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Institutional ^{running!}analysis

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Institutional analysis is that part of the social sciences which studies how institutions, i.e. structures and mechanisms of social order and cooperation governing the behavior of two or more individuals, behave and function according to both empirical rules – informal rules-in-use and norms - and also theoretical rules - formal rules and law. This field deals with how individuals and groups construct institutions, how institutions function in practice, and the effects of institutions on society.^[1]

Since institutional analysis is focussed on the systematic study of people's collective behaviour in institutions, its ability to explain major political, social, or historical events is sometimes contrasted with the use of conspiracy theory to explain such events, since the latter focuses on explaining such events by a secret, and often deceptive, plot by a covert coalition of small numbers of powerful or influential individuals rather than by the systematic, regular, publicly documented behaviour of the institutions.^[2]

[1]

The term “institutional analysis” is used by several academic disciplines, and has several meanings and connotations. One meaning of institutional analysis refers to actual formal institutions. In the Bio-Medical Sciences, “institutional analysis” oftentimes refers to analyzing data coming from concrete institutions such as health authorities, hospitals networks, etc.^[3] Similarly, in the Sciences of Education and in Public Administration and Governance Studies, the term usually refers to how school boards and governmental agencies, respectively, implement policies.^[4]

Another meaning refers to institutions as **ways of thinking** that have a direct impact on behaviors. Under this approach, there are several variations and usages of institutional analysis. In economics, it is used to explain why economic behaviors do not conform to the theory of supply and demand. This is a relatively old school of thought that has its roots in the economists of the early 20th century, such as Pareto.^[5] One of the most prominent contemporary figures of institutional analysis in economics is Douglass North,^[6] who received the Nobel Prize for Economics in 1993.

Sociology has also used institutional analysis since its inception to study how social institutions such as the laws or the family evolve over time. The foundational author of this approach is Émile Durkheim, also founder of sociology as a discipline.^[7]

Since the 1980s, however, there are cross-pollinations between the sociological and economic traditions in institutional analysis. A new focus is to explain how organizations and individuals within organizations take economic and managerial decisions, particularly by investigating the non-rational, non-economic, and non-psychological factors. This movement produced what is known as the **New Institutional Analysis**. The neoinstitutional approach has several variants. One of them tries to improve economic models based on the theory of the Public Choice, and one of its applications is known under the expression IAD framework (Institutional Analysis and Development).^[8] Another variant is influenced by organizational sociology and seeks to integrate Max Weber's^[9] work on bureaucratic mentality.^[10]

There is also a **French school**^[11] of institutional analysis influenced^[11] by the Durkheimian analysis of social institutions, and the anthropological school of thought established by Marcel Mauss.^[12] This approach to institutional analysis is also influenced by post-structuralist thinkers such as Cornelius Castoriadis^[13] and Michel Foucault.^[14] The main thrust of this approach is the identification of hidden forms of power that institute behaviors and organizational procedures.

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