

Chapter 5

From Republican Spaces of Schooling to Educational Territories?

The Problematic Emergence of Educational Territories in Postdecentralized France



David Giband

Like in many other Western countries, schooling and spatial planning in France have been subject to synchronous changes rooted in the state decentralization process (Vanier, 2008). In Europe, most of the decentralization reforms enacted since the 1980s have tended to reorganize relationships and regulations between the national and the local level and between education and spatial planning issues in accordance with a “post-bureaucratic paradigm” (Kernaghan, 2000; Mons, 2004, p. 24). Many scholars (Cowen, 1996; Mons, 2007) have underlined the changes affecting the *education state* and the emergence of postbureaucratic rhetoric, norms, and ideologies (Olssen, Codd, & O’Neill, 2004). These changes are synchronous with: the crisis of a public school system seen as inefficient; the neoliberal turn in education witnessing the introduction of new public management norms in the public administration sphere, including both urban/spatial planning and education policies; and international pressures from large institutions (such as OECD) promoting new education policies, introducing or reinforcing stakeholders in education (parents, local authorities, private sector, etc.). Breaking with centralized models, a differentiated approach to education and spatial planning has emerged whose practitioners take in account national, regional, and urban locations.

In France, educational policies and spaces have been subject to incomplete phases of decentralization. Starting in the 1980s, proponents of the decentralization process, popularized as the “three acts of decentralization,” have experienced difficulties in transforming the education state—inherited from the construction of the French Republic in the late nineteenth century and characterized by a centralized space of schooling (Prost, 2004)—into autonomous educational territories. This long decentralization process seems to have proceeded in two distinct phases.

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The first phase (Act 1 and 2 of the decentralization, 1983–2004, 2004–2011) is synchronous with a postbureaucratic rhetoric valuing *territorial logics*, aimed at easing the emergence of local educational spaces ensuring national equity in education and favoring “a local mode of educational governance” aligned with the new territorial architecture of the country (Faure & Douillet, 2005, p. 110). The *local, le territoire* (territory), seems to be both the horizon and the ideal space for educational decentralization policies even if it obviously lacks a strong conceptual definition (Vanier, 2008). These changes are also linked to the implementation of national policies of affirmative action in urban education, favoring the development of *Education Priority Areas* (EPAs; *zones d’éducation prioritaire* (ZEP); Heurdiere, 2011). Newly entrusted with responsibilities in education, municipal authorities are part of the emergence of local educational territories according to a rhetoric inspired by the urbanism field. The local is to be understood under the auspices of an educational territory (*territoire éducatif*). The notion of territory is specific to the French administrative system and also to the French social geography (Di Méo & Buléon, 2005). Widely disputed and trivialized (Agnew, 2010; Barreteau et al., 2016), the word *territoire* is commonly used to describe sociospatial entities in which stakeholders—through social, cultural, and political practices—claim territorial appurtenance and identity.

The second phase (2011–...), known as Act 3 of the decentralization, modifies the geography of schooling following a neoliberal path, its developers questioning the relevance of the concept of educational territory that previously structured the regulation of schooling on a local scale. Because of its new commitment to decentralization, the French state introduces logics of accountability and assessment. In a context in which the state is transforming itself from an education state into an *evaluator state*, the local must be reconsidered (Charlot, 1994). The purpose of this paper is to question evolutionary relationships between schools and its spaces in recent major French educational and spatial planning reforms. The watchword *territoire* brings with it complex strategies, practices, ideologies, and policies for the local to adapt to paradoxical directives. After discussing the emergence of territory as both a structuring spatial figure and an ideal for public action in education priority areas, I will examine the spread of the *territorial paradigm* in the spatial governance of education. I will then use the concept of *spaces of interdependency* (Bartho & Monfroy, 2005) to understand—in a competitive (and neoliberal) context for schools and local authorities—how the *territoire* produces *territorial arrangements* in order to fit with various issues and directives in the spatial organization of education (international competition, educational inequalities, demographic challenges). Spaces of interdependency are more than just an incomplete decentralization process attached to a French case study; rather, they are the base of a new educational order (Ben-Ayed, 2009) answering diverse directives in a hybridized sociospatial system.

Territoire as an Ideal Space of Schooling: The Territorial Paradigm

A historical figure of the republican ideal, school used to be the guarantor of national equity and cohesion. From the birth of the Third Republic (1875) to the de Gaulle administration (1958–1969), its spatialization was conceived as a homogenous and equitable national space ensuring national order in place of local disorder (Lelièvre, 2008). A pillar of the Republic, school was a state matter, centralized and depending on the state authority. The national French educational space is divided into territorial academies (as Fig. 5.1 shows), delimiting strict administrative perimeters placed under the authority of the local representative of the state Ministry of Education (*Inspecteur d'Académie*). This centralized model was called into question with the social movements of 1968 and the democratization of secondary schooling in the 1970s (Prost, 2004).

