

REFORM OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN FRANCE, ALWAYS STARTS AGAIN

André CABANIS

Université Toulouse 1 Capitole, Toulouse, France (retired)
andre.cabanis@univ-tlse1.fr

Mihaela PĂCEȘILĂ

Bucharest University of Economic Studies, Bucharest, Romania
mihaela.pacesila@man.ase.ro

Abstract: The policy of reforming municipalities in the French state shows continuity as regards its objectives while pointing out instability as regards the achievements. The paper aims to analyse the policy of local government reform in France, highlighting the challenges of reducing fragmentation of France's territory and the distribution of powers between the various constituencies: municipalities, departments, and regions. The data collection method used in this paper included the document analysis considered by the authors to be the best way to conduct a research on this topic. The analysis indicates that the local leaders are not able to take the necessary measures to ensure the progress of the reform, on one hand, and they fail to reach a consensus as regards the administrative-territorial division and the simplification of local election procedures and division of competencies between three tiers, on the other hand.

Keywords: administrative-territorial division, reform, simplification of local election system, division of competence

JEL Classification: R58, H70

DOI: 10.24818/ARAS/2022/3/1.03

1. INTRODUCTION

The policy of reforming municipalities in France is both very consistent in its objectives and very inconsistent in its achievements. This situation is somewhat similar to that in the pension system, as it is very difficult for the authorities to address this challenge. The main elements of the problem are almost unanimously known, accepted, and commented upon, as well as the necessary ways to identify the best solutions. However, disagreements arise when determining how to implement this policy. This contradiction between intention and achievement can be seen both in the policy of revising the administrative-territorial division and in the policy of simplifying local election procedures and division of competencies.

While the paper summarizes the main arguments regarding the need for a reform of administrative-territorial division by pointing out the discrepancy between communes, departments, and regions as regards their inhabitants, it focuses particularly on the solutions provided by the authorities over time to this problem. Moreover, considerations regarding the election of municipal, departmental, and regional councilors are also presented, highlighting the main deficiencies of the system used.

This article could give useful insights to researchers interested in exploring the obstacles to the French municipalities' reform. Moreover, the paper is expected to make a contribution to the literature in the field of local government reform.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of local government reform as well as its types, formal procedures, and recent practices associated with reforms have been largely addressed in the literature. According to several authors (Razin 2000; Razin, 2004; Blom-Hansen, 2010; Marcou, 2012; Kuhlmann and Bouckaert, 2016; Ladner, 2017), local government reform comes periodically to public authorities' attention in most European countries, generating tensions depending on several aspects: the tendency towards decentralization or centralization, as well as towards the traditional or modern ways of local government. Furthermore, in these authors' opinion, local government reform should be considered from several perspectives: territorial approach (focused on amalgamation,

structures of inter-municipal cooperation, municipal consolidation, etc.); decentralization of tasks and political autonomy; financial resources of local authorities; elections and other ways of citizen participation; governance practices.

In the context of all these perspectives, territorial reform is the most important one, having implications for territorial boundaries and local government (Barlow, 1997; Sancton, 2000). Steiner et al. (2016) highlighted the outcomes of amalgamation reform such as improved service quality, increasing autonomy, cost savings, are not sure to appear after mergers, but they result from other decisions of local authorities.

Inter-municipal cooperation could be another way to enhance economic efficiency of local services delivery that preserve smallest municipalities and avoid conflicts with the residents of rural areas (Painter et al., 2003; Kuhlman, 2008).

An interesting aspect arises when talking about the decentralization process. If, a few decades ago, there were authors (Esman and Uphoff, 1982) arguing that governments and national elites were not interested in transferring power at the local level, especially when considering that local authorities were threatening the regime, then the adoption of some form of decentralization became a necessity as regards political, socio-economic and administrative benefits (Hussein, 2006). However, while some authors (Brinkerhoff, 1998; Ikhide, 1999) point out the political benefits of decentralization (increased accountability and transparency, revenue distribution, decongestion of the center level, etc.), others (Smith, 1985) consider that it focuses on the privileges of local authorities, giving them the opportunity to perpetuate oppression.

