A Research Agenda for New Institutional Economics
Claude Ménard and Mary M. Shirley, eds.
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Younger institutional scholars often ask us: Where should I put my research efforts? What are the most important gaps in our knowledge of institutions? How are emerging technologies and new developments changing the frontier of institutional economics? How can I carry on the legacy of Coase, Ostrom, North, Williamson, and other founding thinkers, and make my own contribution?

This volume provides some guidance on how to move forward. Drawing on a diverse group of authors, mainly from a new generation of institutionalists, 30 brief essays explore priority issues for future NIE research. Some chapters probe the frontiers of our knowledge of issues long at the forefront of NIE – government and politics, laws and norms, organizations and contracts. Others consider emerging questions in topics underexplored by NIE, such as religion, culture and beliefs, gender and the family. Another set of chapters examines areas where new technology is raising novel issues, such as the digital (or Uber) economy and its effects on labor institutions, social media and the challenge of fake news, blockchain and its institutional implications. Several chapters also deal with tools, techniques, and approaches, including how to measure institutions, use experiments, and exploit big data and machine learning.

It is an opportune moment to explore our future research agenda. An explosive rise in computing power, combined with machine learning and rapid digitization of rich datasets, allow researchers to analyze empirically questions that could never be explored systematically before. This book aims to help us seize that moment. We hope it will inspire scholars to seek new research frontlines with the enthusiasm and curiosity that characterized the founders of new institutional economics. The table of contents can be found here: LINK. Below are a few abstracts of chapters to give a flavor of the final volume.

Contracting in Innovative Industries
Richard Gil (Johns Hopkins University) & Giorgio Zanarone (CUNEF)

Given the increasing role of creation and innovation in the world economy and the pervasive informational problems that plague contractual relationships between firms and creative agents, innovative industries constitute a natural and intriguing battlefield for researchers interested in the study of organizations, institutions, and governance. This paper draws

on organizational economics to illustrate the contracting frictions and governance solutions that arise in industries and processes where innovative and creative efforts are the key inputs. We point out open questions and gaps that emerge from the existing empirical evidence and provide recommendations that we hope will inform future researchers, industry practitioners, and policymakers.

Corruption and the New Institutional Economics
Miriam Golden, UCLA

Corruption is common in poor and middle-income countries, but relatively infrequent in wealthy ones. How does corruption decline with modernization? In this essay, I consider two ways that analytical tools that derive from the New Institutional Economics may contribute to a better understanding of corruption and modernization. First, even where laws prohibit corruption, it often persists. How do cultures of corruption develop, and how can they be changed? Second, how do anti-corruption interests organize politically to change institutions that facilitate patronage and discretion, replacing them with meritocratic, formula-bound ones?

Data Science for Institutional and Organizational Economics
Jens Prüfer (University of Tilburg) and Patricia Prüfer (University of Tilburg)

To which extent can data science methods – such as machine learning, text analysis, or sentiment analysis – push the research frontier in the social sciences? This essay briefly describes the most prominent data science techniques that lend themselves to analyses of institutional and organizational governance structures. We elaborate on several examples applying data science to analyze legal, political, and social institutions and sketch how specific data science techniques can be used to study important research questions that could not (to the same extent) be studied without these techniques. We conclude by comparing the main strengths and limitations of computational social science with traditional empirical research methods and its relation to theory.

What's Next for the Study of Nondemocracy?
Scott Gehlbach (University of Wisconsin–Madison)

The vast majority of the world's population has always had limited access to political (and economic) institutions. Yet until recently the overwhelming share of intellectual effort in political economy, if not always new institutional economics, was devoted to the study of mature

democracies. This imbalance has begun to be reversed, and with vigor. Much of the contemporary literature on nondemocracy falls into two broad areas of inquiry: a) the analysis of formal institutions such as elections, parties, and legislatures, and b) the study of autocratic control, typically through the manipulation of beliefs. Scholars of NIE will recognize in this characterization a familiar divide between formal institutions, on the one hand, and social norms and beliefs, on the other. Looking ahead, the most promising opportunities for research lie in a truly *comparative* analysis of the formal institutions of nondemocracy and the study of how formal and informal institutions interact.

Questions of Property Rights
Dominic Parker (University of Wisconsin, Madison)

The study of property rights lies at the heart of institutional economics and has been the subject of much seminal research. But many old research questions demand new answers. Why and when do property rights emerge? What role does or should the state play in the creation and evolution of property rights? I argue there is no static answer to these questions. Novel technologies and production processes, combined with modern global demand shocks, have created pressures for new definitions of property rights and opened new research opportunities. For example, rising demand for sand has led to sand mafias in India, brutally defending their control rights, while the greater value being placed on pristine environments is challenging old "use it or lose it" rules. To understand and predict institutional responses moving forward, the field will need a new cadre of creative and dedicated scholars employing new theory, applications, and empirical tests.

New media, new issues
Francesco Sobbrio (LUISS "Guido Carli" & CESifo)

The creation of the Internet and the consequent dramatic expansion in the number and types of news sources has revived interest in the role of news media while posing novel research questions. There are several open research questions in the political economy of new media. What role do they play in the spread of "fake-news"? What are their effects on voters' beliefs, behavior and on the overall level of ideological polarization? What is their impact on citizens' trust in experts and democratic institutions? Furthermore, we still need to fully understand to what extent new media and digital platforms represent tools to overthrow autocracies or, rather, whether they provide new propaganda and surveillance instruments for such regimes.

A Mutually Beneficial Relationship: Relational Contracts in Developing Countries
Rocco Macchiavello (London School of Economics)

Imperfect contract enforcement is a pervasive feature of real-life commercial transactions. Consequently trading parties rely on long-term relationships based on trust, reputation, and the promise of future rents, to guarantee contractual performance. Developing countries offer fertile ground for studying such relational contracts (RCs) since the market failures and organizational responses are starker, there are fertile opportunities to test theory isolating confounding factors, and a deeper understanding can help design better policies. This paper reviews recent contributions that highlight the empirical content of RC models, different empirical strategies to test for the presence and quantify the value of RCs in observational data, the interaction between informal RCs and formal governance structures and evidence of how RCs alter market functioning. The paper highlights promising avenues for further research in this exciting area, not only between firms, but within firms and public bureaucracies, between state and other actors, in informal community organizations, etc.

Family and Gender: Questions for the New Institutional Economics
Raquel Fernández (New York University)

This chapter discusses the large variety of research questions that would benefit from a NIE perspective in the area of family and gender. Although the family – the most basic of social organizations -- and the role of women have undergone huge transformations over time, for the most part researchers in the NIE tradition have been silent as to why this has happened and how to explain the cross-country variation we observe. The issues, ranging from the evolution of divorce laws to suffrage extensions to the change in female labor participation and social beliefs about women, are important and would benefit greatly from an approach grounded in history, anthropology, and sociology in addition to economics

Recognizing and Solving Institutional Puzzles
Douglas W. Allen (Simon Frazer University)

What research topics should young institutional scholars pursue in the near future? I don't know. I do know that I've made a career out of finding interesting institutional puzzles and explaining them with testable transaction cost arguments. In this essay, I share the methodology for doing this, which should be common knowledge, but is not.