

**EVOLUTION OR REVOLUTION? INSTITUTIONS, POWER, AND PROSPERITY:
The Development of Douglass North's Institutional Categories in the Work of
Daron Acemoglu**

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Introdução

The study of economic development and the disparities in prosperity among nations has long posed a challenge for the applied social sciences and public policy debates. Economic institutionalism, emphasizing the role of institutions in shaping incentives and economic performance, has emerged as a key theoretical perspective to elucidate this complex phenomenon. Within this school of thought, the works of Douglass North and Daron Acemoglu are seminal, providing an analytical framework designed to clarify the origins and persistence of inequality among nations.

Problema de Pesquisa e Objetivo

Although Daron Acemoglu is often considered the intellectual successor to Douglass North in the field of economic institutionalism, the precise nature of this theoretical transition—whether it represents continuity, a radical break, or an incremental development—remains under-analyzed. This paper fills this gap by conducting a systematic comparative analysis of the core categories of both authors. The guiding question for this investigation is: does continuity, rupture, or development of North's categories exist in Acemoglu's work?

Fundamentação Teórica

North, a leading figure in New Institutional Economics (NIE) and Nobel laureate, defined institutions as the "rules of the game" that shape human interaction, influencing transaction and production costs. He argued that institutions ultimately shape economic performance and evolve over time. Acemoglu deepens this analysis by proposing a dichotomy between extractive and inclusive institutions; the former perpetuate poverty and inequality, while the latter foster growth and prosperity. Acemoglu decisively expands upon North's premises by incorporating political power as a central variable.

Discussão

The analysis reveals a clear continuity and development of North's categories within Acemoglu's work. Acemoglu builds upon North's core concepts such as institutions and institutional change, but he also expands and deepens the institutional analysis. He incorporates new elements like the dichotomy between extractive and inclusive institutions, a stronger emphasis on political power, and a more nuanced examination of the relationship between technology and institutions.

Conclusão

Responding to the research question, there is indeed continuity between North's categories in Acemoglu's work, but it is not a mere reproduction. Acemoglu incorporates North's ideas on the importance of institutions in economic development, but he advances by deepening the analysis of political power, the relationship between technology and institutions, and the importance of inclusion for development. Acemoglu's works represent the development of North's institutionalist theory, complementing and refining his ideas through the incorporation of new categories and the analysis of novel aspects.

Contribuição / Impacto

By demonstrating how Acemoglu builds upon, and simultaneously transcends, North's framework, this analysis contributes to a more nuanced and politically informed understanding of the institutional factors that determine the prosperity and poverty of nations. These findings pave the way for future investigations, such as analyzing the influence of North and Acemoglu on Brazilian authors who study economic development and institutions, and conducting comparative case studies utilizing their analytical framework.

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