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# Call for Papers – London Workshop on Institutional Issues – 2021

**Crisis and Persistence: Dynamics of  
institutional changes at the interface of  
the formal and informal institutions**

Organised by the Friday  
Association for  
Institutional Studies

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**Deadline for submissions  
18 June 2021**

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On behalf of the Friday Association for Institutional Studies (a collective including members of the Birkbeck Centre for Political Economy and Institutional Studies (CPEIS), the Centre for Comparative Studies of Emerging Economies (CCSEE) at the School of Slavonic and East European Studies (SSEES UCL) and the Institute for International Management at Loughborough University London), we are pleased to announce the following call for contributions to our 4th annual London workshop on institutional studies (to be held online on 21 and 22 September 2021).

As the COVID sanitary emergency continues to unfold, and despite the glimmer of hope afforded by the vaccine roll-out in some parts of the world, we are reminded of the key role crises often play in institutional change. Indeed, they constitute opportunity windows for change and sometimes moments of critical junctures and structural breaks in the development of economic institutions (Collier and Collier 1991; Acemoglu and Robinson 2012). However, some – even major – emergencies do not seem to have the expected disruptive effect on institutional arrangements, with institutional features showing remarkable resilience in the face of major upheaval (Crouch 2011). One stream of scholarship focuses on “punctured equilibrium” models (Baumgartner and Jones 1993), “grammar of institutions” (Crawford and Ostrom 1995) or “critical junctures” (Acemoglu and Robinson, 2012), that is to say on events or conditions generating big and radical institutional changes. Another stream of research has pointed out the importance of more subtle processes of institutional change, proposing theoretical tools that capture incremental, but still transformative processes of change (Mahoney and Thelen 2010; Streeck and Thelen 2005).

Against this general backdrop, one important understudied aspect is the role of informal institutions and their interplay with formal institutions in processes of institutional change. Crises are often associated with disruption of the formal institutional order, while little attention is paid to the role of informal institutions. Informal institutions are sometimes seen as ‘second best’ (Rodrik 2008) compared to more formal institutional arrangement. However, in crisis situations when the formal institutional order breaks down or is severely challenged, informal institutions may prove crucial for economic activity to persist by providing resilience. Conversely, whether or not a crisis will provide an opportunity for formal institutional change may also depend on whether informal institutions supporting the status quo remain unchallenged or are equally shaken by the crisis. More generally, informal institutions have been conceptualised as shaping the implementation of formal institutions, making them a more fundamental driver of institutional change (Boettke, et al., 2008).

Overall, we thus contend that crises provide opportunities to further our understanding of the interplay between formal and informal institutions. Better understanding the interplay between formal and informal institutions in times of crises holds important lessons for both theory and policy making. In certain circumstances, socially desirable change does not happen although recurring crises may show the limitations of the existing system. Conversely, more research is needed on what makes institutions resilient to crises even when change appears desirable. Both issues require a better understanding of the interplay between formal and informal institutions.

We are thus calling for papers proposing to shed light on institutional change, either incremental or sudden, with an explicit focus on the role played by informal institutions, either theoretically or empirically. Questions of interest include – but are not limited to:

- What are the antecedents of different types of institutional change in times of crisis?
- What interactions exist between formal and informal institutions during crises?
- How do informal institutions affect institutional change during crises?
- Can crises reshape human behaviour above and beyond the “formal rules of the games”?
- How/when/where do informal institutions provide resilience to institutional orders in crisis?
- How/when/where do they undermine institutional stability or support institutional change?



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## SUBMISSION:

Please send an **abstract** (max. 500 words) or a **full paper** (if available and preferred by the submitters) by **18 June 2021** to [ssees-events@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:ssees-events@ucl.ac.uk)

The submission should be sent with “**Institutional Change Workshop**” in the subject line.

Please note that the format of the submission (abstract or full paper) will not affect the chances of being accepted. Researchers submitting structured abstracts will not be treated less favourably than authors submitting full papers, as long as their key contribution and approach are made clear.

Authors of accepted submissions will be notified by **9 July 2021**.

## STRUCTURE OF PRESENTATIONS:

Every paper presentation will be assigned a discussant. It is thus important to **submit full papers** at **least two weeks before the workshop**, i.e. **9 September 2021** at the latest.

## CONVENORS AND QUERIES:

For any queries, please contact any of the workshop convenors: Dr Luca Andriani ([luca.andriani@bbk.ac.uk](mailto:luca.andriani@bbk.ac.uk)), Dr Randolph L Bruno ([Randolph.bruno@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:Randolph.bruno@ucl.ac.uk)), Dr Elodie Douarin ([e.douarin@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:e.douarin@ucl.ac.uk)) and Dr Gerhard Schnyder ([G.Schnyder@lboro.ac.uk](mailto:G.Schnyder@lboro.ac.uk))

## WHEN:

**21 and 22 September 2021** – two half days (time to be confirmed after papers acceptance, to be able to adapt to the location of the speakers)

## WHERE:

Hosted on **ZOOM** (logins detail to be circulated at a later date)

## REFERENCES:

- Acemoglu, D. and J. Robinson (2012) *Why Nations Fail*. London: Profile Books Ltd.
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- Baumgartner, Frank R. and Bryan D. Jones. 1993. *Agendas and Instability in American Politics*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.
- Collier, Ruth Berins and David Collier. 1991. *Framework: Critical Junctures and Historical Legacies*.
- Crawford, Sue E. S Ostrom, Elinor;. (September 1995). "A grammar of institutions". *American Political Science Review*. 89 (3)
- Crouch, Colin. 2011. *The Strange Non-Death of Neo-Liberalism*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.
- Mahoney, James and Kathleen Thelen, eds. 2010. *Explaining Institutional Change: Ambiguity, Agency, and Power*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Rodrik, Dani. 2008. "Second-Best Institutions." NBER Working Paper Series 14050:1–4.
- Streeck, Wolfgang and Kathleen Thelen. 2005. *Beyond Continuity: Institutional Change in Advanced Political Economies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.