

The Organizational-Cybernetic Approach to International Institutions

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Abstract of the dissertation

One of the key tasks of the institutionalist research in international relations should be to explore how the functioning of international institutions can be enhanced through alterations of their design, where design is understood as the only factor that can have a direct causal effect on the institutions' functioning and that, at the same time, is at least in principle amenable to conscious manipulation. The task of this dissertation is to elaborate on whether this can be at all done and, if yes, how exactly and under what conditions. To deal with these problems, I present what is best labelled as the organizational-cybernetic approach, a theoretical and conceptual framework based on insights from the field of organizational cybernetics.

Building on the organizational-cybernetic framework, I outline the concept of information transmission capacity as the right dependent variable for the study of how design impacts on functioning of institutions. Subsequently I present the viable system model, an organizational-cybernetic model that identifies on a general level all the key information channels necessary for viability of any governance scheme. Using this approach, we can proceed in the direction of systematic investigation of the effects of design on international institutions' capacity. I illustrate validity of the presented theoretical and conceptual framework in two empirical chapters, one on decision-making in the Council of the European Union after the eastern enlargement, and one on the politics of staffing in several major inter-governmental organizations.

With the help of the conceptual and theoretical framework I develop in the dissertation, we are able to approach the problem of international institutions capacity and design from a perspective that on the one hand is deeply rooted in the existing theories of international relations, but that on the other hand brings in a number of new insights and analytical tools from outside of the discipline.