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### **INFORMAL INSTITUTIONS RESEARCH: THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL DILEMMAS**

*The article analyzes the genesis of the development of the informal institutions research in the paradigms of classical institutionalism, behavioralism and new institutionalism, as well as the most widespread classical and modern approaches to the definition of the informal institutions phenomenon. It is substantiated that theoretical and conceptual uncertainty exists in the contemporary political science discourse, which is characterized by the coexistence of diametrically opposed approaches to the informal institutions studying. In this regard, possible ways of forming a «methodologically balanced» approach to the phenomenon of informal institutions research are proposed.*

**Keywords:** *informal institutions, new institutionalism, new institutional economy, culture, values, habitus, frame.*

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### **ДОСЛІДЖЕННЯ НЕФОРМАЛЬНИХ ІНСТИТУТІВ: ТЕОРЕТИКО-КОНЦЕПТУАЛЬНІ ДИЛЕМИ**

*Аналізується генеза розвитку дослідження неформальних інститутів у парадигмах класичного інституціоналізму, біхевіоралізму та неоінституціоналізму, а також найбільш розповсюджені класичні та сучасні підходи до визначення феномену неформальних інститутів. Обґрунтовано, що у сучасному політологічному дискурсі наявна теоретико-концептуальна невизначеність, яка характеризується співіснуванням діаметрально протилежних підходів щодо дослідження неформальних інститутів. У зв'язку з цим запропоновані можливі шляхи формування «методологічно сбалансованого» підходу до вивчення феномену неформальних інститутів.*

**Ключові слова:** *неформальні інститути, новий інституціоналізм, нова інституційна економіка, культура, цінності, габітус, фрейм.*

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### **ИССЛЕДОВАНИЕ НЕФОРМАЛЬНЫХ ИНСТИТУТОВ: ТЕОРЕТИКО- КОНЦЕПТУАЛЬНЫЕ ДИЛЕММЫ**

*Анализирует генезис развития исследования неформальных институтов в парадигмах классического институционализма, бихевиорализма и неоинституционализма, а также наиболее распространенные классические и современные подходы к определению феномена неформальных институтов. Обосновано, что в современном политологическом дискурсе присутствует теоретико-концептуальная неопределенность, которая характеризуется сосуществованием диаметрально противоположных подходов к исследованию неформальных институтов. В связи с этим предложены возможные пути формирования «методологически сбалансированного» подхода к изучению феномена неформальных институтов.*

**Ключевые слова:** *неформальные институты, новый институционализм, новая институциональная экономика, культура, ценности, габитус, фрейм.*

**Formulation of the problem and analysis of relevant studies.** Informal institutions are a critically important category for understanding contemporary political, economic and social processes. The study of informal institutions can fully explain the failures of modernization and economic stagnation, as well as substantiate the tools for establishing a consolidated democracy, ensuring stable macroeconomic development. Moreover, the more the applied sciences are developing (in particular, the economics), the more clearly their insufficiency is being revealed in terms of identifying new factors and determinants of «objective» processes that require address to the socio-cultural dimension, the conduct of interdisciplinary research of informal institutions (Dia 1996; Azari & Smith 2012; Waylen 2013).

Currently, the main problem of studying the informal institutions is the existence of theoretical and conceptual uncertainty. How do informal institutions emerge? Is it possible to «create» them or do they appear spontaneously? How do informal institutions and cultural values relate to each other? Is it advisable to identify informal institutions with culture in general? Different theoretical approaches offer diametrically opposite answers. Thus, S. Pejovich emphasizes that informal institutions are cultural traditions rooted in society (Pejovich 1999), and G. Helmke and S. Levitsky, on the contrary, note that it is worthwhile to demarcate these two concepts, since the values of individuals are not always the result of culture influence (Helmke & Levitsky 2004). K. Bossard defines informal institutions solely as rules imposed and implemented by civil society, but at the same time characterizes civil society as a whole as an informal institution (Bossard 2000). A. Auзан and E. Nikishina proceed from the assertion that the role of «the author» and the guarantor of the informal rule can be performed by any individual (Аузан, Никишина 2013). While J. Knight observes that informal institutions are self-enforced and self-sufficient in the sense that there is no external power controlling their implementation (Knight 1992).

