Reviewer’s report

Title: Who calls the shots in tobacco control policy? Policy monopolies of pro and anti-tobacco interest groups across six European countries.

Version: 2 Date: 24 Apr 2019

Reviewer: Jennifer McKell

Reviewer's report:

I am grateful to the authors that they have responded to my earlier comments and I believe that the manuscript is now much improved. The Methods section is now much more transparent in terms of how interviews were conducted and the authors have set out why they used the Framework methods. The Results section is also much clearer and easier to read, making it possible to see the evidence for the arguments set out in the Discussion section.

I feel, however, that there are some issues outstanding with this manuscript but with some minor revision these could be addressed. My main concern is with how the policy contexts within Belgium and the Netherlands are handled. From the examples provided, it seems to me that the policy contexts here are quite complicated in that they contain elements demonstrated in both the pro and anti-tobacco control countries but this isn't fully acknowledged or addressed. I note that in the Discussion, there are descriptions of moves to introduce tobacco display bans, in Belgium's case from members of a ruling party and in the Netherlands from the government yet it is also acknowledged by the authors that health NGOs in these countries are relatively weak, particularly in Belgium where NGOs struggle to work together. Also, I'm not entirely clear on the distinction made between the frame of reference in Italy and Germany being focused upon tobacco use as a private matter for individuals, and the frame of reference in Belgium and the Netherlands being the avoidance of paternalism in people's lives. To me these sound very similar and so I think this need more careful delineation or explanation off why they are different. Also, the interpretation of the FCTC article 5.3 appears to be very similar in Ireland and the Netherlands in that they appear to consult with tobacco industry on technical implementation issues only, yet there is more emphasis on Ireland distancing itself from tobacco industry. On a side note the extra information included about the moves to implement display bans in the individual countries is a welcome addition but I think it would be better placed within the results section rather than the Discussion.

Other smaller issues, and I apologise for not highlighting these earlier, are firstly, that I think in the explanation of the use of the theory of policy monopolies it necessary to explain why exactly this theory was used to examine tobacco control policy-making. Other theories are mentioned as
having a useful contribution to make e.g corporatism, federalism, but the manuscript doesn't explain what the theory of policy monopolies adds particularly.

Secondly, I think it would be helpful to know if the themes included in the codebook were all pre-determined (deductive) or were also informed by the interviews themselves (inductive). I would presume from the fact that the interviewer encouraged spontaneous reflection from interviewees that the approach was inductive as well as deductive but this isn't apparent in the discussion of the analysis.

Finally, even more minor issues are that the manuscript would benefit from a closer proof read to pick up spelling and other errors, and some of the headings require review as they do not set out all sections clearly.

**Are the methods appropriate and well described?**
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.

No

**Does the work include the necessary controls?**
If not, please specify which controls are required in your comments to the authors.

Unable to assess

**Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown?**
If not, please explain in your comments to the authors.

No

**Are you able to assess any statistics in the manuscript or would you recommend an additional statistical review?**
If an additional statistical review is recommended, please specify what aspects require further assessment in your comments to the editors.

Not relevant to this manuscript

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