Decentralizing the Education State

Following the lead of most European countries, in the early 1980s France committed to implement state reforms through a decentralization process that remains unfinished. In what scholars have characterized as *minimal decentralization* (see Fig. 5.1), education and spatial planning play a central role (van Zanten, 2012). The objectives of the first act of the decentralization (1982–2004) are to articulate in a single movement the reform of *the territorial state* (centralized state controlling spatial planning) and of the education state (the central state as the organizer, planner, and leader of educational policies) into a territorial, governance-combining state decentralization, devolution, and *Europeanization*¹ of public policies on a local scale. Its proponents seek to face issues and critics denouncing rising social inequalities and the inefficiency of the national educational system. As Derouet (2004) quoted, in the early 1980s the French system of education witnessed the end of a traditional educational order in which education was a state concern. The massive expansion of enrolments in secondary schools, settled in the 1970s,² led to a *schooling explosion* and the unprecedented growth of educational inequalities (Broccolochi, Ben-Ayed, & Trancart, 2006). The generalized access to secondary education and the opening of secondary schools and high schools to low-income children failed to offer equal educational opportunities. The purpose of such reforms is also to transform and adapt the nation-state and its territorial instruments (spatial planning, education) to the new emergent global order of the end of the twentieth century (Olssen et al., 2004).

¹Europeanization refers to the translation of the European Union policies and rules into national and local educational policies (Mons, 2007).

²Through the national policy of *collège unique* (uniform secondary school system; 1975).

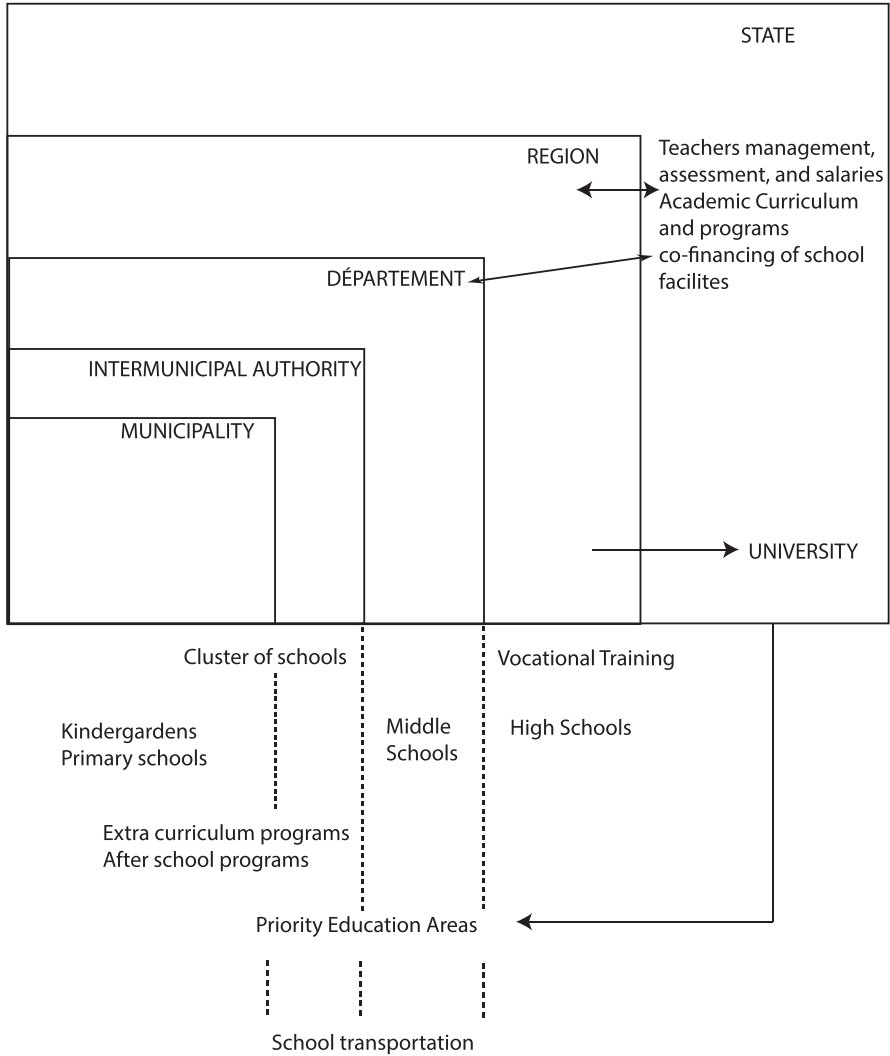


Fig. 5.1 A minimal and complex educational decentralization. Source: Design by author

Simultaneously to the state decentralization policy, an educational territorial framework was set dividing educational responsibilities according to the new institutional architecture of the country: The *région* manages and finances high schools, the *département* middle schools, and municipalities primary schools (see Fig. 5.1). Decentralization is described as an incomplete transfer of responsibilities related to school planning, management, financing, and allocation of educational resources and facilities from the central state to local authorities (van Zanten, 2013). Although local authorities manage school buildings, maintenance, and financing, the state

promulgates educational programs and norms and has a monopoly on teacher recruitment and career management.