Therefore, **the main purpose** of this article is to analyze the most common approaches to the conceptualization of the informal institutions phenomenon, highlighting the «places of agreement» of researchers, as well as detecting the most controversial aspects of the informal institutions' essence definition. **The tasks** of the proposed work are the following: to trace the genesis of the development of the

informal institutions research in the paradigms of classical institutionalism, behavioralism and new institutionalism; to consider the phenomenon of informal institutions in comparison with sociological categories such as habitus and frames; as a result of the analysis of the most common concepts of informal institutions to outline ways to form a «methodologically-balanced» approach to their definition.

**Main materials.** *The place of informal institutions in classical and new institutionalism.* The theory of informal institutions cannot be considered beyond its general theoretical-conceptual context, namely, the paradigm of institutionalism. Consequently, the genesis of the concept of informal institutions should be initially explored within the framework of the theories of the classical («old») and the new institutionalism.

Classical institutionalism arises at the beginning of the XXth century, with emphasis on the formal legal analysis of traditional political institutions, such as legislation and legislative power, the legal system, the state (T. Veblen, M. Weber, M. Duverger, J. Schumpeter). In fact, until the middle of the XXth century, this theoretical direction is central to political science and, according to R. Rhodes's exact characterization, in general, constitutes «its identity as a discipline» (Rhodes 2011). As G. Eckstein assumed on this subject: «If there is any subject matter at all which political scientists can claim exclusively for their own, a subject matter that does not require acquisition of the analytical tools of sister-fields and that sustains their claim to autonomous existence, it is, of course, formal-legal political structure» (Eckstein 1963: 10-11). That is, in the classical institutionalism, the institutions were considered as a certain legal instruments that embody the power relations between the individual and the relevant components of the system (democracy, power division, constitution, federalism, etc., traditional economic institutions – enterprises and firms).

Generally, two main directions can be singled out among the studies of «old» institutionalism – constitutionalism and public administration, which were focused on the exploring the formal, legal and administrative relations (arrangements) between the state (government) and the civil sector. This emphasis on formally-legal rules is the peculiar «line of differentiation» that opposes classical and new institutionalism. «In contrast with an older institutionalism, – observes J. Olsen, – that used formal-legal rules as proxies for

political action, the new institutionalism is behavioral» (Olsen 2007: 2).

According to issued earlier, returning to the question of the place of informal institutions in classical institutionalism, it is should be noted that before the emergence of the behavioralism paradigm (1920-1950), researchers almost ignored such factors as informal rules, practices or behavioral settings, firstly, because political behavior in general was not the main focus of the study, and, secondly, «by default» it was believed that political behavior in one way or another was formed and determined by formal rules or procedures of the institutional structure (e.g. well-known Weber's concept of bureaucracy mentality: as researcher noted, bureaucrats are rational, because this feature meets the formal rules of the structure of the bureaucracy). As a matter of fact, among researchers there are diametrically opposed assessments of the behavioralism's role in the development of new institutionalism: R. Rhodes argues that the new institutionalism appeared as a reaction to behavioralism (Rhodes 2011), while, for example, P. Hirsch believes behavioralism to become a significant theoretical source of integrating the old and new institutionalism (Hirsch 1997). We are also inclined to support P. Hirsch's point of view, regarding the fact that the revolution of behavioralism altered the institutional tradition in policy and politics studies, to some extent

reducing the significance of the political institution, but giving it the decisive status of the «the stage for occurrence of a political behavior» (Wu 2009: 106).

Informal institutions as a full-fledged subject of study gradually enter the political science from the middle of the XXth century, gaining special attention with the emergence of theories of new institutionalism. First of all, within the framework of this theoretical direction, the understanding of the institution itself is changing. The institution is now understood as a «enduring collection of rules and organized practices, embedded in structures of meaning and resources that are relatively invariant in the face of turnover of individuals and changing external circumstances»»; institutions become constitutive rules and repertoires of standard operating procedures, the functions of which are to prescribe under the conditions of uncertainty appropriate behavior for specific actors in specific situations (Olsen 2007: 3). In other words, new institutionalism explains any individual action from the perspective of duties and obligations abiding, contradistinguishing, therefore, the *preference-driven behavior* to the *rule-driven one*. J. March suggests differentiating between these two types of behavior through the following questions given in the Table 1 (March 1989: 23).

