

Emerging Institutions: Design or Evolution?

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Institutional developments, i.e., creating rules that govern the society, are not as gradual and static as they used to be. In fact, environmental change and technological advancements call for rapid institutional development by policy makers along with an increasing role of the general public in changing existing institutions and creating new ones. The aim of this workshop was to bring experts from various disciplines together, in order to make a step forward in modelling and understanding institutional emergence by both design and evolution in today's rapidly evolving society. Our objectives were to:

- 1) Reach a common language and understanding of what institutional emergence and evolution implies
- 2) Become aware of the developments regarding institutional emergence, design and evolution in different disciplines
- 3) Understand how the different perspectives and approaches can be bridged, complemented, and possibly integrated.

These objectives were all met during our one week Lorentz workshop. By using Ostrom's definition of institutions as a common ground, the researchers from a whole range of disciplines, from history to artificial intelligence, engaged in very lively discussions about what institutional design or evolution imply in their fields. Surprisingly, although several researchers used an organizational definition of institution in their research, they still managed to get on the same page and build on the discussions among the "institutions-as-rules" scholars.

From a historical point of view, researchers presented the state of art regarding institutional emergence and evolution. At the same time, experts from the field of economics explained how they design institutions. As such, by the end of the workshop, everyone became aware of the developments in other fields. This resulted in many research plans and research collaborations either bilaterally, or in groups. These connections were especially unique as scientists from very different fields were able to understand each other, and discover how their agenda would complement each other.

As an example, one historian said that she would have never thought she would listen to the presentation of a computer scientists, understand so much and find this many common grounds. The same kind of observation was shared several times during the conference by different scientists. These commons grounds will hopefully be the seed to several short term and long term scientific breakthroughs.

Organization

The general format of the workshop which was a combination of invited talks (max 2 per day) and group discussions, kept the level of motivation and engagement high throughout the week. However, the general observation was that the participants learnt more and were more enthusiastic about the talks. A shared online notepad¹ was used to write down notes during the talks, and was also used to further discussed unaddressed issues. Therefore, besides the general collective or group discussions, there was a very long and in-depth virtual discussion taking place even outside workshop hours. The shard notepad will be the source of a publication on the topic of this workshop. A final observation regarding the organization was that half way through the week (i.e., Thursday) the participants were very tired, and

¹ <http://pad.eeni.tbm.tudelft.nl/p/EmergingInstitutionsWorkshop>, username and password available upon request

were not able to focus as much as before. Having taken a flexible arrangements, the organizers decided to leave that afternoon open for participants. That boosted the energy for a very fruitful Friday. The last talk of the workshop was by a prominent economist, and all participants found it extremely inspiring.

In general, the group size which stayed around 35 (min 30, max 37) participants seemed to be the perfect size for a comprehensive and diverse group, yet small enough for a good level of engagement by all.

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