The Education Priority Areas Model: The Time for Territoire

The involvement of local authorities in education is not new. As Glasman has noted (2005), the French state has relied on municipal actions in the democratization of schooling since the early 1900s. But the impetus for municipalities to be more active in educational issues dates from the decentralization acts (1982 and 1983). This first step towards decentralization was synchronous with a postbureaucratic rhetoric³ valuing territorial logics: local authorities and stakeholders' involvement in education and the contractualization of public action on the local scale.

Entrusted with responsibilities in the schooling and educative fields,⁴ municipal authorities developed their own agenda, policies, and administration favoring the emergence of local educational spaces according to a rhetoric inspired by the urbanism field. This is particularly true in urban areas where the implementation of local urban educational policies appears with *la politique de la ville*⁵: a multisectoral and compensatory policy dedicated to the improvement of disadvantaged neighborhoods in *la banlieue*.⁶ This set of urban and housing policies is intended to align housing and social programs with educational issues. A national education priority policy is locally settled into EPAs, a ground for municipal/national partnerships.

This first act of decentralization still refers to the republican values of national equality inherited from the construction of the French republic in the late nineteenth century. It leads to design of educational decentralization following directives of social justice and equality. Considering this, the democratization of education has been implemented not in terms of spatial homogenization and unification, but merely through social differentiation according to a new slogan: Give more to those who have less. This slogan organizes new modes of urban and educational planning (EPAs and priority geography programs following the British experience).⁷ Following EPAs and social housing policies (priority geography programs), there is strong alignment between education and urbanism in the deprived neighborhoods (*la banlieue*).

³These changes cover new emphases such as innovation, risk-taking, empowerment, teamwork, and continuous improvement.

⁴In the financing and maintenance of primary school buildings and amenities, in the organization of extracurricular activities.

⁵Many urban, educational, social, and housing policies in favor of peripheral disadvantaged neighborhoods.

⁶Peripheral deprived neighborhoods mainly composed of public housing.

⁷In 1982, French ZEP began channeling additional educational resources towards schools in deprived urban areas. This compensatory education policy was based on the British EPAs experimented with in the early 1970s following the Plowden Report (Brady, 2007).

Rhetoric, norms, and tools are transferred from the urbanism field to educational and schooling issues. Using urban planning norms—such as spatial proximity, social mixing, urban project—, the educational priority policy promoting a rhetoric of projects developed into many EPAs projects established on a contractual basis between local and national authorities. The purpose is to help the emergence of local educational spaces ensuring national equity in education and favoring a local mode of educational governance. In the EPAs, the local scale appears as a social space devoted to the coordination of various stakeholders and articulating national policies at the local level. The EPAs introduce the notion of educational territory. Facing school failure and growing educational inequalities in these deprived neighborhoods, EPAs develop a territorialized conception of national educational policies. Schools inside EPAs are asked to open their doors to local partners (families, municipalities, social workers, etc.) and to cobuild actions in favor of educational success, anti-school-violence, or social programs (literacy, free lunch programs, etc.) in accordance with national programs and incentives. They all rely on a territorialized regulation of schooling following two watchwords: *territoire* and *contractualization*. According to this assumption, priority education policies must be territorialized. This involves a territorial and spatial rooting of national policies at the local scale. It relies on the belief that the local (the *territoire*) is socially, culturally, and politically built by stakeholders and constitutes a sociospatial territory that is both a priority target of public policies and central to their implementation by local stakeholders.

In the public policy and academic domains, territory has a specific meaning (Di Méo & Buléon, 2005). It refers to the concept of a social space (a local space that is socially, culturally, and historically appropriated and the object of social representations and local identities) and a political space (a space that has been institutionally delimited). Ethological (territory as a daily social space) and political dimensions are constitutive parts of this concept, which grew increasingly popular in the late 1980s in the academic and political sphere (Faure, 2005; Hancock, 2001; Moine, 2006). *Territoire* became a dominant paradigm for public action experimented with in particular in Education Priority Areas. This concept justifies politics of affirmative action according to the acknowledgement of the specific requirements and needs of some deprived neighborhoods. It is also a means and a rhetoric used by the state to modernize public action on the local scale, even if territory clearly lacks strong definitions. The so-called *modernity of territory* brings new notions: projects, partnerships, and capacity building used in order to ease the involvement of the local and to rationalize public action. A large set of tools and instruments are locally implemented to help local authorities meet national requirements in both educational and urban treatment of deprived neighborhoods: Examples are the *Local Education Contract* (LEC; *Contrats Éducatifs Locaux* (CEL)) and the *Territorial Education Project* (TEP; *Projets Éducatifs Territoriaux* (PET)). Contractualization is the main means used by the state to decentralize education to local authorities: financing local educational actions and programs according to national incentives and directives.

