

William Genieys

Narrative CV — English version— 2024

CNRS research professor in sociology and political science, since September 2018 I have been recruited to the Center for European Studies and Comparative Politics (CEE) at SCIENCES Po. After studying law and political science at the University of Montpellier, I completed a Master's degree in political sociology at the Political Science Department of the University of Paris 1 Sorbonne, where, in 1994, I defended a thesis entitled: *Les élites espagnoles face à l'État. L'institutionnalisation des élites périphériques en Espagne*, under the supervision of Pr. Pierre Birnbaum). Since then, a comparative, interdisciplinary, theoretical and methodological approach to the issue of elites has guided my career as a scholar. In 2013, my research was awarded the only Prix d'Excellence scientifique for researchers under the age of 50 by the *Association Française de Science Politique* (AFSP) and the Mattei Dogan Foundation.

● I. Academic career overview

I would like to point out that my personal career has always been accompanied by a strong commitment to the various facets of the academic profession: obtaining research grants; assessment of research projects (for research agencies in France, Luxembourg, Switzerland and Portugal); leading research teams and managing research structures such as the CNRS CEPEL laboratory at the University of Montpellier (as deputy director [2011-15] and then Director [2015-18]); training of young researchers (5 PhDs and 5 post-docs); editorial boards of academic journals (*Pôle Sud* [de 1994-2009], *European Policy Analysis* [2018 to present], *Revista Española de Ciencias Políticas* [2018 to present]); professional academic associations (AFSP, IPPA [2022-2026]); the organization of the 14th annual AFSP Congress in 2017 in Montpellier; participation in international congresses (49 papers) and national seminars (71 papers). Throughout my career, I have always taught (50 hours a year on average) at various levels: college, Master's, doctorate. I have also been a member of doctoral schools (University of Montpellier). For ten years, I directed the Master's research program in the Department of Political Science at the University of Montpellier. (cf. full, CV). Today at SCIENCES PO, I teach a college-level course on the political sociology of elites and supervise 6 thesis committees a year for CEE doctoral students.

● II. Underpinning a comparative approach to political elites: from Spain to France

In the 1990s, my initial research focused on different types of political elites in Spain and France. At that time in France, the subject-matter elite represented a risk for young researchers wishing to enter the academic world. The dominance of structuralism and Marxism in the social sciences had severely delegitimized this field of research. Only a handful of prestigious researchers, such as Raymond Aron, Mattei Dogan (Genieys, 2022) and Pierre Birnbaum considered the issue of elites (Genieys, 2005). Paradoxically, this context has favored my international collaborations with Juan Linz and John Higley.

● *Spain's peripheral political elites*

In 1990, at the University of Paris 1-Sorbonne, I was awarded a doctoral research grant to study the role of political elites in the Spanish state-building process (Genieys, 1997). Inspired by the comparative historical sociology of Stein Rokkan and Juan Linz, and based on the « Francesc Cambó » archives and opinion surveys, I have highlighted the long-term involvement of Catalan and Basque elites in the process of building the Spanish multinational state. In the context of the democratic transition, an in-depth study of the career paths of MPs in the Parliaments of Andalusia and Catalonia has enabled me to identify the overlap between two logics of institutionalization: one vertical towards the central Parliament (centralist parties) and one horizontal centered on the autonomous Parliaments (nationalist parties) (Genieys, 1996, 1998). My thesis was thus an opportunity to combine the analysis of the career paths of political elites with the dynamics of political institutions in an original way. The fruit of serendipity, this original intuition was to become the common thread running through my research.

● *Intellectual exchange with Juan Linz at Yale University*

Through my study of the Spanish political system, I was able to develop a fertile intellectual relationship with Juan Linz, then Sterling Professor in the Department of Political Science at Yale University. During several stays as a visiting scholar at Yale University, we worked on the Spanish translation-adaptation of my book, which he then prefaced, deepening my approach to the career paths of peripheral elites. (Genieys, 2004). Later, in collaboration with Saïd Darviche and Guy Hermet, we translated his classic work *Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes* into French for the academic publisher Armand Colin. (2007). At the same time, we organized an international congress in Montpellier (September 7-9, 2006) *Penser la Démocratie autour de l'œuvre de Juan Linz* (Darviche & Genieys, 2008). Last but not least, I recorded a long intellectual biography interview in three languages (DVD format in Spanish, French and English) at his home in Hamden, Connecticut (April 2006). It has been made available free of charge to students and the general public: *Juan Linz: Penser la démocratie avec un maestro-compositeur*.

