlated (.933).<sup>4</sup> In the case of the elites, these two different 'forms' of, or approaches to, social capital thus tend to yield similar results. In our opinion, the number of sectors may thus also be interpreted as an indicator of *potential* intermediarity; persons with large networks have increased probabilities of serving as mediators between their own networks and individuals with few or very limited contacts.

However, when analysing social capital relations, as pointed out by Boltanski (1973: 5), one must also take past positions and contacts into account:

... at each step in a biography, in the form of accumulated information, one finds the traces of the preceding steps. More precisely, the previous career is like a matrix which gives the present its specific form . . .

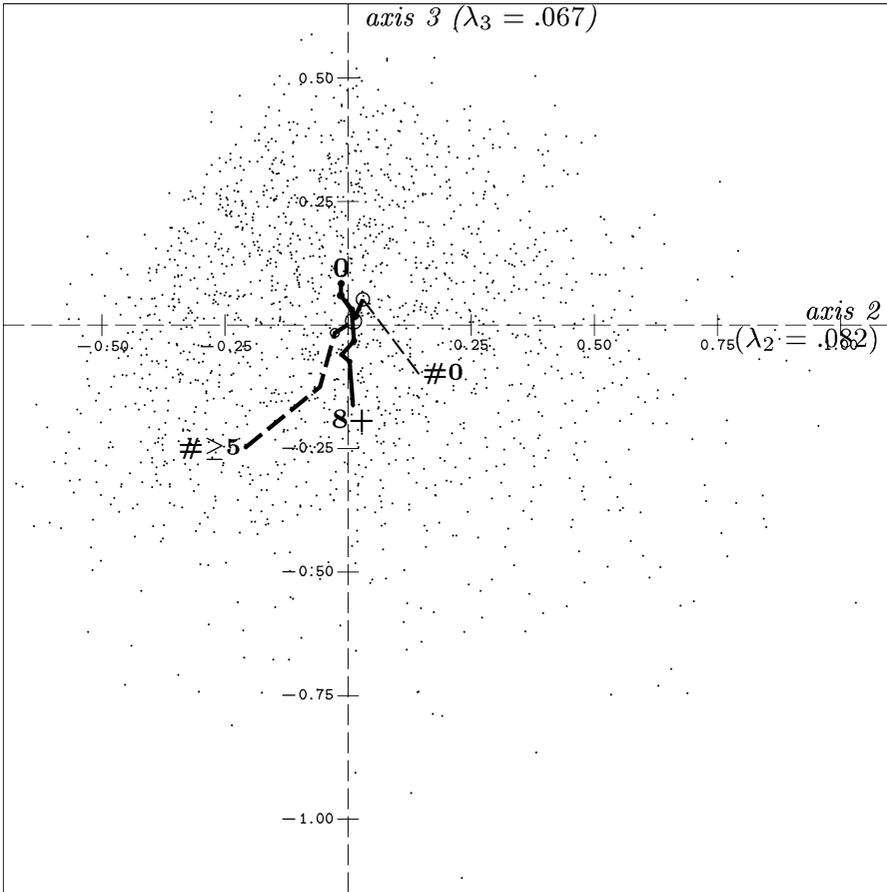
For this reason, we have also included a variable measuring the number of sectors a person has worked in, both as an indicator of the extent of an individual's network (ie an indicator of objectified social capital) and as an indicator of field seniority; persons who have worked in several sectors will not only tend to have larger networks than persons who have only worked in one sector – they will also more easily be recognized by other actors in the field, and display 'savoir faire' when interacting with other actors in the field.

Taking together the two variables, number of sectors 'worked in' and 'contacts,' gives us a composite measure of the respondents' global social capital volumes. Because this measure is not restricted to institutional memberships or affiliations in the present, it complements classic studies of interlocking directorships in the inner groups of the economic elites (eg Useem, 1978, 1979). Notably, unlike in those analyses, these two variables do not form a unidimensional hierarchy:

Figure 3 shows, in plane 1-2, the mean points of the subclouds of individuals<sup>5</sup> induced by the variable '# of sectors the person has worked' in, and also the mean points for the variable '# of formal contacts with other sectors'.