Urbanism Norms and Rhetoric as Commonplaces

This cobuilding process is influenced by urban planning ideologies promoting the rhetoric of projects. Emerging at the end of the 1970s as a reaction against modern urbanism and functionalism, the notion of project (used and named as the urban project, the *projet urbain*) appears among urbanists and professional planners as the most theoretical and practical way of dealing with current urban and spatial planning issues (Ingallina, 2010). The success of the notion of the urban project (*projet urbain*) can be explained through its suitability to the growing demand of local democracy and because it also fits with the state directive to modernize local public action, following a devolution process in education and urban planning. The *projet urbain* is designed as an answer to a bureaucratic and centralized urbanism and to foster local dynamics. Similarly, the educational project is expected to locally implement national policies and coordinate actions and stakeholders involved in education issues (teachers, social workers, local associations, health services, etc.).

Following the practice of the urban project in the urban planning field, promoters of the *politique de la ville* fostered the idea of TEPs. Thus, one of the most popular operational tools, the TEP, appears as a clear extension of such urban planning norms. It participates in the notion of urban project, meaning the implementation on a local scale of a strategic schooling plan associating many stakeholders in connection to the urban planning issues (demographic forecast, social mixing issues, health and care programs, public housing policies, etc.). It relies on a project engineering process, locally developed and embedded in the strategic urban master plan. TEPs are contractual procedures running on a 4-year period focusing on educational success, parent involvement, out-drop programs, and extracurricular activities; they are locally managed and nationally financed. A TEP is embedded in the *contrat de ville*, an urban planning contractual procedure involving education in the urban and neighborhood planning process (along with housing and public transportation issues for instance). School planning is therefore established under the auspices of urban planning in deprived neighborhoods and urban renewal programs. These contractual logics and practices involve a network organization between stakeholders drawing new institutional and territorial limits: turning priority education zones into new educational territories, implementing social development programs in urban deprived areas, and so forth. In the first years, EPAs are associated with an emancipatory scope, paving the way to innovative actions and partnerships between schools, local authorities, and other stakeholders.

However, local educational priority territories rapidly appear as schizophrenic spaces: instruments of national educational (and urban) policies on the one hand, and spaces of growing local autonomy on the other hand.

EPAs as Educational Territories of Problems (territoires éducatifs de problèmes)

By the end of the 1980s, education priority areas and programs faced many critics. Many observers denounced the failure of a policy leading to the reinforcement and stigmatization of deprived schools and their catchment areas. The rise of inequalities in educational attainment between schools located in the EPAs and schools in other catchment areas, the concentration of school violence, the *school avoidance syndrome* towards EPAs, and the representation of EPAs as schools for ethnic minorities produced an image of territories of problems. Moreover, observers underlined that rural areas (also concentrating a growing number of educational problems) were not included in the EPA system. The failure of the *politique de la ville*⁸ to improve life in the *banlieue* and the urban riots of 2005 modified the perception of EPA as relevant spaces for public action and its capacities for allowing a fair redistribution of educational resources and opportunities. Furthermore, the territorialization of education priority programs in EPAs appears less as an increasing power for local stakeholders than as a tool to maintain state legitimacy and control on the local. These experiments in EPAs and their critics ease the shift from earlier conceptions of education priority programs (based on social justice and equity) to an enlarged vision carrying new norms: flexibility, local development, proximity. The 2008 Act on education guidance (*Plan de reliance de l'éducation prioritaire*) thus enlarged the EPAs' experiment beyond deprived urban areas to urban, suburban, and rural localities. In leaving EPAs, the notion of educational territory thus embraces local development issues.