As regards local finances, solutions are sought in order to ensure a more balanced distribution of financial resources between the different layers of administrative organization, especially as budgetary rigor is required at all levels of public administration (Profiroiu and Profiroiu, 2007). The last perspective, governance practices, start from the principles of modern local government, involving sharing power in decision-making, encouraging autonomy, transparency, and increasing the number of administrative partners (Frederickson, 1999; Kettl, 2002; Blomgren Bingham et al., 2005), compared to the traditional forms of government where the power of local authorities and citizen participation was limited (Razin, 2004).

Attention to the citizens' interests, as well as to the local authorities' responsibilities is a critical component of local government reform. In this regard, such a reform provides greater freedom of action to local authorities and allows citizens to express their opinions regarding local political actors' decisions (Chandler, 2000; Profiroiu și Păceșilă, 2010). This idea is in line with the other authors' opinion (Nalbandian, 1999; Denhardt and Denhardt, 2000) that focus both on the fundamental role of political engagement and the importance of meeting citizens' needs rather than on steering a market process (Warner and Hebdon, 2001; Warner and Hefetz, 2002). At the opposite pole, Bel et al. (2007) consider that emphasis should be placed on both the political and the market system when dealing with local government reform.

In this regard, local authorities gain greater powers giving them more freedom in developing local public policies (Păceșilă, 2004), ability to better fulfill their commitments to citizens, as well as increased responsibilities, and an expanded role of local government (Charlick, 2001). However, the opinions of researchers in the field are different. There are authors arguing that reforms could lead to increasing the citizens' role in the decision-making process (Elcock, 1998; Profiroiu, 2002), while others are more skeptical about the changes they could bring (Boyne, 1999; Leach and Wingfield, 1999; Tam, 1999).

Ensuring proper management in implementation is an important aspect of local government reform. In this context, Andrei et al. (2006) considers that the congestion of daily tasks is an important risk in carrying out this reform, thus leaving little time to look for new solutions to the difficulties encountered. Consequently, the success of the reform requires that a large number of target groups (in particular, key levels of leadership and decision-making) express their support, commitment, and recognition of the need for change and its implementation.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The paper is based on desk research of French normative acts such as laws, decrees, ordinances, orders, as well as on reports, scientific articles, and books. By using the document analysis method, the local practices in

the field of administrative-territorial division, as well as of elections, are examined in order to draw attention to the role played by the authorities' regulations over time.

Document analysis is a qualitative research method involving the examination and interpretation of data in order to provide meaning to the study, to gain understanding, and to promote empirical knowledge (Solak and Erdem, 2015). In this regard, 23 normative acts were used to explore the French levels of administration and their main weakness along with the election system at the local level.

4. THE REVISION OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE-TERRITORIAL DIVISION

The experts in local government more or less agree on the shortcomings of the administrative-territorial division in France. This situation has been going on for more than half a millennium. In this context, any attempt at reform faces many obstacles related to traditions, customs, and interests. However, as regards the basic administrative-territorial units, i.e. the municipalities, it is generally accepted that their number should be reduced. France had 34,965 communes in 2021, their number exceeding the total number of the three major EU countries, namely Germany, Spain, and Italy. The population of French municipalities is on average 1,800, which is lower than in Germany (11,000) and in Spain and Italy (8,000). Regarding Romania, where there are 2,686 municipalities, the average exceeds 3,000 inhabitants.

The main problem is the disproportion between these various constituencies. While Paris has over two million inhabitants, some French municipalities located in the mountains are almost deserted and survive only by the registration of a few additional voters, residing elsewhere but owning land there. They are very interested in maintaining this administrative framework, even though the Municipal Council meetings are often seen as family reunions rather than political assemblies. The financial means at the disposal of the mayor are very limited to the point that having the facade of the town hall repainted is a ten-year event. This absurd situation can be explained by what happened in the past. According to the 14 December 1789 decree for the constitution of the municipalities, the National Constituent Assembly has chosen to draw up a map of municipalities in 1789 in order to keep the boundaries of the "good cities" of the Old Regime, but also of the tens of thousands of parishes existing since then, i.e. the ecclesiastical districts. It is about meeting the demands of rural populations, to the point that the first division leads to a total, estimated at 44,000 French municipalities (Archives parlementaires, t. XXII, 1885, p. 164-166).