The global volume of ISC is ranked from high (+8) to low (0) along axis 3, the axis of professional experience, with the mean points indicating the highest volumes located close to the political and organisational positions, and the ones indicating the lowest volumes close to the legal and the military positions (Figure 4). The range of networks established through previous work experiences, however, is clearly ranked from high to low along axis 2, with the mean points indicating the highest numbers located close to the political positions, and the ones indicating the lowest numbers located close to the religious and university positions (Figure 3).

In both cases the analysis suggests that actors can compensate for low volumes of cultural and economic capital assets by high volumes of both objectified and institutionalised social capital, though not in a uniform



**Figure 3** Cloud of 1710 individuals in plane 2-3 with the mean points of the 6 subclouds defined by the number of sectors a person has worked in (dashed line from #0 to # $\geq 5$ ) and with the mean points of the 9 subclouds for the number of formal contacts with other sectors (solid line from 0 to 8+)

manner. Both capital indicators converge in the sectors of the space where the accumulation of political capital is high and where political capital is also the *predominant* component in the individuals' capital composition.

With respect to elite circulation and capital conversion rates, we find this result to be important. As Michael Hartmann (2007) has claimed, there are currently three main models of elite recruitment and elite circulation in Europe:

- 1) A French model, with homogeneous elite recruitment through elite educational institutions (in particular the *Grandes Écoles*), facilitating a strong internal cohesion. The typical trajectory associated with sectorial

circulation goes from positions in the public to positions in the private sector (in French called 'pantouflage' of higher civil servants with degrees from *École polytechnique* or *École nationale d'administration*). According to Maclean *et al.* (2006), in 1998, almost 1 in 2 of the French top CEOs have followed this trajectory. This trend has also been increasing since the 1980s, despite the pushes towards privatisation of the economy (Bauer and Bertin-Mourot, 2002).

- 2) A British model, with relatively homogeneous elite recruitment through elite educational or military institutions (in particular public/boarding schools, Oxbridge and Sandhurst), but with a limited degree of sectorial circulation. Compared to the French case, only 3 percent of the top CEOs began their careers in the public sector (Maclean *et al.*, op.cit). In parallel, a diversification seems to have resulted from the institutional transformation of the financial market, with a decline of traditional 'old' families (Scott, 2003).
- 3) A German model, with heterogeneous elite recruitment and limited sectorial circulation, which Hartmann (op. cit.) finds to be the most common in Europe. Unlike the French and the English case, there are no dominant institutions of elite education (see also Derlien, 2002). Furthermore, educational capital is less distinctive, and subsequently, capital conversion is seemingly a less prominent characteristic.

So far, our analysis indicates that in the case of Norway, a combination of the French and the German model is the most fitting. Recruitment to the field of power may be relatively heterogeneous, but that does not exclude the simultaneous existence of a core of multipositional individuals in the double sense of the term: individuals who, over the course of their careers, circulate between multiple leading positions in the field of power and who also occupy positions which, because of their high volumes of institutionalised social capital, give them access to wide field sectors. On the contrary, in the case of Norway, these two properties tend to go together, and thus to be mutually reinforcing. But unlike the French case, 'pantouflage à la norvégienne' is not primarily related to educational capital assets and 'l'esprit de corps', but rather to the accumulation of political capital.<sup>6</sup> This finds its clearest expression in the relations between the political field and what usually goes under the name of the tripartite system: a national coordinating system for wage negotiations and governmental policies.

## 5. The core of the core

As suggested by Useem (1979: 558) in the case of the capitalist class, 'the inner group does constitute a distinctive segment . . . and the position of the inner group in the social organisation of the class is likely to lead its members to take a particularly active role in institutional governance.' Furthermore, this group 'represent[s] a degree of reconciliation of the conflicting and contradictory interests dividing the capitalist class' (ibid: 570). If we extend this scheme to

the Norwegian field of power, we would expect the members of the tripartite system to play a similar role. This system dates back to the first decades of last century and the uneasy balance of power between a rapidly expanding national federation of trade unions (LO), and a federation of employers (NAF). Both federations were established at the end of the 19th century – LO, which encompassed industrial and government workers, in close collaboration with the Labour Party (DNA). During the crisis of the 1930s a general agreement between the federations was signed at the same time as the Labour Party, for the first time, gained governmental power. After World War II, the tripartite system was expanded and institutionalised through the establishment of a growing number of ministry committees and coordinating bodies between the partners. These regulated national wage settlements and established the framework and priorities for most government policies. The Labour Party, which held an uninterrupted majority rule for 20 years after the war, was obviously a main actor in establishing and consolidating the system; but the main architecture of the arrangement has survived to date. The legitimacy of the system is regularly challenged by other national federations of workers who claim to be excluded. Nonetheless, in the 1990s one may even speak of a ‘revival of central concertation’ (Dølvik and Stokke, 1998), and LO was also a major force behind the establishment of the latest ‘red-green’ coalition government (2005-) in Norway.