The Spread of the Territorial Paradigm and the Ideology of Proximity

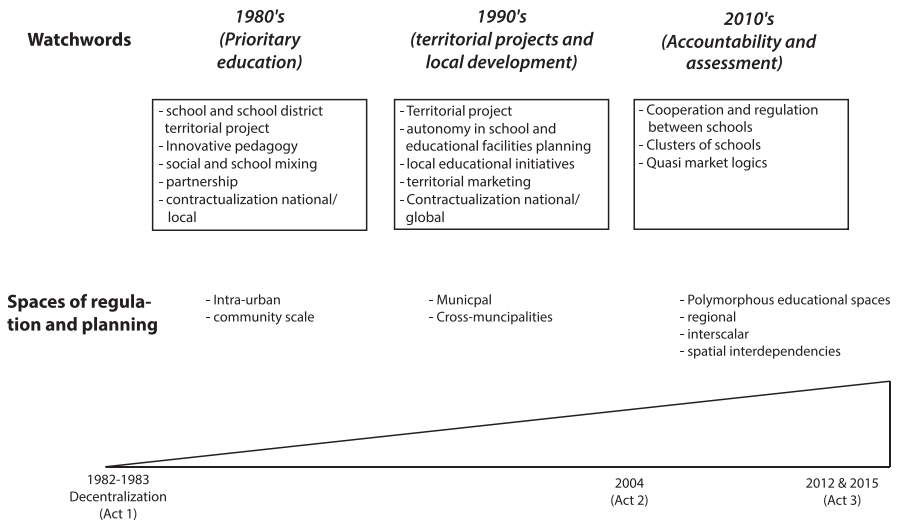
Basically conceived as a temporary experience limited to deprived neighborhoods, the territorial paradigm, founded on the Education Priority Areas model, was largely spread and trivialized as a common procedure for local authorities in urban, suburban, and rural areas. As many authors pointed out in other national cases (Whitty, Power, & Halpin, 1998), the growing concern for *localism* in education is associated with the dismantling of the education state and more specifically with the dismantling of centralized educational bureaucracy (popularized in 1997 by the formula of the French Minister of Education: "We have to degrease the mammoth"⁸), and with the attempt to create local devolved territories of education (*territoires décentralisés d'éducation*).

⁸ In a press conference by Claude Allègre, French secretary of national education (1997–2000), on July 24, 1997.

The Trivialization of the Notion of Educational Territory

The notion of educational territory progressively becomes the main instrument for local educational policy and school governance in this second phase of decentralization, concentrating the partial devolution of education on local authorities. The territorial paradigm acts as a dominant figure in the thinking, planning, and governance of education on the local scale, largely spreading to all levels of institutional authority (see Fig. 5.2). It relies on an ideology valuing proximity (understood as neighboring) using the rhetoric of *territorial project* (a rhetoric valuating the mobilization of stakeholders, the implementation of local educational programs, the definition of priorities according to educational demographic prospective, and local development issues) largely fuelled by the urbanism and regional planning practices and ideology, and leading to new territorial arrangements. Although the territorial paradigm spread in suburban and rural areas, it progressively lost its directives of spatial and social compensation in the most deprived urban areas. By the mid-1990s, TEPs are multipartner projects that aim to implement a schooling and youth policy (extracurricular programs) in a specific administrative territory. The scales cover both the municipal limits and the school catchment areas. The Territorial Educational Projects lay out many initiatives and tools territorialized on the local scale, such as:

- School district planning and allocation of resources (employees, location of school facilities),
- A large set of tools initiated by the state government on a contractual basis,



Territorial paradigm and local education planning

Fig. 5.2 Territorial paradigm and local education planning. Source: Design by author

- The involvement of local communities in extracurricular programs and activities,
- Different scales, from the very local (the school and its surrounding neighborhoods) to the city, the school district, and the region.

By the 2000s, the directives of social mixing and equity were seen as secondary objectives (see Fig. 5.2). The purpose now became to build local educational territories based on larger local development objectives combining school and educational amenities planning, and local development issues. Practices and experiences of territorial education projects nurture a growing autonomy in school and educational planning answering new needs: in school and educational facilities, in school demographic forecast, and strategic planning explaining a profusion of local initiatives on different scales (regional, municipal, etc.). The use of the territorial paradigm by local authorities involves three steps (see Fig. 5.2). Basically, it follows national directives of social mixing and local partnership (parental and community involvement), and leads to social and educational innovations in the name of affirmative action and priority education. The spread of the territorial paradigm towards local authorities (outside the perimeters of priority education) opens a second step in which local authorities develop their own agenda answering local needs and perspectives: constructing new schools and facilities, reorganizing school perimeters according to local housing priorities and objectives, a growing involvement in vocational education, and so forth. According to their agenda, local authorities in the regional and municipal scenes organize and manage their own department of education and implement extracurricular programs focusing on and encouraging local cultural programs (such as regional languages and culture). Proximity is here understood as both geographical (physical distance) and institutional (cooperation between stakeholders) that allows social, cultural, economic, and political interaction and cooperation inside an enlarged territory (Torre, 2009). Proximity applied to educational territories thus takes the shape of *polymorphous spaces* that encompass spaces of the school, catchment areas, the school district, the city, or the region, depending on the number of stakeholders involved. It tends to organize three kinds of education on the local scale: formal (national rules inside the school system), nonformal (extracurricular programs enacted by local stakeholders), and informal (by local communities, association of neighbors, the private sector, etc.). Proximity depicts a dialectic relationship between the school system and its sociocultural environment, and covers two interrelated dimensions. It first considers territory as a stakeholder in itself, participating in the production of school supplies and educational opportunities (because of its social, economic, and cultural resources). Second, it is understood as a context impacting schools and the educational landscape (its symbolic dimension).