One possible solution would be to encourage the inhabitants of the smallest communes to join forces with their neighbors to form structures of inter-municipal cooperation with increased resources. In fact, successive Ministers of the Interior have long encouraged prefects to put pressure on local elected officials to force them to accept the disappearance of their commune in favor of a larger constituency (Law no. 71-588 of 16th July 1971). Despite the subsidies promised to those who agree to sacrifice, the results are disappointing, showing the people's attachment to their traditional administrative framework. This emotional bond between local authorities and its inhabitants has continued to grow to this day. Moreover, of all the elected officials, the mayor is always the one who comes first in the polls, as the one who is most readily trusted.

Another solution, closely related to the French municipalities, starts from the problems they face. Due to lack of financial and human resources, they are unable to provide their fellow citizens with the services they need most, such as sanitation, road maintenance, fire protection, electrification, etc. They are required to create 'multi-purpose municipal unions' (Ordinance No. 59-29 of January 5, 1959 amended by Law no. 2015-991 of 7 August, 2015). In fact, their number reached 1223 in 2021. Subsequently, their number may decrease, while they will be gradually replaced by structures of inter-municipal cooperation with extended powers (Law no. 92-125 of February 6, 1992 amended by Law no. 2015-991 of 7 August, 2015). Currently, their number is 995, comprising 25,871 municipalities. In this context, it seems that the right solution has been found, a solution that responds to the lack of resources of small municipalities while preserving a framework to which the population is attached. However, there remains a problem, in that decisions are no longer taken by those elected directly by universal suffrage, but by those elected by indirect vote, according to negotiations between political parties. Therefore, in 2013 a system was set up to indicate those municipal elected officials who could have access to the community level (Law No. 2013-403 of 17 May, 2013).

The second tier of administration in France is provided by the department. In number 101, they are the subject of a reproach somewhat comparable to that addressed to the French municipalities: they are accused of being too small to play the role expected of such a constituency, that of which, on the other hand, makes the connection between the base and the state power. Moreover, although their delimitation is quite recent, starting from a decision taken in 1789 (Decree of 22 December 1789) and then from a text of 1790 (Decree of 16 February 1790) setting their final list, the objectives pursued then show the archaic character of the principles used. It is primarily a matter of breaking with the old division, namely provinces, which is supposed to encourage local particularisms, even secessionist temptations, a fear now overcome. Secondly, it is a question of facilitating access to administrative services, so that, sticking to the explanations frequently put forward regarding the most marginal points of the department, one can get to the city on a horseback day, a mode of transport obviously outdated.

Over time, these constituencies are very unevenly populated: over 2.6 million in the northern department, considered the most densely inhabited; less than 80,000 in Lozère, considered the most deserted. Either because they cover a too small area or because they lack the necessary financial means, the departments are inadequate to what should be their areas of action: economic intervention and regional planning. According to many public management experts, when talking of a superfluous level, the department could be included in this category. There are often discussions of grouping them together with the regions. The creation of the territorial councilor position by the law of December 16, 2010, which will not apply, went in this direction (Law No. 2010-1563 of 16 December 2010). The General Councils currently classified as departmental – and their administration represent a too powerful pressure group for a government to dare confront them, let alone suppress them. The obstacles to reform are comparable to those protecting the French communes. To use a well-known formula, these constituencies are too small to live, too many to die.

Finally, the region is the most recent constituency. It has emerged as a result of the increase in public interventionism and the political leaders' desire to have a large enough local administrative framework in order to conduct an effective regional planning policy. After many stillborn projects' failure and in accordance to a delimitation set by a Ministerial Order of 28 November 1956 regarding the influence area of metropolises of equilibrium, the law no. 72-619 of 1972 provides a first status to the regions as a public establishment led by an elected Council. Later, as part of the recent decentralization policy of the Left Party that has recently come to power, a law of 1982 transformed the regions into real municipalities (Law no. 82-213 of March 2, 1982). The delimitation of the 26 French regions have seemed to be satisfactory until 2016: on the one hand, they were comparable in size to the Italian and Spanish regions, even if their financial resources were much smaller; on the other hand, they were relatively homogeneous as regards their population, between 2.5 and 10 million inhabitants.