In terms of social capital, the centrality of the system stems from its combination of being a strategic point of passage for political initiatives and from its members’ multipositionality. On the one hand, having contacts within the system may have multiplier effects far beyond contacts outside the system. On the other hand, the effect of contacts within the system depends on whether or not they influence the system’s internal mechanisms of coordination. In short, the central question concerns not only the volume of social capital but its *composition*. Thus, rather than calculating individuals’ scores, we have chosen to introduce a more structural perspective into the analysis, drawing inspiration from network approaches to studies of structural equivalence (Scott, 1991; Wasserman and Faust, 1994). Briefly, two actors can be considered as structurally equivalent if they have identical ties to and from all other actors in the network. For this reason, when studying equivalence, one focuses less on individuals than on the relations among positions. In order to investigate these relations and the composition in each subgroup, we have performed an ascending hierarchical clustering of the individuals based on the 13 variables on formal contacts, then we have interpreted a partition into seven clusters.<sup>7</sup>

Clusters c1 and c5 are characterized by the number of contacts which are very high for c1 and very low or 0 for c5; clusters c2, c3, c4 and c6 are similar to cliques; cluster c7 encompasses members of the tripartite system.

Cluster c1, which appears at the first dichotomy, is comprised of individuals with formal contacts to *all* sectors. The most frequent contacts are with leaders of political parties (95% of the individuals in cluster c1), MPs (95%), the media (89%) and in the trade unions (78%). The 14 party leaders and 75% of

the members of parliament are in this cluster. All political positions are over-represented. In contrast, the positions in the church, private businesses, universities and in the central government administration are under-represented.

Cluster c5 is mainly comprised of individuals with *no* or very few formal contacts in the field; 79% of them do not meet formally on a regular basis with other leaders (0 or 1 contact), whereas 90% of the individuals in cluster c1 have contacts in more than four sectors. University deans, leaders in the Research Council of Norway, supreme court judges and chairmen in cooperatives are over-represented. MPs, leaders of NGOs, military officers, leaders in the police and the top clergy are under-represented.

Clusters c2, c3, c4 and c6, constitute cohesive groups of individuals with over-representation of the contacts *and* of the corresponding positions. All individuals of cluster c2 meet with church leaders, and 99 (over 107) individuals who hold church positions are in this cluster; they constitute 57% of cluster c2. MPs, higher civil servants and public business positions are under-represented. All individuals of cluster c3 meet with leaders in the police/legal system (eg 11 district attorneys out of the 17); directors of research institutes, the clergy, leaders of public cultural institutions and of private businesses are under-represented. Cluster c4 is a military/police one. Cluster c6 first and foremost consists of leaders of NGOs and cultural institutions.

Finally, cluster c7 consists of members of the main parties that constitute the tripartite system. In this case, there is a correspondence between over-representation of contacts with managerial associations, leaders in private and public business, and trade union leaders, and positions in private business and organizations. The military, the police and the legal positions, the leaders of NGOs, the MPs and the church positions are under-represented. This cluster constitutes the 'core of the core' in the field of power in Norway.

Sociologically, these seven clusters can be summarized in four weberian 'ideal types', each characterized by its potential for converting ISC into the other forms of capital:

- The *omnipresent* (c1), with a high potential for, or degree of, ISC conversion. This cluster further emphasizes the importance of political capital in the Norwegian field of power and in the Norwegian social space in general.
- The *endogamous* (c2, c3, c4 and c6), who have a low degree of/potential for ISC conversion into the other forms of capital. The members of these clusters are also the most likely top contenders for dominant positions in field-*internal* hierarchies and struggles.
- The *tripartites* (c7), centered around industrial and economic power, where ISC can more readily be converted into *economic* capital than in the other clusters.
- The *deprived* (c5), whose capital types, because of their lack of ISC, are more often non-convertible, and who also more likely are located in *dominated* positions in the field of power.