A New Local Educational Order Source of a Territorial Complexity

Despite the numerous initiatives, decentralization appears less as local control over educational issues and much more as a manipulation of the local by the state in order to ease and legitimate national policies (transferring a mode of financing from the national to the local, adapting local authorities to new management issues), partly dedicated to school planning issues. This conjures up a picture of a decentralization without power, depicted as the *les faux-semblants de la décentralisation* (false pretences of decentralization; Mabileau, 1997). In this context, local authorities have only narrow margins in which to act. Tensions and rivalries between stakeholders are exacerbated. Despite these limits, this phase of decentralization favors a new local educational order (Ben-Ayed, 2009) characterized by a growing autonomy for local authorities, the spread of a *state territorial thinking* diffusing a new semantic universe on the local scale: governance, new management, partnership, professionalism, expertise, and so forth. If educational local planning was guided by social directives (to fight school segregation and educational inequalities), it slowly turns into local development issues according to new standards in the managing of education imposed by the national level: building and planning education facilities, financing extracurricular programs, fighting rural desertification, forecasting population growth or decline, and so forth.

The proliferation of initiatives by local authorities from the 1980s to the 2010s lead to a growing complexification of the educational map on different scales (regional, county, municipality, neighborhood), leading to an institutional and territorial fragmentation, and to a lack of legitimacy for local authorities who exceeded their mandates and legal competences. Some territorial innovations were possible, such as the development of school clusters in rural or suburban areas. But a territorial complexity emerges and asks for another spatial regulation and mode of planning. Once built in closed territorial limits, dictated by education priority programs, the territorial governance of schooling overflows the initial perimeters and turns into a more network-oriented, managerial governance. At the turn of the twenty-first century, critics denounced the territorial complexity that was making it impossible to meet the century's educational challenges, such as school choice and international competition.

This debate arouses the need for new institutional/territorial arrangements and governance that take into account the management of spatial interdependencies created by the second phase of decentralization (local/national, private/public) and the need for more flexibility (such as school choice).

Looking for the Good Scale: Hybridization of Norms and Local Spaces of Educational Interdependencies

The transfer of authority in education from the national to the local scale has transformed the national educational space into a complex set of local educational territories with limited responsibilities. Facing what has been described as a territorial complexity (Leloup, Moyard, & Pecqueur, 2005; Vanier, 2008), the third act of decentralization (2012–...) marks the transition from territorialized schooling and educational policies (national norms and directives implemented at the local scale) to local educational policies placed under a stronger regional authority. Critics of the first and second acts of decentralization underline a complex interdependency of competences and responsibilities, the poor legibility of local initiatives in schooling, and the excessive dispersal of resources, preventing stakeholders from facing locally new issues such as institutional fragmentation, school choice, rural desertification, educational inequalities, or social and ethnic diversity.

The Region or the Territorial Optimum

The 2015 territorial reform, known as the third act of decentralization, has changed the issues and the context, reshaping the institutional map into 17 new administrative regions that cross the boundaries of the new 17 academic regions (see Fig. 5.3). The issue relies on the quest for the “good scale” and what has been officially named as the territorial optimum. Behind this new territorial rhetoric, one can see less a real decentralization process and much more a partial regionalization of education and also the return of the state (and paradoxically of its centralization). State reforms in 2012 and 2015 (known as the third act of decentralization) signal the repositioning of the state, whose role is now less to locally implement contractual national policies than to merely develop on a new scale (the region) a space of coordination and regulation between local stakeholders. This conception of state action in education relies on new watchwords: accountability, assessment, and the implementation of new tools to regulate state resources, such as strategic steering, partnership (with the private sector), and school assessment. Schools and school principals are invested with new responsibilities and autonomy: in the staff management, in the management of the flow of pupils, in the supply of new curriculum. This autonomy allows them to adapt to the local context (answering local needs in school choice, defining extracurricular activities) and initiate a more dynamic system of exchanges, relationships, and interdependencies between schools and between schools and local authorities. The former system of schooling embedded in proximity in the microlocal space (mostly the catchment areas) is breaking apart while a new system of regulation is being set, one in which relationships between schools and school principals, as well as between schools and the different local authorities (from the local to the regional), that are characterized by forms of cooperation and concurrence redefine

