Thinking Like an Artisan: The Ostroms' Contribution to Political Economy

Principles of design and artisanship infuse the scholarly output of Vincent and Elinor Ostrom, informing their approach to public choice and the political analysis of institutions. Since the publication of Elinor Ostrom’s 'Governing the Commons' in 1990, analysts have rightly advanced the use of Lin’s design principles in innovative ways. However, the Ostroms’ emphasis on principles of design and artisanship significantly pre-date Lin’s Nobel Prize-winning monograph. This paper relates the Ostroms’ foundational work on design and artisanship through a comparative analysis of selections from their scholarly output and other artifacts, including their built environment and their Workshop in Political Theory and Policy Analysis. It then advances the thesis that one of the Ostroms’ significant contributions to public choice is their development of an alternative approach to policy analysis—their theory of artisanship—which grapples with human affairs in the context of political economy.

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*This will be a hybrid event. Attend via the Zoom link above or in person. For questions or further details please email workshop@indiana.edu*