

Constructivisme

Constructivism is an approach to social analysis that deals with the role of human consciousness in social life. It asserts that human interaction is shaped primarily by ideational factors, not simply material ones; that the most important ideational factors are widely shared or “intersubjective” beliefs, which are not reducible to individuals; and that these shared beliefs construct the interests of purposive actors

Trois éléments font du constructivisme une théorie à part entière des théories des relations internationales.

Premièrement, **la politique mondiale est définie comme guidée par les idées partagées, des normes et des valeurs qu’ont les différents acteurs**. Le constructivisme se penche tout particulièrement sur l’intersubjectivité du savoir parce qu’il désire mettre l’accent sur l’aspect social de l’existence humaine, sur **l’influence du milieu et des interactions sur la constitution de nos comportements**. Rien à voir avec la force causale du [néo-réalisme](#), la structure du système, qui est intemporelle et imposée aux agents (On parle d’acteurs dans le constructivisme pour montrer le libre arbitre des unités et d’agents dans les théories réalistes où l’unité est forcée d’agir par le système).

Deuxièmement, **la structure idéale** (l’espace intersubjectif) **a un rôle constitutif sur les acteurs**. C’est-à-dire que la structure invite les acteurs à redéfinir leurs intérêts et leurs identités dans un vaste processus d’interactions. Au contraire des théories dites « [rationalistes](#) » (néo-libéralisme et néo-réalisme) qui posent les intérêts des États comme des constantes invariables pour définir la force causale qui sous-tend les relations internationales, le constructivisme se penche sur **la structure idéale qui forme la façon dont les acteurs se définissent (qui ils sont, leurs intérêts et comment atteindre leurs buts)**. **Constructivism believes that the social world is in endless process of construction done by people.**

Troisièmement, **la structure idéale et les acteurs se constituent et se définissent constamment l’un l’autre**. Si la structure définit le comportement et les intérêts des acteurs, ceux-ci altèrent la structure par leurs agissements. C’est qu’il est difficile, mais pas impossible pour un acteur d’agir en dehors de la structure ou de manière originale. Ce type d’agissements transforment les dialogues et contribuent ainsi à altérer la structure. Les individus ou les États peuvent ainsi défier la structure et se sortir de certaines situations dysfonctionnelles qui perpétuent des pratiques de confrontation par exemple. Kant as a critical philosopher pointed out that what one conceive as subject and object is just an phenomenon, not ‘thing in itself.’ \$

Ainsi, pour les constructivistes, il est essentiel de reconnaître que **la réalité d’un acteur est toujours historiquement construite**. Elle est le produit de l’activité humaine et peut, au moins en théorie, être transcendée en instituant de nouvelles pratiques sociales. Ce processus de transformation peut être lent, les acteurs affrontant parfois des milliers d’années de socialisation.

Seulement, même les structures les mieux enracinées peuvent être remises en question par la simple volonté. L'affirmation néo-réaliste voulant qu'il y ait des schémas universels de la politique internationale, contraint par la structure inaltérable de l'[anarchie](#) du système mondial, est très sévèrement critiquée par les constructivistes. **pragmatism insists that every idea, relations, and object are cognized by experience. In contrast to objectivism, constructivism denies the existence of the absolute truth. It focuses on the concept of contextuality, refers to differences created in social terms.**

Wendt et le constructivisme

Les théories de Wendt partagent ce corpus constructiviste, mais en dérive aussi grandement. Pour Wendt le corps du constructivisme social est à la fois trop extrême et trop limité dans sa critique du [néoréalisme](#). Il est trop extrême quand il affirme que les idées sont les seuls éléments importants du système mondial. **Wendt soutient plutôt que les forces matérielles existent et qu'ils disposent d'une certaine influence sur le comportement des acteurs. De plus, l'État est un acteur à part entière qui existe indépendamment des interactions avec ses pairs. Il n'est donc pas une construction sociale au même titre que l'argent par exemple. L'État dispose ainsi de quelques intérêts de base qui ne découlent pas de la structure idéale** (comme « l'instinct de survie »).

As long as states are in endless process of relating themselves to others, the international system is also in process, which can change by the change of states. After developing his constructivism in state centric system approach, **he argues that states can build the Kantian structure of the international system**, which refers to peaceful culture currently shared among the western democratic states.

Le corpus constructiviste est aussi trop limité quand on en vient à tester la théorie des idées en tant que facteur causal face à certaines variables réalistes comme le pouvoir ou les intérêts, sans explorer le degré auquel ces variables apparemment « matérielles » sont en fait constituées par des processus intersubjectifs.

La cible de son ouvrage principal est sans conteste le néo-réalisme de [Kenneth Waltz](#) et son « but ultime » est de faire pour le constructivisme ce que Waltz a fait pour le réalisme, c'est-à-dire construire une théorie cohérente et systématique qui met à jours les forces de la structure, cette fois du point de vue des normes et des idées (De là provient la similitude des titres des ouvrages de Wendt et de Waltz)

He builds a cultural theory of international politics, which takes whether states view each other as enemies, rivals, or friends as a fundamental determinant. Wendt characterizes these roles as ``cultures of anarchy," described as Hobbesian, Lockean, and Kantian respectively. These

cultures are shared ideas which help shape state interests and capabilities, and generate tendencies in the international system. The book describes four factors which can drive structural change from one culture to another ± **interdependence, common fate, homogenization, and self-restraint** ± and examines the effects of capitalism and democracy in the emergence of a Kantian culture in the West.

