



# INDIANA UNIVERSITY BLOOMINGTON OSTROM WORKSHOP

## COLLOQUIUM SERIES

### Sheila R. Foster

*Urban Law and Policy, Georgetown University*

Monday, October 5, 2020: 12:00 – 1:00 pm EST

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



## Ostrom in the City: Conceptualizing the (New) Urban Commons

This talk is based on a chapter of my forthcoming MIT Press book (with Christian Iaione) entitled "Co-Cities: Empowering Equitable and Self-Sustaining Communities through Land and Resource Stewardship." Chapter Two, the urban commons, is the subject of the workshop. This chapter argues that while some urban commons, such as parks and urban gardens, share much in common with the natural resource commons that were the subject of Ostrom's work, many facets of collectively governed urban resources are notably distinct. We demonstrate why Ostrom's principles do not translate precisely in the city the way they do in nature. Ostrom's framework needs to be translated to the reality of urban environments which are often crowded, congested, socially diverse, economically complex, and heavily regulated. As such, we highlight some characteristics of "constructed" urban commons that are not captured well in Ostrom's design principles for user-governed natural resource commons. We identify three elements that are key to the creation of many urban commons and that are not always present in collectively managed natural resource commons - the role of central authorities, or the state, in enabling the creation and sustainability of urban common; legal and property experimentalism, or adaptation; and social and economic "pooling."

**Sheila R. Foster** is the Scott K. Ginsburg Professor of Urban Law and Policy at Georgetown. She holds a joint appointment with the Georgetown Law School and the McCourt Public Policy School. In addition to teaching at Georgetown, she also co-directs Laboratory for the Governance of the City as a Commons (LabGov), an international applied research project, is the chair of the advisory committee of the Global Parliament of Mayors, and sits on the New York City Mayor's panel on Climate Change.

Ostrom Workshop  
513 N. Park Ave  
Bloomington, IN 47408

[ostromworkshop.indiana.edu](http://ostromworkshop.indiana.edu)

*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))*