If there are people suggesting a reduction in the number of regions in order to give them more powers, this does not seem to be a priority in relation to the municipalities regrouping or the departments' disappearance. The support of the latter was so strong that, to the surprise of a lot of us, President Hollande neglected to reform the two most problematic types of constituencies and proposed the reduction of regions, which was enshrined in a law of 2015 (Law no. 2015-29 of 16 January 2015). After very long discussions, it has gone from 22 metropolitan regions to 13, while the number of overseas regions remained 5. Although the goal of this reform was to 'gain efficiency through rationalization of institutional tiers' (Carmouze et al., 2019, p.16) and save money, the reform involved significant additional costs.

5. SIMPLIFICATION OF LOCAL ELECTIONS' PROCEDURES

The election of municipal, departmental and regional councilors meets sometimes contradictory objectives, which makes their compatibility very complicated. In order to allow minorities to be represented, the proportional ballot is used to elect the representatives of municipalities and regions. To help the part getting the most votes to govern easily, a majority bonus is granted to the list that got more than 50% of the votes in the first round, or the simple majority in the second round. The bonus amounts to 50% of the seats for the Municipal Councils and 25% for the Regional Councils. The remaining seats are distributed in proportion to the votes obtained, while the winning list is taken into account in this second distribution. In the same spirit of diversity, the regional lists are presented in different departments, which favors local diversity, but does not encourage regional unity.

Ambiguous provisions: between the two rounds, the lists can merge, leading to regroupings by affinity, but also to partisan maneuvers. As regards municipalities, the foreigners who are members of the European Union are allowed to vote without the right to hold the positions of mayor or deputy (Law no. 98-404 of 25 May 1998). The elections are held by sector in Paris, Marseille, and Lyon, a reform that was originally intended to allow the ruling team to perpetuate itself. However, a traditional enclave remains: municipalities with less than 1,000 inhabitants where a multi-member majority system operates, that is to say, with isolated candidacies, incomplete lists, and especially splitting, allow voters to make their choice apart from any considerations presented by a party. Finally, as regards the lists, they should respect equality between men and women (Law No. 2007-128 of 31 January 2007).

As for the departments, they inherited a much-criticized way of election which has been improved without changing the overall balance. The base is provided by the direct uninominal system with two rounds. In this regard, the departmental territory is divided into cantons, and the winner obtains the absolute majority in the first round and the relative majority in the second round based on the vote in each constituency. Moreover, the Council is half-renewed every three years. Criticisms of these methods result primarily from the unequal share of the cantons in terms of demographics, leading to an over-representation of the countryside compared to cities. They also want to be half renewed, which makes it difficult to take into account major movements in public opinion. Finally, the balanced representation of both sexes is not guaranteed, as is the case for the electoral lists.

A law of 2013 is sought to address these shortcomings (Law No. 2013-403 of 17 May, 2013). It is based on a redistribution of cantons by several decrees published between 13 and 26 February 2014, while taking into account the populations' size of each constituency. Thus, the balance between rural and urban centers is better ensured. Furthermore, the law fully restores the renewal every six years based on a provision adopted in 1990, subsequently repealed and, therefore, revived. Finally, to ensure gender equality, an original system was created as a "binomial" vote: the candidacies take the form of a pair of two first-class candidates, a man and a woman, and two alternates, also a man and woman. To avoid any implicit hierarchy, everyone's names are reported in alphabetical order. The majority pair in the first or second round will be elected.

The accumulation of mandates is a long-time debated issue, as well as subject to multiple provisions. In this case, it is found that the arguments intersect. The initial problem has its origins in the beginning of the Third Republic when certain political personalities have multiplied their elected positions at municipal, departmental, national level, not to mention the structures of inter-municipal cooperation. As for Europe, it has been around for more than half a century. In this regard, the arguments for denouncing the risk of many interests, as well as negligence in holding a mandate increase. In fact, above all, the two assemblies of the French Parliament are the victims of high absenteeism, especially since experience shows that not the most assiduous elected officials are the most easily re-elected. On the one hand, according to supporters of mandates' accumulation, the freedom of voters' choice should not be restricted, but on the other hand, several levels of responsibility lead to the sharing of useful experiences while giving a kind of security, a waiting job in case of election failure. Above all, and without much recognition, those who are cumulating multiple mandates are discouraged insofar as they seem to be clinging to the mandates that others could hold.

