

New Perspectives on Institutional Change: The Origins and Evolution of Political Institutions



Two-day workshop in Paris 26. & 27. May 2016:

- small panels ensuring sufficient time to discuss papers.
- panels focused on institutional origin or evolution over time.
- no workshop fee, all meals and coffee are provided.
- partial funding for participants with no or limited research funds.
- confirmed guests:

Ben Ansell, Isabelle Guinaudeau, and Johannes Lindvall.

The emergence of new institutions and institutional change constitute central questions for political science. Institutions have a profound and active role in shaping political realities. Since institutions influence actors' behavior, we often seek to understand their effect to ultimately understand the political phenomena we study. Given the importance of institutions the question arises why certain institutions are created and amended in some polities but not in others. To fully understand political institutions requires an understanding of why they were put in place and how they evolve over time.

Logistics

The workshop will accept a small number of submissions (about a dozen) explaining why and how institutions are put in place or how they change over time. It takes place on Thursday 26. & Friday 27. May 2016. The workshop is structured around small panels – with three papers each – lasting for about two hours and ensuring sufficient time for discussion and debate. The workshop dinner will take place on Thursday evening and provide further opportunities for exchange.

Application:

Please submit your abstract at <http://goo.gl/TXnL4E>, deadline: 08.01.2016.

Questions & information:

Camille Bedock (camille.bedock@scpobx.fr) and Lucas Leemann (l.leemann@ucl.ac.uk).

Organization committee:

Camille Bedock (Sciences Po, Bordeaux), Emiliano Grossmann (Sciences Po, Paris), Lucas Leemann (UCL, London), Nicolas Sauger (Sciences Po, Paris).

Sponsor:

LIEPP (Laboratoire interdisciplinaire d'évaluation des politiques publiques/Laboratory for Interdisciplinary Evaluation of Public Policies), Sciences Po, Paris, <http://www.sciencespo.fr/liepp/en>.

For the last decade, Comparative Politics has returned to the origins of institutions. Giants in the field of Comparative Politics, such as Rokkan and Moore, had already provided a first set of explanations for how certain institutions emerged, but Comparative Politics then lost interest. A testimony of this is found e.g. in Steinmo and Thelen (1992) when they say that “although arguably one of the most important issues in Comparative Politics, [the question of institutional formation and change] has received little attention in most of the literature to date” (1992, 15). More recently this has changed again and the question of how specific institutions originated and under which circumstances they evolved returned as a focus of mainstream Comparative Politics. Capoccia and Ziblatt (2010) argue with respect to the study of democratization that “The collective ‘return to history’ reflects a growing appreciation among political scientists of the conclusions that can be drawn from the history of democratization and of the constraints imposed by history on the prospects of democratization. Furthermore, though history may not be a laboratory, it can help solve enduring problems of causality and endogeneity that plague standard ahistorical approaches.” (2010: 932).

The study of the emergence of institutions and institutional change has already produced a plethora of insights, whether it is about new electoral systems being implemented in the 1990s, the genesis of proportional representation in Europe at the beginning of the 20th century, the emergence and consolidation of new political regimes in the aftermath of the last wave of democratization, or the incremental changes to existing institutions. The employed methodologies vary strongly from case studies, to large N statistical analyses, to a mixture of various research modes. Despite the methodological heterogeneity, they all share the objective to understand how certain important institutions come into existence and change over time. The concepts and the theories mobilized are at least as diverse as the methodologies. Some analyses of institutional change have been based on an economic or rational choice perspective, in which power considerations are paramount, others have used a constructivist approach, in which ideas and values are put forward, others still have used a Rokkanian perspective centered on national trajectories and on unique country configurations.

This workshop will provide a unique opportunity for focused discussions in a constructive environment. We are very much looking forward to your applications and to the workshop next summer.

