

OSTROM WORKSHOP COLLOQUIUM SERIES

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“Political Context, Organizational Mission, and the Quality of Social Services: Insights from the Health Sector in Lebanon”

Monday, March 27, 2017

12:00 – 1:00 p.m.

Ostrom Workshop, 513 N. Park



In some developing countries, non-state actors have effectively replaced or overshadow the state as providers of social welfare. In this paper, we explore whether religious or other organizational types exhibit a “welfare advantage,” or a demonstrated superiority in service delivery, as some accounts suggest. Based on a preliminary study in Lebanon, we find evidence that secular NGOs exhibit superior health care quality but little support for a faith-based welfare advantage, a counterintuitive finding in Lebanon where religious actors dominate politics and command the most extensive resources. Our tentative explanation for this finding emphasizes the ways in which the sociopolitical context shapes the choices of qualified providers to select into particular organizations and why citizens might perceive some providers as superior, irrespective of the actual quality of services delivered. A scale-up of the project, which is currently in the field, tests multiple hypotheses about the sociopolitical determinants of service quality.



Melani Cammett is professor of government at Harvard University. Her current research explores governance and the politics of social service provision by public and non-state actors and identity politics in the Middle East. She is also working on a new project on the historical roots of varied development trajectories in the region and currently serves as a commissioner on the Lancet Commission on Syria. She has published numerous articles in academic journals, consults for development organizations, and has received various fellowships and awards ([website](#)).

Presentations are open to the public and are live streamed (see our website for URL and papers). You are welcome to bring your lunch. For questions, contact Allison Sturgeon (sturgeon@iu.edu; 812/855-3151).