The laws have followed one another since 1985 (Law no. 85-1406 of December 30, 1985) until the law of 2014 (Organic Law No. 2014-125 of 14 February, 2014; Law no. 2104-126 of 14 February, 2014) laying the foundations of the general system. It would take too long to list all the rules of incompatibility applying to Constitutional Council, Economic, Social, and Environmental Council, magistrates, non-elected public officials, mixed economy companies, local public companies, etc. Similarly, it is not necessary to mention the provisions explaining the time limits for applying these prohibitions or the cases allowing standing for an election involving accumulation, even if it requires making a choice, in case of success. To stick to the essentials, it is important to focus on the mandates in local authority councils (municipal, departmental, or regional councils, to which are added those of overseas authorities), within the executives of these municipalities (mayor, constituency mayor, deputy mayor or president and vice-president), and in the national assemblies (National Assembly and Senate) or European ones. There are also prohibitions: no more than two mandates in the local Councils, no accumulation between an executive mandate and a mandate in national or European assemblies, and no accumulation between two executive mandates. In fact, these standards are very complex and long-time

negotiated between deputies and senators, many of whom could have been particularly attentive to their personal circumstances.

6. DIVISION OF COMPETENCES

The councils resulting from these various procedures are responsible for more or less precisely defined competences, to the point that some criticize the legislation because it could not clearly distinguish the responsibilities of one of others (Law No. 96-142 of February 21, 1996). However, there are also the dominant ones. Thus, this explains the way that municipalities provide a local administration. This involves mandatory competencies, such as marital service (including birth, marriage and death registration documents), organization of elections, and protection of local public order, local roads, and funerals. The municipality involvement also results from the tourist offices and the municipal centers of social action's activities. Above all, the mayor was entrusted with issuing building permits (Law No. 83-8 of January 7, 1983) in accordance with local urban plans and areas of concerted development. Currently, some of them tend to be blamed for being too restrictive in this area, in order to satisfy fearful citizens, which would not make it possible to meet the housing needs of a growing population.

The department's competences correspond to a responsibility of territorial solidarity, including an active partnership with other lower-level municipalities. The most important aspect of their mandate lies in the health and social action corresponding to more than half of the departmental budget: active solidarity income (Law no. 2008-1249 of December 1, 2008 amended by Law No. 2015-994 of 17 August 2015), personalized allowance for autonomy, management of maternal and child protection services, and assistance to people with disabilities. Moreover, there is aid for communes and associations, or for supporting local employment in the fields of agriculture, specific regional crops, crafts, and tourism. Finally, the department is responsible for water management, land consolidation and landscaping, and especially for firefighting through the Departmental Fire and Rescue Service.

Two important regional competences show that, due to their size, the regions are best positioned to intervene in the fields of transport, as well as regional planning in general and economic development (Law No. 2015-991 of 7 August, 2015). On the contrary, the departments are too small in size to design large-scale communications networks and to claim to organize the space and distribute activities, especially the economic ones. To go into a little more detail, the competence in transport gives the region the possibility of interventions in the management of ports, airports, regional express trains, interurban and school road transport, public roads and stations, intermodal transport, etc.

With regard to land use planning and economic development, it is necessary to develop a plan for sustainable development and territorial equality. The region sets its goals regarding territorial balance and equality, building infrastructure of regional interest, opening up of rural areas, housing, and economic management of space. This competence extends to environmental protection involving rural and urban development, standards for regional natural parks, waste management, and, finally, the regional air quality plan. As for economic development, it involves animating competitiveness clusters, implementing the regional plan for economic development, innovation, and internationalization, including guidelines for business assistance.