- *From political elites to local leadership*

Recruited as a CNRS Research Fellow and assigned to CEPEL-University of Montpellier in 1999, I diversified my research fields and initiated interdisciplinary collaborations to study local political leadership in France. With anthropologist Marie-Carmen Garcia, I analyzed the role of political leaders in shaping public policy to understand the invention of the territory of the « *Pays cathare* » (south of France) (Garcia, Genieys, 2005). With Andy Smith, a specialist in European public policy, I studied leadership and wine policies (Genieys, Smith, 2000). Based on these case studies, I have developed a typology of the political arenas of urban leadership: (i) the electoral territory, (ii) the territory of public action and (iii) the territory of imagined identities (Genieys, 2003; Genieys, Ballart, 2004). These interdisciplinary collaborations have reinforced my belief in the need to clarify Putnam's question (1976) about link between the transformation of elite structures and the policy decision-making process.

- *Towards new custodians of state policies*

This is why I have profoundly renewed my research program: by changing the area of study (from Spain to France), by moving away from the study of political elites (parliamentarians, ministers) to that of state elites (senior civil servants and policy advisors of the French *cabinets ministériels*), and finally, by studying policy change in two central sectors of state activity: Welfare and Warfare. Pursuing my initial intuition on the need to combine analysis of the transformation of elites' career paths with policy change, I have established, from the French case, the emergence of new elites in the health insurance and national defense sectors, assuming the role of custodians of state policies (Genieys, 2005, 2008; Genieys, Michel, 2005). In 2011, my book *The New Custodians of State* (2010) received favorable reviews in sociology and public administration journals (Book reviews in *American Journal of Sociology*; *Public Administration*; *Contemporary sociology*). With Marc Smyrl, I have broadened the scope of the comparative study of policy elites in Europe and North America (Genieys, Smyrl, 2008, Book review in *Governance* 2009). Peer recognition of my research on policy elites led to my appointment as full research professor at the CNRS (2009).

- **III. A Tocquevillian approach to unelected governmental elites**

My career then turned towards obtaining grants to extend my field of research on elites in the United States and Europe. My aim was to set up a team of young researchers (Ph.Ds' & Post-Docs) with whom I could confirm the relevance of my research question on *unelected governmental elites* by applying it to the US case. It was a risky choice, as this research topic is far removed from mainstream American political science. Indeed, I only had a basic knowledge of American politics. On the other hand, the payoff could be high, as I would be able to replicate my research question and method on the American case.

- *Writing a "French-style handbook" on the sociology of elites*

To meet this new challenge, I deepened my theoretical knowledge by writing a French-style handbook: *Sociologie politiques des élites* (Genieys, 2011, book review by X. Coller Porta 2013). Like Raymond Aron's *Étapes de la pensée sociologique* de Raymond Aron (Gallimard, 1967), I've written a

gallery of intellectual portraits of the founding fathers of elite theory (Pareto, Mosca, Michels) to put the origins of elite sociology into perspective (Mannheim, Aron, Mills, Dahl, Hunter, Keller) and its empirical developments on political elites in the 20th century (Lasswell, Dogan, Guttsman, Matthews). The presentation of the comparative study of elites in changing political regimes (Linz, Putnam, Higley, Best & Cotta) and reconfiguring democratic states (Aberbach, Suleiman, Birnbaum) completed the exhaustive panorama. Then, two texts completed my theoretical work: « C. Wright Mills, The Power Elite » (2015) and « *Les élites : la politique, le politique et les politiques* » (2018). This state of the art generated two intentions: (i) to revisit the study of the “Ruling class”, understood by Mosca as a minority in charge of government activities, by targeting my research on the non-elected governmental elites who, out of sight, shape the decision-making process, and, (ii) to renew the classical approach to the social structure of elites — too deterministic and deductive — disconnected from that of their action(s).