Table 1

Anticipatory action (preference-driven behavior)	Obligatory action (rule-driven behavior)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are my alternatives?</li> <li>• What are my values?</li> <li>• What are the consequences of my alternatives for my values?</li> <li>• Choose the alternative that has the best consequences.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What kind of situation is this?</li> <li>• Who am I?</li> <li>• How appropriate are different actions for me in this situation?</li> <li>• Do what is most appropriate.</li> </ul>

The questions stated in the table are quite important and revealing, since they illustrate the motivational factors for making a decision to act in one way or another by individuals. It should also be emphasized that the new institutionalism does not deny the goal-oriented (or rational) behavior of the individual, but it is fitted into the broader context of preference-driven behavior, when the values of the actor depend on the particular social environment. Institutions, as J. March emphasizes in the classical article that marked the emergence of new institutionalism, should be seen as actors just as we are accustomed to viewing

individuals as actors in the political process (March 1984: 742).

Institutions establish and confirm the meaning of life interpretation. The institutions' «authority» lies primarily in the assumption that individuals follow social rules, even when there is no need for that (sanctions as a guarantee that the rules given by the institutions will be fulfilled play a distinctive role in the new institutionalism, but sometimes even in the absence of sanctions the individual tend to adhere to the rules, «when there is no police on the horizon, and even if these rules are incomprehensible and uncomfortable») (Goffman 1963). Classic examples of this are

the stop on the traffic light on the empty road, or, if one turn to the field of psychology, a sense of inferiority, which, according to M. Fisher, is associated with the perception of the individuals that they are not able to effectively comply with the rules that are performed by the «self-sufficient», self-realized people («you are not the man who can fulfill the role assigned to the ruling group», «the power of the class becomes a form of social power») (Fisher 2014).

In addition to the rethinking of the notion of institutions, the new institutionalism is also important for considering, because it is the first approach to introduce the notion of informal institutions to the «political arena», differentiating formally codified, written norms and rules, and unwritten traditions and norms, which are transmitted and fixed informally – at the level of world perception, common understanding. Researchers in the framework of new institutionalism conclude that formal institutions themselves are inferior, since they exist only in conjunction with informal institutions, and the very nature of this interaction determines the sustainability and effectiveness of formal institutions (Waylen 2013).

Informal institutions can positively or negatively influence the nature of the formal institutions functioning. For example, in the classical study of informal institutes G. Helmke and S. Levitsky distinguish complementary, substitute, accommodating and competing informal institutions in relation to formal (Helmke & Levitsky 2004: 728). Studying the regimes of established democracies, J. Azari and J. Smith distinguish between informal institutions that complement, exist in parallel or co-ordinate formal institutes (Azari & Smith 2012). While Grzymala-Busse argues that in transitional regimes in Central and Eastern Europe, informal institutions can substitute, undermine, support or strengthen (promoting competition among elites) the formal institutions regardless of their sustainability (Grzymala-Busse 2010).

On the basis of the configuration of the formal and informal institutions interaction analysis, O. Fisun conceptualizes four types of power regimes characteristic of the post-Soviet space: democratic consolidation, bureaucratic neopatrimonialism, oligarchic neopatrimonialism, and sultanist neopatrimonialism (Фисун 2006: 177), and in further research, based on the study of formal and informal obstacles to democratic transformation, introduces the term neopatrimonial democracy (Фисун 2016: 10). O. Krysenko states it is the consolidation of

informal institutions that lead to reduction of social demand for formal institutions instruments, decreasing the arbitration function of constitutional norms in politics and economics within post-Soviet transit process (Крисенко 2012: 59). H. Hale explores how exactly formal institutions (constitutions) influence the consolidation of post-Soviet political regimes, based on informal institutions («pyramids of power») (Hale 2011).