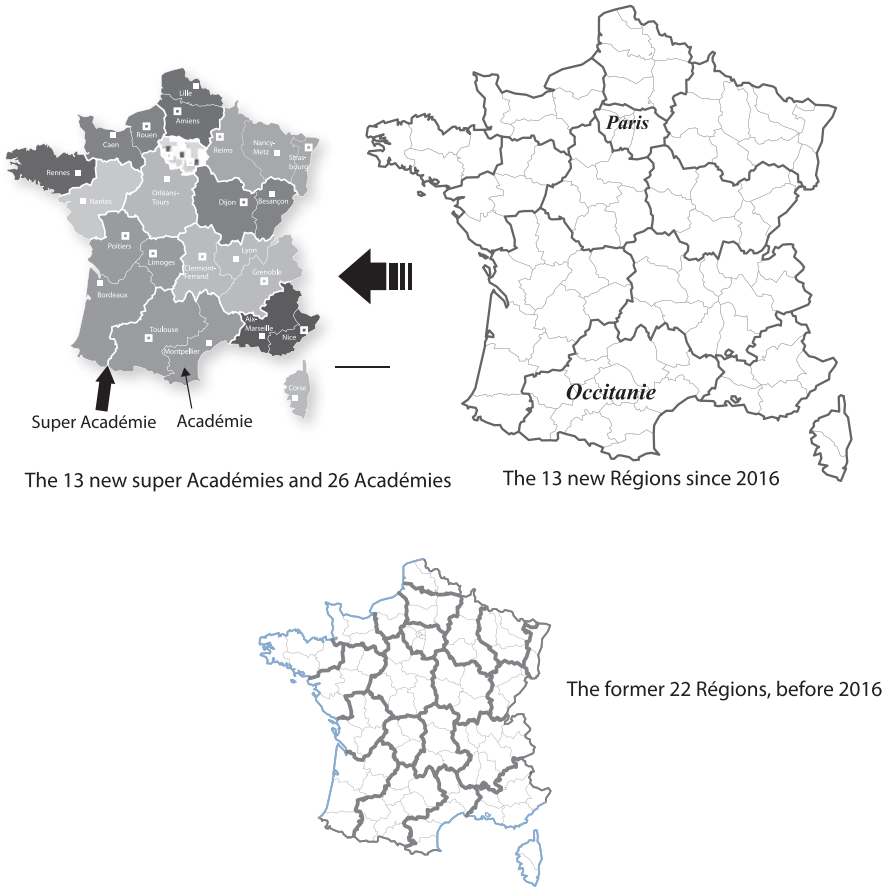


Fig. 5.3 The third act of decentralization from 22 to 17 new administrative and academic regions. Source: Design by author

the spaces of schooling as polymorphous. These spaces are less dependent on institutional perimeters and more dependent on the numerous interdependencies generated locally (between different stakeholders, between schools, between schools and local authorities, and between local authorities). These rely on a local spatialized system of regulation/concurrence and on instances of coordination and dialogue (in the transfer, in the regulation of the optional courses). Local spaces of schooling must thus be considered as local educational spaces of interdependency characterized by sociospatial system of regulation, instances of multiscale coordination and by hybridization of norms, favoring, in a postdecentralized period, a local educational entrepreneurship (see Fig. 5.4).

This mode of governance redefines and redesigns the local not as a single socio-spatial unit but as a set of local educational spaces of interdependencies placed under a partial regional authority and characterized by (Fig. 5.4).

