

Governance in the time of poly-crises: fostering robustness through hybrid configurations

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Abstract: Public administrations around the world are experiencing conditions of high turbulence interspersed with existential threats from crises. It has resulted in a call towards robustness in academic literature to maintain core functions, yet find opportunities for improvement. This article provides a dynamic approach to the existent academic discourse through the hybridity perspective to better understand the decision-making and implementation processes undertaken by public administrations. The paper develops the conceptual approach of hybridity in public administration by delving into the enablers and impediments in hybridity formation in times of crises, the dynamics between the ideal types in formed hybrids and the linkages between hybridity and robustness. The paper highlights the role of administrative characteristics in shaping the hybrids, with new configurations impacted by a number of factors – from past reforms to existing capacities to fragmentation - that result in a multiplicity of responses across administrative systems. This results in formed hybrids, where instruments with different underlying logics from the hierarchy-market-network trichotomy establish positive-sum synergies or negative-sum dysfunctions. The configurations formed contribute towards robustness by nurturing capacities necessary for the different robustness strategies. Robustness is established through the ability of different administrative systems to reconfigure from one hybrid to another to develop the necessary capacities for the robustness strategies.