In general, it should be noted that the conceptualization of the notion of informal institutions began with the study of their certain manifestations (mainly negative ones that lowered the quality of public administration) such as: particularism, clientelism, patronage, nepotism, and illegal practices - corruption, business interference in public administration, «blat» in the Soviet Union, and so on. The informal institutions received a special impetus for theoretization, due to the formation of a neo-institutional economy, whereon it was established that long-term economic growth is influenced by factors that were previously neglected by economic science, namely socio-cultural practices in the form of informal institutions.

*Approaches to the definition of informal institutions.* Obviously, the distinction of a particular theoretical category of informal institutions was also largely influenced by developments in the field of sociology, in particular the structuralism theories, which proceed from the fact that the behavior of individuals is determined by the configurations of structures that restrict and establish the conditions for choices to make decisions. A classic example of this is P. Bourdieu's habitus theory, where habitus is a stable set of behavioral regularities transmitted (due to the requirements to be adapted to a particular social environment) «in the body and the world perception of the individual» (Bourdieu 1984). If to apply J. Lakoff's methodology and switch to the language of metaphors, then one can draw an analogy between habitus and the way people usually move in the subway: a person who has a long experience of using the subway, despite the pointers would turn the appropriate side, on the escalator would get to the right, etc. Equally, habitus, in the form of acquired practices and values, allows individuals to «move on an autopilot» within a social space, carrying out certain actions, the appeals to which they have previously studied through socialization.

E. Goffman's theory of frames also becomes of particular importance in the context

of the informal institutions research. The scientist proceeds from the fact that social interaction consists of stable, repetitive situations, which correspond to a certain «order» that is not constructed spontaneously. In fact, the researcher describes such situations as frames - it is also a «matrix of possible events», which is established due to the «arrangement of roles», and the «scheme of interpretation» present in any perception (Вахштайн 2003: 110). Intrinsically, any Goffman frame (for example, such typical situations as «in a cinema» or «at dinner») defines certain rules of the game – interactions and communication that are acceptable in one frame and tabooed in another. «When X finds himself in the situation of Y, he must behave in such a way» – this is an indicative language phrase, which the scientist often uses in his own work.

In general, the order of social interaction according to E. Goffman's theory is determined by certain «rituals», which individuals constantly carry in relation to themselves and other people. E. Goffman relates such rituals to the field of etiquette, distinguishing it from the sphere of ethics, which, in his opinion, is more relativistic: in the field of etiquette, people are convinced that there are rules that cannot be violated, in spite of any circumstances. For example, most people think that although it is not good to kill, kill those who are going to kill you or other people – it is admissible and even commendable. Violations of ethical standards can lead to condemnation or criticism, while violation of etiquette rules threatens to exclude from social interactions at all, which serves as the most severe sanction for a person (according to Goffman, people fall into a psychiatric hospital not because they distorted perceptions of reality, but because they behaved not in accordance with the rules of social interaction). That logic for the functioning of etiquette within a certain frame, in our opinion, is common to the functioning of informal institutions within a particular community. It does not matter how effective is the established socio-political practice (the criterion of «survival» for informal institutions in classical institutionalism), what does matter is the level of its legitimacy, prevalence and rootedness in society. The simplest example in the Ukrainian context is: the practice of giving a bribe, which does not generally blame public condemnation, because «everyone does it», otherwise it is impossible to solve business issues, to interact; the following logic works «not to give a bribe

means the exclusion from a certain frame: business, politics, etc».

Having considered the «conceptually close» categories of habitus and a frame, it is important to analyze the specificity (or, conversely, identity) of the informal institutions concept definition. Here we approach the issue of theoretical and conceptual dilemmas, since in modern political science there are several approaches and logics for defining informal institutions that sometimes contradict to each other. We suggest to explore the six most common approaches to defining this phenomenon.

**1. Informal institutions as traditional political practices rooted and reproduced in bureaucratic structures (anthropological approach).** The first perspective of the informal institutions analyses lies in the sphere of political anthropology. Informal institutions, hence, are viewed as political practices, which are originated from the pre-political stage of societies' development and are reproduced within contemporary political structures. For example, patronage and clientelism as well as corruption here are explained as the «updated» political practices inherent in traditional societies («when the main regulators have been family relationships, tribal order, dare exchange, exchange of services and later forms - traditional economy») that had been transferred to the modern political realities (Работягова 2014: 63).

