



# INDIANA UNIVERSITY BLOOMINGTON OSTROM WORKSHOP

## COLLOQUIUM SERIES

### Michael McGinnis

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University, Bloomington*

Monday, September 14, 2020: 12:00 – 1:00 pm EST

Virtual via Zoom: [Click here for link to Zoom meeting](#)



### When is Polycentric Governance Sustainable? Using Institutional Theory to Identify Endogenous Drivers of Dysfunctional Dynamics

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In Polycentric Governance (PG) public and private authorities with overlapping domains of responsibility interact in complex ways that can, in some circumstances, perform well in producing diverse public goods and securing a resilient social order. This paper is part of our broader project comparing the policy performance of different kinds of polycentric governance in different empirical settings. Here we explore a question rarely considered: under what conditions will polycentric governance remain sustainable? Like any form of governance, PG has both positive and negative consequences. Its own dynamics generate levels of complexity that may seem overwhelming and unworkable, and yet it also insures that citizens retain access to multiple mechanisms for improving policy outcomes. We identify negative “syndromes” that may emerge endogenously from the interplay of bottom-up and top-down dynamics characteristic of polycentric governance, and suggest ways policy actors may counteract these trends towards dysfunctionality.

**Michael D. McGinnis** is Professor Emeritus of Political Science and Senior Research Fellow (and a former Director) of the Ostrom Workshop at Indiana University, Bloomington. He has published on topics in institutional analysis, game theory, arms control, humanitarian aid, and faith-based organizations. He has edited or co-edited seven volumes of papers by Ostrom Workshop scholars, and his current research applies principles of polycentric governance to the system of health policy in the United States.

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*Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all Ostrom workshop presentations will be virtual until further notice. Join instantly using the link above. For questions, contact Allison Sturgeon ([sturgeon@iu.edu](mailto:sturgeon@iu.edu))*