- *Research grants and international research team management*

Developing these two intentions into a research program (question and method), I successively obtained two grants as principal investigator: one with the French National Research Agency: OPERA [1 407 993€] and the other co-subsidized by the German and French research agencies (ANR/DGF), ProAcTA [832 171€]. The first research program, *Operationalizing Programmatic Elite Research in America* studied the transformation of unelected governmental elites in Congress and the Executive Branch, and changes in defense and health insurance policies (1988-2010). Between 2009 and 2013, with a team of ten researchers (Associate Professors, post-docs [n2] and Ph.D students [n2]), we carried out major field research: over 400 interviews in Washington DC and the creation of a biographical database on elites (available on the CEPEL website). I have trained two young female doctors, Anne-Laure Beaussier et Ulrike Lepont who were subsequently appointed CNRS Research Fellows assigned to SCIENCES PO.

The second research program, *Programmatic Action in Times of Austerity. Elites' competition and Health Sector Governance in France, Germany, the UK and the US*, was carried out in collaboration with a German team (Co-PI Nils Bandelow, Braunschweig University). The aim was to comparatively test the hypothesis of the transformation of health insurance elites into custodians of state policies in the face of austerity. In the journal, European Policy Analysis, we collectively discuss the foundations of a “Programmatic Action Framework” for assessing policy change (Hassenteufel, Genieys, 2021 ; Bandelow, Hornung, Smyrl, 2020). With ProAcTA, I trained two foreign post docs. The first was Canadian, Brent Epperson (Ph.D. Alberta U.) with whom I co-published in *Journal of History Policy* (2022). The second was German, Matthias Brunn (Physician & Doctor of Political Science), with whom I co-authored an article on the influence of AI on psychiatrists (*Academic Psychiatry*, 2020) and on the reform of health studies in France (*Medical Teacher*, 2022). Continuing the teamwork, I have co-authored a series of publications extending the scope of analysis to the issue of elites and policy change in the fields of defense and health, comparing the US and Europe. (Genieys, Joana, 2015 ; Genieys, Hassenteufel, 2015 ; Genieys, Darviche, Epperson, 2022 ; Darviche, Genieys, Hassenteufel, 2022).

- *Developing the Programmatic Elites Framework*

At the same time, I made the risky and costly decision to write two monographic studies, one on the United States and one on France, in order to test the relevance of my approach to non-elected government elites. In this way, using these two contrasting cases as a starting point, I was able to take an in-depth look at the issue of the “government of insiders” in health insurance reforms. This, in turn, paved the way for a more general reflection on the reconfiguration of democratic states. This choice led me to develop the Programmatic Elites Framework (PEF). Narrative description via individual “sociological portraits” makes it possible to establish correlations between the career paths of elites and the orientations of reforms on the political agenda. Comparing continuity/discontinuity in individual portraits, concomitant (or not) with the commitment to health insurance reform

(successful or unsuccessful), has enabled us to appreciate over the long term the role of insiders in democratic government.

- *A government of insiders in America*

For the US case study, I wrote a first manuscript in French, *Gouverner à l'abri des regards. La réforme de l'Obamacare* (Presses de Sciences Po, 2020). In 2019, my election to the CNRS-INSHS International Mobility Program grant has enabled me to become a visiting professor at the Mailman School of Public Health Columbia University. Collaborating with Prof. Larry Brown, since the beginning of my research on the United States, I embarked on an ambitious project of translation-adaptation for the American public. I fought hard to sign a publishing contract with the John Hopkins University Press. *A Government of insiders. The People Who Made the Affordable Care Act Possible* (2024) My book describes the emergence of the Clinton Plan veterans (a failed health reform project under the eponymous administration) as a group of long-term insiders sharing the same career paths, political connections and ideas about health policy in Washington DC. Remaining on the bangs of the administration during the George W. Bush presidency, these Democratic custodians of state policies crafted the foundations of a vast reform of health coverage. When President Obama took office, these “people” returned to the back offices of power to exercise government of insiders, contributing decisively to the passing of the Affordable Care Act. For an anonymous reviewer: “*A Government of Insiders* is a groundbreaking exploration of the unseen forces behind major policy reform, providing a fresh perspective on the dynamics of power in American politics”.