**2. Informal institutions as cultural traditions.** The most obvious and prevalent approach to the conceptualization of informal institutions is to identify them with «traditions, customs, moral values, religious beliefs, and all other norms of behavior that have passed the test of time» (Pejovich 1999: 166). M. Dia defines informal institutions as «indigenous institutions» that are anchored in local culture and values, have significant support and legitimacy in society, constitute their sense of identity (Dia 1996: 1). Thus, due to this approach, informal institutions form part of the culture of a particular society («the accumulated wisdom of the past»), and are transmitted from generation to generation through mechanisms such as «imitation, oral tradition and learning» (Pejovich 1999: 166). It should be noted that this approach is close to the representatives of the new institutional economy, who, by equating the culture and informal institutions, quite generally explain the ways of their emergence and formation. For example, S. Pejovich notes that social interactions are important for individuals from the standpoint of

survival, which is why certain types of interactions had been repeated over and over again – not because individuals understood them, but because they worked; subsequently, such persistent types of social interactions had been institutionalized in taboos, traditions, moral values, etc. (Pejovich 1999: 172). Interesting nuance is that S. Pejovich describes as «traditional» those modern societies, where informal institutions dominate the formal ones.

**3. Informal institutions as a «product» of civil society.** The main criterion in this approach is the distinction between state and social, civil (state-societal differentiation). According to this theoretical perspective, formal institutions are considered as rules enforced by the state and its bodies. Accordingly, informal institutions are rules that are enforced by civil society institutions. It should be noted that the main emphasis in this approach is the role of informal institutions in the process of democratic consolidation: the more civil society is developed, the higher is the level of democratic consolidation (Bossard 2000). This approach, in our opinion, to some extent more accurately outlines the subject field of informal institutions than the previous one, since it identifies actors and mechanisms for the emergence/creation of informal practices. However, theoretical and conceptual dilemmas in this case arise in connection with different approaches to the definition of civil society. For example, K. Bossard proposes to consider two components of the concept of civil society: «material» organizations between the public and private sectors (civil society in a liberal sense), and «nonmaterial» institutions in the form of values and norms (civil society in the sense of majority democracy) (Bossard 2000). In addition to that, the researcher considers civil society as a whole to be an informal institution.

**4. Informal institutions are natural and self-enforced; they do not require a «third party» to guarantee their fulfillment.** The given approach highlights the following features of informal institutions. If formal institutes are enforced by a third party, more often by the state, and the state itself guarantees that social actors will adhere to these rules and procedures, informal institutions are self-sustaining and self-enforcing in the sense that there is no external power that controls their execution (Knight 1992: 3). Important accents in this approach: firstly, it is in the natural environment of informal institutions that the formal rules and procedures appear; secondly, the informal and decentralized sanctions follow the violation of informal institutions. In general,

according to J. Knight's concept, institutions are the by-products of conflicts in the distribution of resources between unequal entities when there are many possible equilibrium configurations (conventionally: in order to limit the behavior of subject B, subject A must rule the expectations of B from behavior A through precommitment and threat) (Knight 1992).

**5. Informal institutions as a «product» of any citizen creation.** This conception complements the previously considered one in the sense that each individual can become a «third party» for the introduction of informal institutions. On this basis, their definition is deduced: informal institutions – rules, where on the guarantor can be any individual who believes that the rule considered must be followed (Аузан, Никишина 2013: 50). By creating an informal institution, the individual derives from his own values that determine his behavioral regularities (in terms of new institutional economy - expectations of potential benefits and costs). That is, we again see the aspect of coercion and control over the implementation of the rules: in the case of formal institutions, the guarantor is specialized, and in the case of informal institutions, the whole society becomes a guarantor. An individual in a certain sense «votes» for institutions, «not in parliamentary elections, but through the everyday practice» (Аузан 2014: 35). Based on this approach, informal institutions are effective in small societies based on personalized relationships. For seminal coordination of larger societies, formal institutions are required.

