

# OSTROM WORKSHOP RESEARCH SERIES

## Daniel A. DeCaro

*Urban & Public Affairs, Psychological & Brain Sciences,  
University of Louisville; Workshop Affiliated Faculty*

### “Legal Design Principles for State-Reinforced Self-Governance”

**Wednesday, September 20, 2017**

12:00 – 1:00 p.m. • Ostrom Workshop, 513 N. Park



Self-governance is a fundamental aspect of democracy, and an essential foundation of societal cooperation and problem-solving in the United States. Vincent and Elinor Ostrom’s seminal research identified important pitfalls and opportunities for self-governance within complex societies (V. Ostrom 1971, 1994) and pinpointed key factors (“design principles”) associated with robust self-governance, specifically in semi-autonomous communities (E. Ostrom 1990, 2010). However, the enabling conditions for broad-scale self-organization and cooperation within complex, highly regulated systems, including government agencies, modern organizations, and partnerships, are poorly understood. It is therefore difficult to engineer self-governing systems (e.g., failures of emergent democracies, collaboratives), or sustain the adaptive, democratic cooperation many societies require (Shivakumar 2005). The current research presentation builds upon Sarker’s (2013) concept of state-reinforced self-governance, and theories of social-ecological resilience and adaptive governance (Chaffin 2016), to discuss preliminary legal design principles, whereby official governments may facilitate self-governance and encourage societal cooperation. Research opportunities and challenges are discussed.



**Daniel DeCaro** directs the Social Decision Making and Sustainability Lab at the University of Louisville and co-chairs the Sustainable Behavior Team for Louisville’s trans-governmental policy collaborative, Partnership for a Green City. His research examines psychological processes involved in societal cooperation, including self-governance and decision making in social dilemmas (supported by NSF Award #1658608, with Co-PI’s Marco Janssen and Allen Lee). Daniel’s other projects examine legal aspects of self-governance in complex adaptive water governance systems ([website](#)).

Presentations are open to the public (see our website for papers). You are welcome to bring your lunch. For questions, contact Allison Sturgeon ([sturgeon@iu.edu](mailto:sturgeon@iu.edu); 812/855–3151).