So far, our main focus has been on contacts within and between sectors. However, *absence* of contacts can be of equal importance, and field barriers of this kind can be either legal, formal and/or social. For instance, in order to avoid conflicts of interest, there are strict formal rules as to whom civil servants are and are not allowed to contact. In terms of *social* distances, there are also groups with few or no common denominators. The fact that individuals located in opposite sectors of the social space, and thus most different in terms of composition and volume of social capital, hardly meet, eg the oppositions between university leaders and the MPs along the field seniority axis, is also not surprising. A lack of relations also limits the 'multiplier effect'. In this respect, the degree, the type and the extent of formal contacts may serve as a good indicator of the potential convertibility of one's predominant type of capital into other types of capital.

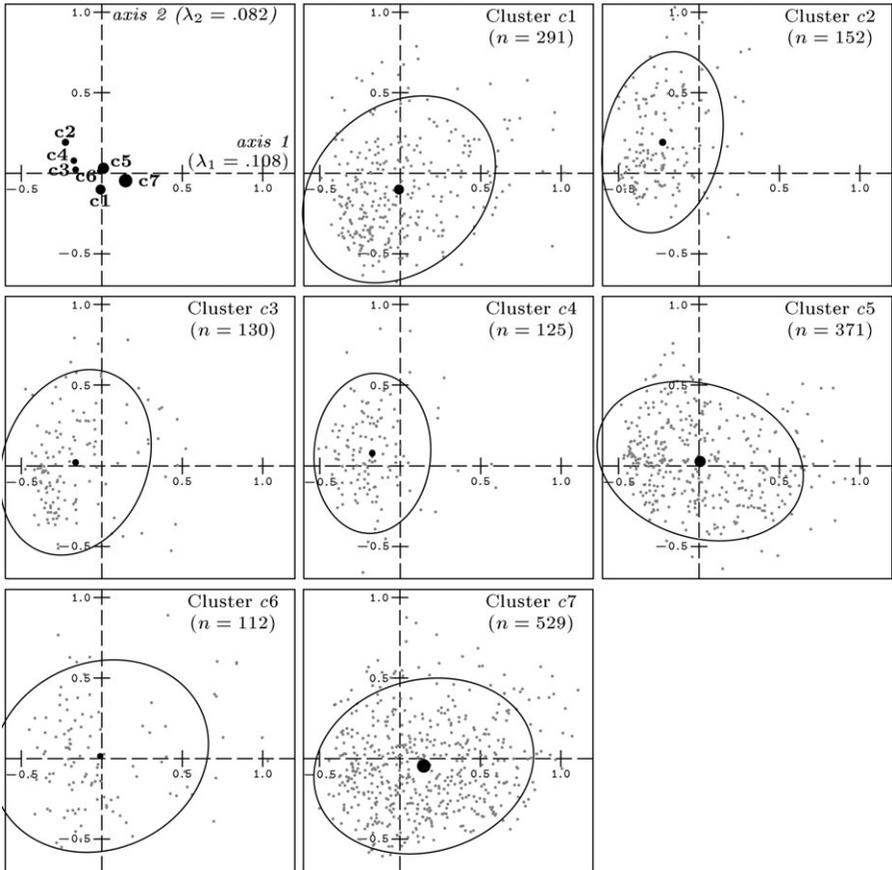
In this step of the analysis, we have projected the 7 clusters into the initial space of the elite, in order to situate the different compositions of social capital we have identified. This reveals how social capital depends on the other forms of capital possessed by the individuals, on their trajectories, and their sectors of origin.

Along the economic capital axis (axis 1), the clearest deviation is found between the clusters c2 (mainly a church connected cluster), c3 (justice) and c4 (army) and the tripartite cluster c7.<sup>8</sup> Thus, the axis not only distinguishes between high and low volumes of economic capital, and between men and women; it also separates the tripartite from the cohesive clusters – an opposition that tends to reinforce the oppositions in economic capital and between genders.

Along the axis of field seniority (axis 2), the most clear-cut deviation is found between the omnipresent, cluster c1 (lower sector of figure 4 top left), and the religious cluster c2 (upper sector). In this case, the opposition between high volumes of cultural vs. high volumes of political capital is further reinforced by an opposition between high and low volumes of ISC. In the case of Norway, where cultural capital traditionally has had a relatively low value (Slagstad, 1998), its devaluation may thus be even further amplified by the distribution of ISC in the field of power. Finally, along the axis of professional experience (axis 3), a large deviation is found between, on the one hand, the two cohesive clusters c3 (justice) and c4 (army) (top in Figure 5) and, on the other hand, the cohesive clusters c2 (church) and c6 (NGOs and cultural institutions) and the omnipresent cluster c1 (bottom). This axis thus separates internally between the cohesive groups (eg the justice/police and the military).

