

Title of workshop: The design and effects of international institutions

Subject area: International relations and international political economy

Abstract of workshop.

International institutions have acquired an almost obvious presence in international politics. Remarkably, they come in such diverse forms as international organizations with permanent secretariats and nearly universal membership (such as the United Nations) and bilateral agreements in a specific policy field (such as bilateral investment treaties). Some are highly legalized (such as the World Trade Organization), while others only foresee consultations among the members in case of dispute. Originally researched under the flag of regime analysis, and more recently, under the flag of the rational design of international institutions, this workshop aims to build on and critically engage with the existing literature on international institutions, by inviting theoretical and empirical work, whether in the form of single case studies, comparative case-studies across institutions or over time, or large-N quantitative analyses.

Our workshop proposes to tackle the twin questions of (1) why the design of international institutions differs so widely, among others in terms of institutionalization, legalization, scope, flexibility, and degree of delegation, as well as (2) whether and how this variation in institutional arrangements matters for forms of political interaction and policy outcomes.

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Topic

International institutions have acquired an almost obvious presence in international politics. Remarkably, they come in such diverse forms as international organizations with permanent secretariats and nearly universal membership (such as the United Nations) and bilateral agreements in a specific policy field (such as bilateral investment treaties). Some are highly legalized (such as the World Trade Organization), while others only foresee consultations among the members in case of dispute. Originally researched under the flag of regime

analysis (Keohane 1984), for some time authors did not pay much attention to this diversity in institutional design. Only more recently, the literature on international institutions has become interested in variation in institutional form (Koremenos et al. 2001).

Our workshop proposes to tackle the twin questions of (1) why the design of international institutions differs so widely, among others in their degrees of institutionalization, legalization, scope, flexibility, and degree of delegation, as well as (2) whether and how this variation in institutional arrangements matters for forms of political interaction and policy outcomes.

Ad 1.) The question of institutional design has received prominent attention in recent years, attracting different types of explanations. Domestic politics explanations have ranged from how actors can use specifically designed multilateral arrangements to lock-in preferences, as unanimity and strong enforcement make such institutions resilient to change, to explanations arguing how actors may prefer loose institutions that enable informal coordination and learning, or purposely make institutions ineffective. In between have been arguments about how actors can build in flexibility into institutional structures to make them more resilient in the face of future shocks. Other explanations of institutional creation and design focus on structural factors. In a unipolar world, for example, a hegemon may design international institutions with the purpose of ensuring its continued preponderance in international relations. The current shift to multi-polarity than may affect arrangements that originated either with the U.S. alone (e.g. in the security field) or with the U.S. and the EU (e.g. in the multilateral trade regime). A further explanation for institutional design emphasizes the type of dilemma that international institutions are supposed to resolve (Stein 1982). Finally, explanations of institutional design can also gain traction – once organisations have been created – by having recourse to arguments stressing path dependent forces of bureaucratic autonomy.

For this first broad question of the creation, design, and evolution of international institutions, we welcome contributions from, for example, negotiation analysis, analyses of the rule of international law in authoritarian or non-western political systems, and the domestic politics of international institutional creation and reform, whether centred on domestic veto players or on domestic interest groups.

Ad 2.) The second question is more fundamental and empirically more difficult to get at: does the design of international institutions matter? International institutions display great variation in the degree to which they are binding, legalized, and judicialized. Also, many differ substantially in their decision making rules, some sticking to strict unanimity, others working with forms of delegation to a smaller core membership, while yet others use super majority voting rules to avoid blockage. Ideally, one would also like to know whether more flexible and more rigid institutional arrangements differ in their effects on policy outcomes and whether depth is a necessary condition for an institution to produce the desired public good (see e.g. Thompson 2010). Institutional differences may have systematic effects on the forms of domestic politics they engender, re-aligning the preferences and strategies of domestic actors – both public and private. The functional overlap as well as the different constraints and opportunities of international organizations may also lead to forum shopping behavior by state and private actors alike.

The recent literature has made advances in tackling this question of the effect of the design of international institutions. International institutions that provide for transparency and potent sanctions have been shown to be more effective than other institutions (Mitchell 1994). Yoram Haftel (2007) submits that a specific design of treaties can reduce the likelihood of militarized interstate conflicts. Finally, Tim Büthe and Helen Milner (2011) analyse whether institutional design matters for the effect of preferential trade agreements on investment flows to developing countries.

On this question, we hope to bring together papers that assess the effects of different aspects of institutional design (depth, flexibility, legalization, etc.) on a variety of possible outcomes, including compliance (McCall Smith and Tallberg 2008; Zangl et al. 2012), economic flows (Dür et al. 2012), and inter-state conflicts.

Bibliography

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- Stein, Arthur (1982) 'Coordination and Collaboration: Regimes in an Anarchic World', *International Organization* 36 (2): 299-324.
- Thompson, Alexander (2010) 'Rational Design in Motion: Uncertainty and Flexibility in the Global Climate Regime', *European Journal of International Relations*, 16 (2): 269-296
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Relation to existing research

The workshop broadly contributes to the continuation of the cooperation and regime theory literature, and more specifically links to the more recent literatures on institutional design, legalization and judicialization, and the impact of international institutions.

Likely participants

A large number of scholars work in this emerging field of research. If our proposal is successful, we will widely circulate the call for papers to reach scholars that deal with the topic from a variety of different angles.

Type of papers

We are interested in original and innovative contributions to the literature on the design of international institutions, independent of the theoretical, conceptual, and methodological angle from which these contributions approach the topic. We welcome papers that cover theoretical and methodological aspects in the study of international institutions. Particularly, however, we seek to attract papers that offer novel (theory-guided) empirical work. This empirical work can be in the form of single case studies, comparative case-studies across institutions or over time, and large-N quantitative analyses.

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Biographical notes

Dirk De Bièvre is Associate Professor of International Politics at the Department of Political Science at the University of Antwerp. His research is centred on European trade policy, interest groups, and judicialization in the World Trade Organization. He has published in *Journal of World Trade*, *Comparative Political Studies*, *Journal of Public Policy*, and *Journal of European Public Policy*. He is currently co-authoring a book on European trade policy with Sieglinde Gstöhl (College of Europe) for the Palgrave EU series.

Andreas Dür is Professor of International Politics at the Department of Political Science and Sociology of the University of Salzburg. His research is concerned with international economic relations, interest groups, and European integration. He has published articles in journals such as the *British Journal of Political Science*, *Comparative Political Studies*, *European Journal of International Relations* and *International Studies Quarterly*. He also is the author of *Protection for Exporters* (Cornell University Press, 2010).