- *Welfare elites as custodians of the French social security*

At the same time, with my long-time collaborator M-S Darviche, I took advantage of the isolation caused by the Covid-19 crisis to co-write: *Elites, Policies and the State reconfiguration. Transforming the French Welfare* (2023). A study of the sociological portraits of individuals shaping and acting on Medicare policies from 1970 to 2020 points to the institutionalization of new unelected governmental elites, called welfare elites. Having carried out the constitutional reform of 1996 (introduction of the Social Security Finance Act), these elites —composed exclusively of senior career civil servants— are differentiated by their career paths within the “iron triangle” of Social Security governance (Administrative unit, fund management and High authorities/High Councils). Their common goal: to make “social welfare sustainable” (in their own words) by universalizing access to health coverage and developing expenditure control. With the implementation of this program, these insiders have developed the role of custodians of state policies, justifying their sustainability in the context of budgetary constraints. This raises the question of reconfiguring the French strong state around a renewed social security model.

- **IV. A strong commitment to research dissemination**

I've always been committed to disseminating research, organizing large-scale scientific events in Montpellier (France), participating regularly in most media forums (TV, radio, print and online) and, last but not least, taking part in the open science movement (submission of articles and papers on H.A.L. science ouverte and creation of open archives for my surveys).

I was co-organizer of two major events at the University of Montpellier. The International Congress “Thinking Democracy around the work of Juan Linz” (7-9 septembre 2006) with over 40 speakers (German, American, Spanish, French, Greek, Italian, Portuguese). The 14th annual AFSP Congress in Montpellier in 2017, the first to be held in the city of Montpellier (Le Midi Libre), with 66 themed workshops and 1,000 participants.

I took part in and moderated the public TV debate on the independence referendum organized by Catalan nationalists (France 3 TV) and in the newspaper Le Monde (2017). I also commented live from New York city for TV on the results of D. Trump's election in 2016 (BFM TV, Fr3, CNEWS, France 2 et France 24, podcast Les Échos). I've been a regular commentator on elections and American politics on the radio. (RCF; RFI; France Inter), on the political effects of the Covid-19 crisis in the USA (Rfi). Online for THE CONVERSATION (2019-23), I've written numerous « fact-check » articles [n 11, 65,000

readers] on health insurance reform, so called « Obamacare », its repeal failed under the Trump presidency (La Croix), the myth of Washington's deep state (A.O.C.), and the management of the Covid-19 crisis in the USA under the Biden presidency. In the French context, I commented on the continuity of ministerial elites (France Info), political appointments and conflicts of interest issues (Le Monde), the reform of ministerial offices (Le Figaro), the transformation of the French Sécurité sociale. Finally, I engaged with populist anti-elitist critique by deconstructing Trumpian anti-elite rhetoric, the French paradox of anti-elite elites (THE CONVERSATION & Les Échos), and critique of technocracy (THE CONVERSATION).

Lastly, I made an early commitment to Open Sciences by making the vast majority of my publications [scientific articles, book chapters, articles in scientific blogs, reports, pre-pub] and communications freely available in French open archives [n 106] (HAL Science Ouverte). This investment has gone hand in hand with a constant effort to make the data produced as part of my own research accessible. I have produced an interview in DVD format in three languages (Spanish, French and English) with Juan Linz, entitled "*Penser la démocratie avec un maestro-compositeur*" (Thinking democracy with a maestro-composer), so that students and the general public can have access to this knowledge. In addition, with the research team from the OPERA research program, we have built up an impressive and unique database, open to the scientific community. Data on US elites studied in the health and defense sectors between 1988 and 2010 are freely available on the CEPEL website (in French and English versions): a nominative list of 3,000 congressional staffers and political appointees in the executive branch, around 200 sociobiographical sheets (1 to 4 pages) and almost 200 anonymous interviews (also available on the BeQuali website).