However, the axes may also have a *internal* polarising capacity on the same classes, thus revealing capital oppositions and capital composition principles *within* these subgroups in the field of power. In this step of the analysis, we use *concentration ellipses*<sup>9</sup> that provide geometric summaries of the subclouds in a plane. The ellipse's shape tells us how it is affected by the axes of the principal plane of the space of social positions. In this way, both the degree and the character of internal cohesion and division can be visualized.

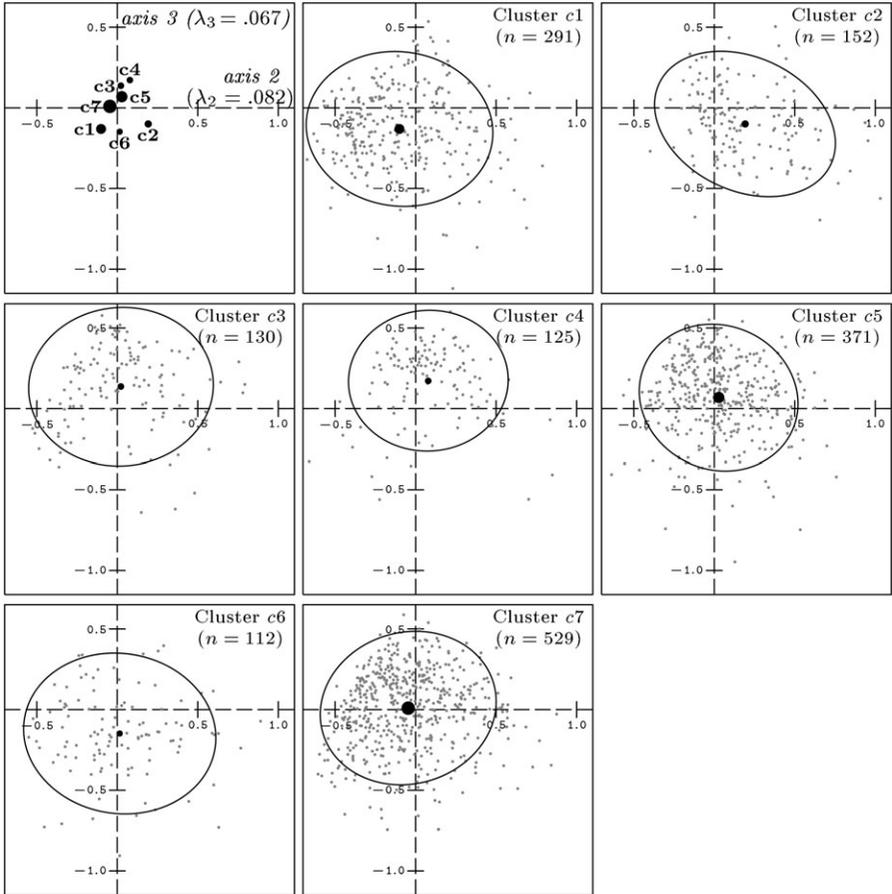
From figure 5, we can conclude that the internal polarization along the economic axis is strongest in the tripartite class (c7). If the capital conversion



**Figure 4** Seven concentration ellipses of the subclouds associated with the partition into 7 clusters in plane 1-2

hypothesis we introduced above is correct, this specific combination and composition of ISC can not only be converted into economic capital; economic capital assets also create internal oppositions *within* this highly central group of multipositional individuals.

In the cohesive clusters c2 (church), c4 (army) and (partly also) c3 (justice), however, the internal polarization is much stronger along the field seniority axis which also distinguishes between high and low volumes of cultural capital. In the cohesive classes, where ISC cannot as easily be converted into economic capital, an opposition between dominant and dominated field positions may thus turn out to be related to the agents' global volumes of personal and inherited cultural capital. In the Norwegian field of power, oppositions between the 'inheritors' and the 'newcomers' will thus mainly be found internally in the classes with the highest degree of internal cohesion.