Wendt's discussion on the social theory starts with the agent-structure problem. The agent-structure problem begins with the following two truisms: "1) human beings and their organizations are purposeful actors whose actions help social relationships, which structure the interactions between these purposeful actors."

Peter Haas

The original organizational missions and aims of IOs need to be amended once it becomes apparent that those missions and aims have lost relevance because new problems and actors have arisen to claim a place on the global agenda, and even to shape it. In the absence of a dominant state willing to lead, a strong shared universal vision, or a world government, collective responses to the global problematique depend on international institutional mechanisms. Only flexible institutions with expanding organizational visions can respond effectively to these problems and help guide their member states toward more productive governance likely to benefit the international community as a whole.

We focus on the **shared beliefs** that inform the practices of institutions, thus augmenting attention to the formal rules by which an exogenously determined set of values is authoritatively determined and applied. We regard a problematique as an intersubjective phenomenon and look at the social process by which knowledge informs visions and contributes to organizational practices.

New nonstate actors are becoming numerous and vocal, and **experts no longer invariably mirror the preferences of their governments**. Because of the world's growing reliance on the knowledge of specialists, networks of experts as learners and transmitters of knowledge have acquired enormous significance. **States themselves are porous** and often unable to satisfy their citizens by relying on their national capacities alone. **State actors will remain the most important ones on the world scene, but their centrality and range of autonomous choice will decline** in the face of **transgovernmental, transnational, and nongovernmental actors**.

The functional dimension for characterizing problems **overlaps with both space and time**. For instance, when we seek to specify the "problems" of peace, economic growth, sustainable development, or intergenerational equity, we must show how such diverse "places" as water, atmosphere, and terrestrial ecosystems interact with such human "acts" as agricultural and industrial production, armaments and the arms trade, and demographic trends. In turn, we explore how these look in various social time frames. Policy spaces, such as public health measures, macroeconomic choices, and military operations, now demand to be studied in terms of these complications. **Issues no longer stay in tightly sealed compartments. Yet, The process is ragged and**

almost never complete. Several problématiques usually coexist and may even compete in the nested system of IOs.

Organizational learning requires that the efforts of epistemic communities be accepted and advocated by a coalition of hegemonic member states rather than being endorsed merely by majorities of weak states. After the programs have been validated by such a coalition, a learning IO then becomes an active transmitter of new ways of defining and solving problems by persuading most member governments of the appropriateness of the consensual knowledge involved. The ultimate stage in the evolution of learning comes when the IO is given something akin to executive power to induce member governments to accept the implications of that knowledge. Controversy between advocates of rival world order ideologies is the essence of change.

Organizational learning is the process by which the learning becomes ingrained in IOs. Institutional learning is the broader international process by which state entities and other actors learn and assimilate some of these lessons.

Consensual knowledge is structured information about causes and effects among physical and social phenomena that enjoys general acceptance as true and accurate among the members of the relevant professional community.

Ex: environmental issues, reorientation of policies, structures and beliefs since 1989.

Learning IOs Teach States. These learning organizations exert influence on the states that rely on their operational activities. For instance, the recommendation by the WHO regarding exposure limits for various chemicals has served as the basis for legislation and policy in many developing countries.

For Learning to Occur, There Must Be Value Consensus between states and IOs and a Stable Knowledge Base. The values of dominant decisionmakers and epistemic communities must agree, otherwise governments will not tolerate the policy innovations recommended by secretariats and executive heads.

Finnemore

Martha Finnemore draws on sociology and sociological organization theory to demonstrate the influence of norms on state behavior in world politics. Her central argument is that states are taught to accept new norms, values, and interests by international organizations.

The book's second case concerns the development of humanitarian norms in warfare, specifically, the establishment of standards of treatment and neutrality status for noncombatants, particularly the wounded and medical personnel. In this chapter, Finnemore focuses on the origins of the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Geneva Conventions. She notes that, because **humanitarian norms require states to restrain their use of violence during war—a time when the vital interests and even the survival of states are at stake—theories that ascribe only power-based interests to states offer no explanatory hold.**

Finnemore's final case study examines the shift in international development goals from a nearly exclusive focus on raising GNP and per capita GNP to an emphasis on poverty alleviation in the late 1960s and 1970s. This shift, the author argues, cannot be explained by domestic political changes within states nor can it be attributed to the initiative of states. While **development experts in universities and multilateral lending organizations did play a role in preparing the intellectual groundwork for this normative change**, Finnemore argues that the impetus for the shift came from one individual, **Robert McNamara**, and that its precise form was determined by the structure of the organization that he headed after 1968, the World Bank. In Finnemore's account, the bank "sold" poverty alleviation as an essential component of development policy to its member states through a **mixture of persuasion and coercion**.

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