The state transfers several responsibilities to local authorities. This is the case for the construction and maintenance of educational buildings: nursery and primary schools to the communes, colleges to the departments, high schools as well as agricultural schools and establishments to the regions. Moreover, the departments manage departmental archives and libraries and provide support to cultural life, especially in schools. For the benefit of the regions, transfers are complemented by vocational training, including job-seeker training, as well as apprenticeship and vocational training management.

7. RESEARCH CONCLUSIONS

The policy of revising the administrative-territorial division as well as of simplifying local election procedures and division of competences between three layers is investigated in this article. The subject of this paper is a recurring theme in the writings of journalists to denounce the blockages of French society. However, the leaders

are not able to take the measures that seem to reach a broad agreement. This is the case with the reform of municipalities, which is progressing very slowly, although the progress in recent years is satisfactory.

The article makes theoretical as well as empirical contributions. Theoretically, the paper investigates the literature on municipalities reforms by pointing out the opinions of different authors interested in the field, as well as the results of various studies addressing this issue considered important and topical by certain European countries. Empirically, the paper provides some insight into the French shortcomings of the administrative-territorial division along with the provisions of the local election system and division of competences between the three tiers of territorial division.

REFERENCES

- Andrei T., Proftoiu M., Turturean M. (2006). Reforma administrației publice locale. Cazul României. *Economie Teoretică și Aplicată*, 55-64.
- Archives Parlementaires de 1787 à 1860 – Première série (1787-1799) Tome XXII – Du 3 janvier au 5 février 1791. (1885.) Paris: Librairie Administrative P. Dupont.
- Barlow M. (1997). Administrative systems and metropolitan regions. *Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy*, 15, 399-411.
- Bel G., Hebdon R., Warner M. (2007). Local government reform: Privatisation and its alternatives, *Local Government Studies*, 33(4), 507-515.
- Blom-Hansen J. (2010). Municipal Amalgamations and Common Pool Problems: The Danish Local Government Reform in 2007. *Scandinavian Political Studies*, 33(1), 51-73.
- Blomgren Bingham L., Nabatchi T., O’Leary R. (2005). The New Governance: Practices and Processes for Stakeholder and Citizen Participation in the Work of Government. *Public Administration Review*, 65(5), 547-558.
- Boyne G.A. (1999). Processes, performance and best value in local government. *Local Government Studies*, 25(2), 1-15.
- Brinkerhoff D.W. (1998). *Democratic governance and sectoral policy reform: linkages, complementarities and synergies*. Accessed on March 9, 2022, available at https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PNACM017.pdf
- Carmouze, L., Hernandez, S., Serval, S. (2019) Through the Looking-Glass> What Does Strategic Planning Reveal in French Local Governments ?, in Hintea et al eds (2019) Strategic Planning in Local Communities. A Cross – National Study of 7 Countries., Palgrave Macmillian
- Chandler D. (2000). Active citizens and the therapeutic state: the role of democratic participation in local government reform. *Policy & Politics*, 29(1), 3-14.
- Charlick R.B. (2001). Popular participation and local government reform. *Public Administration and Development*, 21, 149-157.
- Decree of 14 December 1789 relating to the constitution of municipalities (décret du 14 décembre 1789 relatif à la constitution des municipalités).
- Decree of 22 December 1789 on the constitution of primary assemblies and administrative assemblies (Décret du 22 décembre 1789 relatif à la loi du 22 décembre 1789 relative à la constitution des assemblées primaires et des assemblées administratives)
- Decree of 16 February 1790 on the division of the kingdom (Décret du 16 février 1790 sur la division du royaume)

REFORM OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN FRANCE, ALWAYS STARTS AGAIN