**Figure 5** Seven concentration ellipses of the subclouds associated with the partition into 7 clusters in plane 2-3

As for one of the questions we raised in the beginning - to what types of capital is the institutionalised social capital primarily related? – these results point in two directions that are additional and complementary to the ones discussed above. Whereas the *multipositional* clusters, ie the ones with high volumes of ISC (c1 and c7), are most highly internally polarised with respect to economic capital volumes, the *unipositional* clusters (c2, c3 and c4), ie endogamous contact clusters with low volumes of ISC, are most highly internally polarised with respect to cultural capital volumes.

Plane 2-3 (see Figure 5) adds further support to this interpretation. Not only do we find the before-mentioned opposition between the cohesive clusters along the axis of professional experience. The shape of the ellipse of the religious cluster (c2) is in this case markedly different from the others in that

it once again is stretched along the field seniority axis (axis 2), but less so along the axis of professional experience (axis 3). Of the four cohesive clusters, the religious one was also by far the one with the highest degree of closure, cf. table 1. In conclusion, the more endogamous and cohesive the cluster is, the more pronounced is the opposition between the ‘newcomers’ and the ‘inheritors’. And in this particular case, in the space of social positions, this opposition overlaps with an opposition between the high and the low clergy.

## 6. Concluding analysis and discussion

Ever since the publication of Mills’ (1956) *‘The Power Elite’*, questions about the composition and cohesion of the top level of the stratification hierarchy, and also about the mechanisms behind recruitment to this level, have been central. However, a universal model has proved difficult to validate. Instead, across Europe, the trajectories that lead individuals to given elite positions, and also the degree of intersectorial elite circulation, varies highly (Hartmann, 2000, 2007). And despite pushes towards globalisation or europeisation, neither a universal nor a European model with a strong transnational elite component can be found. Our analysis of the Norwegian field of power and of ‘pantouflage à la norvégienne’ yields further information on this variation, while at the same time highlighting some important methodological and theoretical consequences that should be taken seriously if a cross-national study of elites is to be undertaken.

Choosing ‘nation’ as analytical framework, in this case Norway, may thus not only serve to study the variety of structures, trajectories, positions and habituses (cf. Hartmann, 2000), but should not be confused with choosing ‘nation’ as an explanatory factor. If basic concepts and theoretical approaches are to be applicable in cross-national studies, this fundamental distinction must be upheld. Furthermore, two pitfalls are avoided by linking social capital to the others forms of capital possessed by the agents. The first one would be to consider personal networks as self-sufficient for the analysis, and to leave aside the social properties of the individuals (age, gender, class etc.). The second one would be to neglect that networks are also social and historical productions. The social capital of an individual depends not only on his/her networks: his/her contacts, the forms taken by the interactions with them and their frequency, the nature of material or symbolic goods exchanged. Social capital also refers to the membership of groups united not only by the relationships between their members, but also by the possession of objective properties.

The main purpose of this paper has therefore been to refer to social capital not only as a vector of coordination but also as an asset that may possibly distinguish an elite within the elite. With respect to our three initial questions, the findings can be summarized as follows:

- 1/ The level of institutionalised social capital varies from one fraction of the Norwegian elite to another. Political parties and business leaders are the most connected to other sectors, while church leaders are the least connected.
- 2/ The range of networks established through previous work experiences is related to field seniority. The global volume of institutionalised social capital is structured along the opposition between political/organisational positions and judicial/military positions; here again, the highest levels of social capital are situated on the side of political and organisational resources. Forms of political capital appear central as far as the accumulation of social capital is concerned: social capital may compensate for the relative lack of economic and educational capital of political and organisational leaders.
- 3/ The positions of highest endogamy are situated in the religious field (and to a lesser extent, the scientific field, and police/justice). They are characterized by a strong opposition between newcomers and inheritors. On the other hand, the 'core of the core' is defined by actors who are strongly interconnected inside the tripartite system, with a high level of multipositionality and intersectorial connections.

Although the specificity of Norway is difficult to assess without a systematic comparative study, it is nevertheless obvious that the tripartite system, which derives from the long term institutional trajectory of the country, has given birth to a particular sort of political and organisational capital, itself associated with a specific form of social capital and high density sub-space. In the 'core of the core', we find a 'division of labour' between two groups. The first group, partly recruited from the 'inheritors', relates the tripartite system to the traditional elites (the church, the legal system). The second, which seems to recruit more strongly from the 'newcomers', relates the tripartite system to the business world. This 'division of labour' within 'the inner circle' can also be considered as an integrating principle in the field of power.

