Learning from the Vincent and Elinor Ostrom Workshop at Indiana University

Tom Evans
Indiana University

Berlin Workshop in Institutional Analysis of Social-Ecological Systems
June 14-16, 2014
The Challenge

• A brief history of the Ostrom Workshop
• Reflections from Ostrom Workshop scholars
• Thoughts for moving forward
Before the Ostrom Workshop

• Both Lin and Vincent worked on governance of water resources

• Groundwork for future work on CPRs, SES…

• Lin’s dissertation was a product of a seminar she took as a graduate student when Vincent was faculty at UCLA

• Vincent’s early work (1961) on polycentric systems
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>Arrival at Indiana University</td>
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<tr>
<td>1968</td>
<td>Hardin…</td>
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<tr>
<td>1973</td>
<td>Workshop in Political Theory and Policy Analysis created within Dept. of Political Science</td>
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<tr>
<td>1973</td>
<td>First major empirical project, provision of government policing services</td>
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<td>1981-2</td>
<td>Bielefeld U.</td>
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<td>1983*</td>
<td>Moved to current location, dedicated space separate from Department of PS</td>
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<td>1990</td>
<td>Governing the Commons</td>
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<td>1991-1992</td>
<td>IAD, IFRI</td>
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<td>First Workshop on the Workshop</td>
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<td>2001</td>
<td>AAAS…</td>
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<td>2007-2009</td>
<td>SES Framework</td>
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<td>2009</td>
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<td>2011</td>
<td>A geographer and a former state forester??</td>
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<td>2012</td>
<td>Lin and Vincent pass away</td>
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<td>2013</td>
<td>IU scrutiny of the Workshop</td>
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<td>2014</td>
<td>Workshop on the Workshop 5 External search for Director</td>
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<tr>
<td>Period</td>
<td>Emphasis</td>
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<td>1970’s</td>
<td>Public choice, federalism, provision of public services</td>
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<tr>
<td>1980’s</td>
<td>Experimental game theoretic methods, constitutional choice, diversity of collective action dilemmas, polycentrism, decentralization</td>
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<td>1990’s</td>
<td>Common Pool Resources, self-governance</td>
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<td>2000’s-2010’s</td>
<td>CPRs → Social-Ecological Systems</td>
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Reflections

• What characteristics/events/structures are responsible for the Ostrom Workshop attaining the success it has?

• Asked 12 former Workshop participants
Reflections

1) Be accepting, more than just tolerant, of different viewpoints, ideas, related areas of research, etc. Lin was exceptional at this and it served the Workshop very well.

“Cultivating a sense that student opinions are valued, that there isn’t a very tiered system where students should only dutifully listen and learn and not present their own thoughts or opinions. Lin was actually good at making people feel important in this way, even if others were not, and the celebrity surrounding Lin didn’t always encourage this sense either.”
Reflections

2) Weekly colloquium
   Graduate students ask first question
   1.5 hours in duration
   Commitment of 5-6 faculty to attend

3) Self organized working groups
   Catalysts for new projects
   Lin’s SES Framework paper, comments…
Reflections

4) Core grounding course (IAD)
Opportunity to students, visiting scholars to share their work in a rich way

Is this a risk??

5) Mini-conference (end of semester 2 day student work presentation) + book parties
Reflections

6) Extremely reliable staff in two key positions – budget and editorial support

7) Visiting Scholars program, many participating in core grounding course
   Cross-fertilization of ideas
Reflections

7) Take time to get a common understanding of concepts

8) Strong positive relationships between graduate students
   Clear rules and expectations to eliminate risk of cross-student competition

9) Space matters!
   Place where people can work together, informal exchanges…
A note about International Forestry Resources and Institutions (IFRI)

- Was a product of request by FAO to develop a program on forest governance analysis
- Overt intention to connect to practitioners
- Importance of policy analysis

“without a sincere engagement with ongoing policy processes (i.e. on the ground practitioners), the political theory research will lose out”
IF YOU ONLY HAVE A HAMMER
YOU TEND TO SEE EVERY PROBLEM AS A NAIL

ABRAHAM MASLOW
Give a small boy a hammer, and he will find that everything he encounters needs pounding.

— Abraham Kaplan
Give a small boy a hammer and they will find that every SES encountered becomes an action situation…

-- A reformed former Ostrom Workshop co-director
Interdisciplinarity
Observations

• Opportunity for serious engagement with physical scientists to integrate *ecological dynamics*
  – Ostrom Workshop never had this

• Opportunity to engage researchers trained in working with practitioners
  – Ostrom Workshop never had this (students/visiting scholars yes, but faculty not really)
Observations

• Lin’s gift for writing (editorial help + peer review)

• Interdisciplinary creep…
  – Initially grounded in political science
    + economics… sociology, public affairs, anthropology, geography, informatics

• Methodological and theoretical opportunistic co-opter – checking your baggage at the door…
  – ABM, QCA, social network analysis…
  – Rational choice…
Observations

• Opportunities for engagement with informatics/computational sciences
  – Problems of meta-analysis
  – Problems of data harmonization
  – Problems of data archiving, preservation
Observations

• Challenges of incentives…
  – “Money talks…”
  – Administrative challenge of recruiting junior faculty

• Graduate students as life blood
Observations

• One last (tortured) sports metaphor…

Baseball
Playing Together

- Resilient but deformable inner core
  - Engaged faculty
- Encompassing twine/string
  - Graduate students, post-docs, visiting scholars
- Resilient outer cover, with branding
  - Identity
Observations

• Importance of enjoying what you do…
Acknowledgements

Krister Andersson – Univ. Colorado - Boulder
Xavier Basurto – Duke U.
Esther Blanco – U. Innsbruck
Michael Cox – Dartmouth College
Burney Fischer – Indiana U.
Forrest Fleischman – Texas A&M
Marco Janssen – Arizona State U.
Mike McGinnis – Indiana U.
Catherine Tucker – Indiana U.
Sergio Villamayor – Humboldt U.
Jimmy Walker – Indiana U.