- Denhardt R.B. and Denhardt J. (2000). The new public management: serving rather than steering. *Public Administration Review*, 60(6), pp.549-559.
- Elcock H. (1998). The changing problem of accountability in modern government: an analytical agenda for reformers', *Public Policy and Administration*, 13(3), 23-37.
- Esman MJ, Uphoff NT. 1982. *Local Organization and Rural Development: The State of the Art. Rural Development*. Committee Cornell: Ithaca, NY.
- Frederickson H.G. (1999). The Repositioning of American Public Administration. *Political Science and Politics* 32(4), 701-11.
- Hussein M.K. (2006). Capacity building challenges in Malawi's local government reform programme. *Development Southern Africa*, 23(3), 371-383.
- Ikhide S. (1999). *Local government finance and accountability*. In Oluwu D, Williams A, Soremekun K (Eds), *Governance and Democratisation in West Africa*. Dakar: CODESRIA, 165-192.
- Kettl D. F. 2002. *The Transformation of Governance: Public Administration for Twenty-First Century America*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Kuhlmann S. (2008). Reforming Local Public services-Trends and Effects in Germany and France, *Public Management Review*, vol.10, no.5, pp.573-596
- Kuhlmann S. and Bouckaert G. (2016). *Local Public Sector Reforms in Times of Crisis. Governance and Public Management*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Ladner, A. (2017) Chapter1 Autonomy and Austerity: Re-Investing in Local Government, p.23-52 in Schab, C., Bouchaert, G., Kuhlman, S. (eds), *The Future of Local Government in Europe. Lesson from Research and Practice in 31 Countries*, Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft
- Law no. 71-588 of 16th July 1971 on municipality mergers (la loi n° 71-588 du 16 juillet 1971 sur les fusions et les regroupements de communes)
- Law No. 72-619 of July 5, 1972 on the creation and organization of the regions (Loi n° 72-619 du 5 juillet 1972 portant création et organisation des régions)
- Law no. 82-213 of March 2, 1982 on the rights and freedoms of municipalities, departments and regions (Loi n° 82-213 du 2 mars 1982 relative aux droits et libertés des communes, des départements et des régions)
- Law no. 83-8 of January 7, 1983 on the allocation of powers between municipalities, departments, regions and the state (Loi n° 83-8 du 7 janvier 1983 relative à la répartition de compétences entre les communes, les départements, les régions et l'Etat)
- Law no. 85-1406 of December 30, 1985 on limiting the cumulation of electoral mandates and elective positions (Loi n° 85-1406 du 30 décembre 1985 tendant à limiter le cumul des mandats électoraux et des fonctions électives)
- Law no. 92-125 of February 6, 1992 on the territorial administration of the Republic (Loi n° 92-125 du 6 février 1992 relative à l'administration territoriale de la République)
- Law no. 96-142 of 21 February 1996 on the legislative part of the General Code of Local Authorities (Loi n° 96-142 du 21 février 1996 relative à la partie législative du Code général des collectivités locales)

- Law no. 98-404 of 25 May 1998 on the conditions for the application of Article 88-3 of the Constitution relating to the exercise by citizens of the European Union residing in France, other than French nationals, of the right to vote and stand as candidates at municipal elections and transposing Directive 94/80/EC of 19 December 1994 (Loi n° 98-404 du 25 mai 1998 déterminant les conditions d'application de l'article 88-3 de la Constitution relatif à l'exercice par les citoyens de l'Union européenne résidant en France autre que les ressortissants français, du droit de vote et d'éligibilité aux élections municipales et portant transposition de la directive 94/80/CE du 19 décembre 1994)
- Law No. 2007-128 of 31 January 2007 on promoting equal access of women and men to electoral mandates and elective functions (Loi n° 2007-128 du 31 janvier 2007 tendant à promouvoir l'égal accès des femmes et des hommes aux mandats électoraux et fonctions électives)
- Law no. 2008-1249 of 1 December 2008 on the active Solidarity income and the reform of social inclusion policies (Loi n° 2008-1249 du 1er décembre 2008 généralisant le revenu de solidarité active et réformant les politiques d'insertion)
- Law No. 2010-1563 of 16 December 2010 on the reform of local authorities (Loi n° 2010-1563 du 16 décembre 2010 de réforme des collectivités territoriales)
- Law No 2013-403 of 17 May 2013 on the election of departmental councillors, municipal councillors and community councillors, and modifying the electoral calendar (Loi n° 2013-403 du 17 mai 2013 relative à l'élection des conseillers municipaux, des conseillers départementaux et des conseillers communautaires, et modifiant le calendrier électoral)
- Law no. 2104-126 of 14 February, 2014 prohibiting the cumulation of local executive positions with a mandate of representative in the European Parliament (Loi n° 2104-126 interdisant le cumul des fonctions exécutives locales avec le mandat de représentant au Parlement européen)
- Law no. 2015-29 of 16 January 2015 on the delimitation of regions, regional and departmental elections and modifying the electoral calendar (Loi n° 2015-29 du 16 janvier 2015 relative à la délimitation des régions, aux élections régionales et départementales et modifiant le calendrier électoral)
- Law no. 2015-991 of 7 August, 2015 on the new territorial organization of the Republic (Loi n° 2015-991 du 7 août 2015 portant nouvelle organisation territoriale de la République)
- Law no. 2015-994 of 17 August 2015 on social dialogue and employment (Loi n° 2015-994 du 17 août 2015 relative au dialogue social et à l'emploi).
- Leach S. and Wingfield M. (1999). Public participation and the democratic renewal agenda: prioritization or marginalization? *Local Government Studies*, 25(4), 46-59.
- Marcou, G. (2012). Les reformes des collectivites territoriales en Europe: problematiques des communes et idiosyncrasies. *Revue francaise d'administration publique*, 1(141), 183-205
- Nalbandian J. (1999) Facilitating community, enabling democracy: new roles for local government managers. *Public Administration Review*, 59(3), pp.187-197.
- Order of 28 November 1956 defining the framework for regional action programs (Arrêté du 28 novembre 1956 définissant le cadre des programmes d'action régionale)
- Ordinance No. 59-29 of January 5, 1959 on the decentralization and simplification of municipal administration (Ordonnance n° 59-29 du 5 janvier 1958 relative à la décentralisation et à la simplification de l'administration communale)

