

Agenda

Institutional analysis

1. Administrative
2. Institutional analysis and science
3. Social construction of excellence
4. Reading discussion

Next class

| ∴ ***No group discussion next Tuesday*** — intro to social construction and realism

WHAT IS *INSTITUTIONAL ANALYSIS*?

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What is an “institution”?

- ∴ “Institution” is a very broad term in sociology.
- ∴ An **institution** is a set of persistent regularities in behavior viewed as *durable*.
E.g. Religions, legal systems, companies, industries family, ...
- ∴ In this sense, science (roles, methods, norms) is an institution.

Institutional analysis (IA)

- ∴ IA is a perspective in sociology that aims to explain the forms and structures of institutions in society.
- ∴ Institutional analysts examine the ways that institutions shape the behavior of their individual participants.
- ∴ IA focuses on the aggregate outcomes of institutional rules, structures, and norms.



Merton

- ∴ Explaining the ***function*** of the institution of science (certified knowledge).
- ∴ Sets of ***institutional norms*** induce individual behavior.
- ∴ Aggregating this behavior ensures rational and beneficial outcomes.

van den Brink & Benschop

- ∴ Explaining the ***unexamined consequences*** of institutional practices.
- ∴ How do institutionalized norms (merit / excellence) ***work against*** their stated ideals?
- ∴ How do institutional structures interact with ***culture at large***?

Kuhn

- ∴ Explaining ***change*** in the institution of science.
- ∴ How are implicit assumptions about the world (***institutional paradigms***) maintained, and how do they change?
- ∴ How do institutional paradigms ***support and restrict*** what we know about the world?





Meritocracy

∴ **Merton:**

A norm of meritocracy makes *good science* by opening the field of scientific ideas and practice to everyone.

∴ **van den Brink and Benschop:**

A norm of meritocracy reinforces *inequality* by creating a cover for institutional bias

Objectification of academic excellence

- ∴ Prioritizes certain features (e.g. citations, career patterns, etc.) over others (e.g. creativity, administrative support)
- ∴ Reifies those features as the 'objective' measures of excellence

Social construction of excellence

- ∴ Academic hiring committees must ***negotiate the criteria*** that distinguish excellence from non-excellence
- ∴ In doing so, they are determining what "excellence" is

Lecture: **Social construction and the real**

| Required reading

∴ Sismondo(2009)

*Chapter 6: The social construction of scientific
and technical realities*

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