**6. Informal institutions as a phenomenon that exists outside officially sanctioned channels.** The last of the approaches analyzed in this article is the concept of G. Helmke and S. Levitsky, which in our opinion, is the most balanced, but at the same time not less ambiguous. Scientists define informal institutions as socially-formed rules, usually unwritten, which are created, communicated and used outside officially sanctioned channels (Helmke & Levitsky 2004: 727). Officially sanctioned channels G. Helmke and S. Levitsky define quite clearly – they are state institutions (courts, parliaments, bureaucracies), the rules set by the state (constitutions, laws, decrees, etc.), as well as official rules which corporations, political parties, interest groups operate on. Important clarifications of the conceptualization of the notion offered by the researchers are that: informal institutions should not be equated with weak institutions, as well as simple behavioral habits (to take off a hat in a

church – an informal institution, and to take off a hat in a restaurant – a behavioral habit). Finally, scientists demarcate the notions of culture and informal institutions, noting that not always the stable expectations of individuals rooted in societal cultural values (Helmke & Levitsky 2004: 728).

**Conclusions and prospects for further research.** The analysis of the six approaches to the phenomenon of informal institutions definition demonstrated: firstly, in contemporary political science discourse among researchers there is no common vision of the very essence of the phenomenon – on the one hand, informal institutions are considered as cultural heritage or traditional political practices reproduction (in the context of the theory of path dependence, when the previous trajectory of development determines the current direction of movement), on the other hand - as a by-product of distribution of resources conflict between unequal entities, when a subject with a greater volume of resources can establish rules, based on their interests (approach similar to the P. Bourdieu's concept of symbolic violence), in parallel among the representatives of new institutional economy informal institutions are viewed as tools for satisfying unrealized needs within formal institutions. Secondly, the uncertainty about the nature of informal institutions involves a different vision of communication channels and the functioning of informal practices (the sphere of morality and religion, political culture, civil society or, in a broad sense, informal channels). Thirdly, apparently, the most fundamental issue is the correlation between cultural values and informal institutions, since each concept agrees with the fact that one way or another informal practice is based on the subjective expectations of an individual that derive from his socio-cultural preferences or is directly an embodiment of values transmitted by a particular culture.

On this basis, we foresee the prospects for further research primarily in an attempt to synthesize the axiological theories in the concept of informal institutions studies in order to clearly demarcate or vice versa to justify the identity of such categories as informal values, informal practices, behavioral regularities, and cultural capital. Also, in our opinion, to facilitate the formation of a «methodologically balanced» approach to the definition of informal institutions, such categories as habitus, frames, mentality, political culture and political identity should be considered and integrated as well.

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### **ПРОБЛЕМА ТИПОЛОГІЗАЦІЇ МОДЕЛЕЙ ВЛАДНИХ ВІДНОСИН: ВІТЧИЗНЯНІ РЕАЛІЇ**

*Проаналізовано моделі владних відносин, що зазнали кризи трансформацій в сучасних умовах. На прикладі України розглянуто інституційну невідповідність конституційним вимогам та слабкість дієвого суверенітету. Здійснено спробу зміни підходу до проблематики неефективності влади, адже саме незрілість суспільства є причиною спаду розвитку, а іноді навіть регресу. Новими викликами в сучасних умовах є все більший ухил неопатримоніальних режимів у бік неофеодалізму.*

**Ключові слова:** влада, моделі управління, неопатримоніальні режими, інституційна слабкість.

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### **ПРОБЛЕМА ТИПОЛОГІЗАЦИИ МОДЕЛЕЙ ВЛАСТНЫХ ОТНОШЕНИЙ: ОТЕЧЕСТВЕННЫЕ РЕАЛИИ**

*Проанализированы модели властных отношений, которые подверглись кризису трансформаций в современных условиях. На примере Украины рассмотрено институциональное несоответствие конституционным требованиям и слабость действенного суверенитета. Предпринята попытка изменить подход к проблематике неэффективности власти, ведь именно незрелость общества является причиной спада развития, а иногда даже регресса. Новыми вызовами в современных условиях является все больший уклон неопатримониальных режимов в сторону неофеодализма.*

**Ключевые слова:** власть, модели управления, неопатримониальные режимы, институциональная слабость.