- Organic Law No. 2014-125 of 14 February, 2014 prohibiting the cumulation of local executive functions with the mandate of deputy or senator (Loi organique n° 2014-125 du 14 février 2014 interdisant le cumul de fonctions exécutives locales avec le mandat de député ou de sénateur)
- Painter, C., Isaac-Henry, K., McAnulla, S. (2003). Modernising Local Government: Micro-Organisational Reform and Changing Local Structural Configurations, *Local Government Studies*, vol.59, no.4, pp.31-53
- Păceșilă M. (2004). Regionalizarea în statele Uniunii Europene. *Revista de Administrație și Management Public*, 3, 104-111.
- Profiroiu M. (2002). Accelerarea reformei administrației publice. *Revista Transilvană de Științe Administrative*, VIII, 13-23.
- Profiroiu A. and Profiroiu M. (2007). Autonomia financiară a colectivităților locale din România – premisă a succesului descentralizării. *Revista Transilvană de Științe Administrative*, 19, 77-85
- Profiroiu A. and Păceșilă M. (2010). Critical Analysis of the Public Administration System in Romania and its Directions for Reform. *Administratie si Management Public*, 14, 153-164.
- Razin E. (2000). The impact of local government organization on development and disparities – A comparative perspective. *Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy*, 18, 17-31.
- Razin E. (2007). Needs and impediments for local government reform: lessons from Israel. *Journal of Urban Affairs*, 26(5), 623-640.
- Sancton A. (2000). *Merger Mania: The Assault on Local Government*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press.
- Smith B.C. (1985). *Decentralisation: the territorial dimension of the state*. London: Allen & Unwin.
- Solak E. and Erdem G. (2015). A Content Analysis of Virtual Reality Studies in Foreign Language Education. *Participatory Educational Research*. 2(5), 21-26.
- Steiner, R., Kaiser, C., Eythorsson, G.T. (2016) A comparative analysis of Amalgamation Reforms in Selected European Countries, p.23-42 in Kuhlmann S. and Bouckaert G. (2016). *Local Public Sector Reforms in Times of Crisis. Governance and Public Management*. London: Palgrave Macmillan
- Tam H. (1999). Communitarian ideas and third way politics. *Local Government Voice*, 3(2), 26-9.
- Warner M.E. and Hebdo, R. (2001). Local government restructuring: privatization and its alternatives, *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 20(2), pp.315-336.
- Warner M.E. and Hefetz A. (2002). Applying market solutions to public services: an assessment of efficiency, equity and voice, *Urban Affairs Review*, 38(1), pp.70-89.