

# INSTITUTIONAL CREDIBILITY AND FUNCTION

**3-5 Nov 2016, Manchester 2016**

This Call for Papers describes a panel to be held during the annual EAEPE (European Association for Evolutionary and Political Economy) conference. EAEPE is one of the largest heterodox economics associations in Europe, and its conferences generally attracts a wide audience of political scientists, sociologists, economists and anthropologists interested in the rethinking of mainstream economic theory (see <http://eaepe.org/>). For further information please contact the organizer: Peter Ho, Delft University of Technology, [p.p.s.ho@tudelft.nl](mailto:p.p.s.ho@tudelft.nl).

Keywords: credibility, economic history, Lamarckian theory, disequilibrium, emergentism, endogenous development

## ***Introduction***

One of the vexing questions in a neo-classically inspired view of institutional change is why overtly inefficient institutions and “perverse” property rights arrangements are still adopted and tenaciously persist, despite allegedly inhibiting growth and development. In this regard, one might think of the persistence of in-transparent institutional structures that facilitate rent-seeking and corruption; ill-protected intellectual property rights that offer leeway for illicit copying and theft of knowledge and technologies; or insecure, ambiguous tenure that opens up the way for indiscriminate expropriation and forced evictions.

It is posited that the key to understanding the persistence of so-called inefficient, “perverse” institutions might lie in a refocusing of our analysis from form to function, detached from any normative, ideological or theoretical assumptions about institutional appearance. In other words, the form (private/public, formal/informal, secure/insecure) of institutions is subordinate to their function (actors’ temporally and spatially accorded meaning of institutions). The argument starts from the so-called “Credibility Thesis”, i.e. the hypothesis that the persistence of institutions points to their credibility. In other words, once institutions persist they fulfill a certain function for social actors and economic agents. Moreover, in this reading, institutional structure is *not* the result of intentional design by which institutions can be “wrongly” or “rightly” engineered. Instead, it springs forward from a spontaneous, endogenous order. Critically, this reading also implies that institutional change is not characterized by (dynamic) equilibrium or an equilibrium path, yet, by disequilibrium.

## **Papers and submissions**

Against the backdrop above, this panel aims to bring together papers that describe, analyze and conceptualize the evolutionary change of property rights and institutional arrangements

over time and space. In this context, the sector or issue is not relevant – regardless whether that touches on land or water, technology or energy, housing or urban planning, firms or finance, or Intellectual Property Rights or infrastructure. What matters for the panel is the approach and an interest in notions of endogeneity, disequilibrium and institutional function, rather than form.

Please send your abstract to [p.p.s.ho@tudelft.nl](mailto:p.p.s.ho@tudelft.nl). The abstract should clearly mention (i) the title of the paper, (ii) name of the author(s) and full address of the corresponding author and his/her email address, (iii) the aim and the main argument of the paper, and (iv) keywords or the relevant JEL codes. The abstract should be 300-750 words.

**References:**

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