STV 9032: New avenues in the study of public governance: Turbulence, robustness, and organizational theory

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The course was organized during three consecutive days:
5 and 6 June: Teaching from 0900 to 1700 (each day 7.5 hrs of teaching)
7 June: Teaching from 0900 to 1500 (5.5 hrs of teaching)

The course was structured in three interconnected modules. Each module introduced and discussed different aspects of contemporary governance. The course took take place as a three-day intensive seminar and consisted of a mix of predominantly lectures and interaction during the lectures. The students were also required to prepare a draft paper for the course, present it, and comment on (at least) one other draft. The Instruction comprised workshop given as in-person teaching, student presentations of research papers, and individual written feedback on each student's research paper provided by me. Overall impression was that the number of students matched perfectly the time allotted for the course, and so I was very happy. We might have taken onboard 2-3 more students, but the size was good. The venue of University of Oslo was perfectly, and the practical organization of the course was indeed excellent. As a course organizer, I could focus on the contents of the course and the students without worrying about practicalities. As such, I have no clear suggestions for improvements. If anything, I would have liked that the course could be provided to students around Europe, but I understand that SCANCOR sets some limitations to participation.

The contents of the course were, as said, organized in three separate but tightly interconnected modules:

Module I: The first module of the course introduced the core challenges to contemporary public governance: turbulence and crisis. This section argued that we live in a near-chronic

state of crisis-induced turbulence that calls for a new type of governance that must be based on improvisation, agility and fast learning and supported by institutions permitting negotiated knowledge production, adaptation to new and unforeseen problems and innovation of new solutions when the standard solutions are found wanting. In this section we discussed concepts of crisis and turbulence, and how such concepts influence our analysis of public governance.

Module II: The section module moved to the next step and asked how politics can be organized in times of turbulence. This module discussed the idea of robustness. Robust governance aims to match the dynamic character of disruptive problems and events with continuous adjustments and innovations in governance solutions. As such, it goes beyond the immediate crisis response discussed by the crisis management literature and the long-stretched efforts to enhance preparedness and resilience. This module discussed an analytical framework that captures this predicament and outlined robustness as a new agenda for public governance and administration research.

Module II: The final section introduced the participants to one particular theory that is useful when thinking about robustness in turbulent times, and this is organization theory. This section continued the argument that robust public governance is a necessary condition for public service provision. Times of turbulence increasingly question the robustness of public sector organizations and reliable public service delivery. In response to this, a vast body of scholarly literature suggests that public sector organizations are profoundly unstable and unsustainable in the long run. As a contrast, however, this module suggested that public governance might be profoundly sustainable when resting on a relatively stable organizational fabric. To support this argument, this last module outlined the contours of an organizational-institutional approach to public governance studies. In addition, this module took the organization theory approach one step further towards a design approach in political science: I argued, and we discussed, how organization structure may be a *design instrument* of the context of choice in public governance. In effect, this module offered an avenue to build bridges between the academic and practitioner worlds of public administration.