In a more global perspective, one might hypothesise that social capital (in Bourdieu's sense) is the concrete basis of political and organisational capital, which is also defined by a specific type of symbolic capital (or public notoriety). It helps to compensate for the relative lack of educational-cultural and economic assets, which dominate among the other fractions of the elites. If the global field of power is first defined by the relative accumulation of economic and educational resources by its members (and families), institutionalised and intersectorial social capital appears here as another highly valued asset, closely related to the possession (or non-possession) of the two first forms of capital. More autonomous fields seem to be characterized by more internal patterns of social capital accumulation, which we have called 'endogamy'. In this respect, the potential conversion of social capital into other forms of capital is of particular interest. Our results may hint at diverging conversion tendencies: that institutionalised social capital may, relatively speaking, be more readily

converted into economic capital than into cultural capital, but that the capacity for capital conversion also varies according to the agents' capital composition. A closer examination of the familial and historical dimensions of these various social capital accumulation patterns, capital compositions and conversion strategies, will help us to better understand the long term formation of stable elite positions and elite dynasties.

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## Notes

- 1 Zweigenhaft and Domhoff (2006: 7) came to a similar conclusion in their analysis of diversity within the US Congress.
- 2 These variables were constructed from questions formulated as follows: ‘Do you have (weekly/monthly/less often/never) contacts with the leaders of this sector/members of these groups?’ Groups/sectors included in the questionnaire are given in Table 1. We have grouped some questions and created 13 dichotomous variables putting together weekly/monthly vs less often/never.
- 3 Unlike Burt’s index, which is calculated on the basis of a individuals x individuals table, our index is calculated from an individual x sectors table. If  $f_s$  denotes the proportion of individuals who have potential contacts with sector  $s$ , the *coefficient of sectorial intermediarity*  $SI_i$  of individual  $i$  is equal to

$$SI_i = \frac{\sum_s \delta_{si} \frac{1}{f_s}}{\sum_s \frac{1}{f_s}}$$

with  $\delta_{si} = 1$  if individual  $i$  has contact with sector  $s$ , and 0 if not.

- 4 Treating the data set as an affiliation network, several other coding alternatives were tried out, but all the sociometric indicators (based on an individuals x individuals table), eg Degree, Proximity, Betweenness, turned out to be redundant.
- 5 The detailed examination of the cloud of individuals permits a more finegrained analysis of homogeneity and diversity than what usually is done (see Le Roux, Rouanet, Savage and Warde, 2008 for a recent similar application).
- 6 This refutes Alexander’s (1995) critique of Bourdieu’s emphasis on the centrality of political capital in the Scandinavian social democracies.
- 7 To interpret clusters, one proceeds as follows. For each sector,  $s$ , compare the relative frequency of contacts  $f_s^c$  for individuals belonging to cluster  $c$  to the one ( $f_s$ ) for the 1710 individuals. Descriptively, the deviation between sector  $s$  in cluster  $c$  and sector  $s$  in the overall set of individuals is said to be large if  $f_s^c - f_s > 0.05$  or if  $f_s^c / f_s > 2$ . For the sectors with large deviations, we perform the typicality test (the combinatorial test of comparison of a frequency to a reference frequency), hence a combinatorial  $p$ -value (one-sided). If  $p \leq 0.025$ , the frequency is statistically greater than the reference frequency with (S\*) if  $.005 < p \leq .025$  and

(S\*\*) if  $p \leq .005$ . The sectors for which the deviation is *descriptively large and statistically significant* are said to be ‘over-represented’. In the same way, they are said to be ‘under-represented’ if  $f_s^e - f_s < -.05$  or if  $f_s^e / f_s < 0.5$ , and if the result of the test is significant. The interpretation of clusters is based on the sectors that are over/under-represented.

8 In each case, the deviation is either close to, or larger than 1 standard deviation (SD).

9 The length of each half-axis of the concentration ellipse is twice the standard deviation of the sub-cloud along this direction. For a normally shaped cloud, the concentration ellipse contains 86 per cent of the points of the cloud (Le Roux and Rouanet, 2004: 97–9).

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