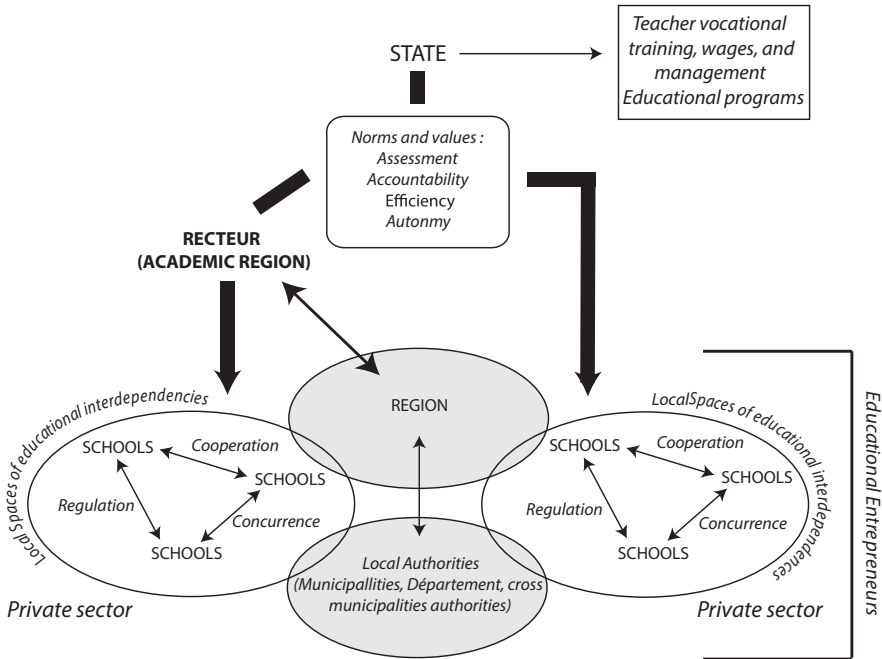


Fig. 5.4 Regulating the local: Regionalization and educational spaces of interdependencies. Source: Design by author

- A rescaling process articulating different scales (regional, municipal, local) and institutional levels connected by interdependency links
- A growing autonomy for schools and principals and school board of education who are invited (in a more competitive educational landscape) to differentiate themselves and to be visible in the new map of local educational supply
- Diversification of the sources of school financing: The 2015 reform allows inter-communal institutions to finance and plan primary schools in their district.
- Introduction of new principles for the local authority in charge of education: accountability, optimization of resources, assessment
- The capacity to make strategic plans, associated with educational demographic forecasts and land planning

As in many European countries, these reforms and structural changes are associated with institutional autonomy and a variety of forms of school-based management, the enhancement of parental power, an increased emphasis on community investment, more efficient management, and more transparent accountability, as well as deregulation, devolution, dezoning, and greater school autonomy, all of which assist schools in responding to market forces (Olssen et al., 2004, p. 210).

The Omnipresence of the State: Towards the Evaluator State

The context is one of the end of the education state and the emerging of the evaluator state (Broadfoot, 2000) accompanied by new modes of governance of local school issues and spaces. In this mode of governance, the relationships between the national and the local are no more regulated by logics of contractualization embedded in specific territories. It relies on a system of devolution in which the state operates at a distance through a new administrative and territorial level: the *région académique*. The former and historical territorial unit (*Inspection académique*) has been reshaped under the auspices of larger perimeters on the regional scale in order to fit with the new territorial framework (see Figs. 5.3 and 5.4). This one is led by a rector (*recteur de région académique*) named by the French Minister of Education (see Fig. 5.4). Since 2015, the *région académique* introduces another institutional level federating under the state representative (*le recteur*) all the local educational territories. *Le recteur* (presented as a *super recteur*) centralizes national subsidies and coordinates education programs and stakeholders. Its role not only consists in regulating public subsidies; it also includes setting norms, procedures, technics, goals, and instruments for public action. For instance, he puts local authorities in competition for financing of some educational programs, according to norms valuating efficiency and entrepreneurship. This is an important break and shift in French educational policy, which has traditionally been structured by the republican and territorial equity dogma. These changes answer incentives for a neoliberal turn in the French educational system, valuing new ideologies:

- Efficiency versus equity
- Strategic steering in place of contractualization
- Educational entrepreneurship: policies and school planning as part of the regional economic development. The new regions have to implement “projected training plans” expressing regional economic and educational objectives. They define a long-term investment plan for school financing and set objectives at the infra-levels.

The 2015 reform tends to reinforce school and educational regionalization valuing forms of *educational entrepreneurship* on two different and interconnected scales: the regional and the local. Educational territory, once the figure of a renewed Republic carrying republican values in the EPA (equity, brotherhood, etc.), is now the leading figure of the entrepreneurial shift of public policies.

Tensions, Resistances, and Hybridization

In reaction against what appears as a hidden deregulation and neoliberalization agenda of education, many tensions and resistances have arisen around the new territorial issue. The strength of the republican educational model firmly established

on the local level (institutional and social representations) and the stakeholders' reluctance (parental associations, teacher unions) are seriously delaying the integration of new educational norms (assessment, accountability). These changes are also the source of political conflicts. Since the 1990s, and the former socialist Minister of Education's provocative statement comparing the French educational system to an immutable mammoth, every educational reform is subject to conflict and protest on a national scale. Growing educational competences and responsibilities at the regional level lead to tensions between the region and other local authorities. In the region of Occitanie, for instance, vocational schools are a shared competence (state, region, chambers of commerce), subject to two opposing strategies. The regional and state actors plan to reorganize vocational high schools according to a high-tech strategy valuating the aircraft industry and school locations in a few large cities. While local authorities ask for more alignment with small business needs and a large spread of the vocational high schools in the region. Beyond these tensions, different directives appear, leading to a hybridization of education politics revealing multiple and complex interdependencies. In Occitanie, the state operates a partial regionalization of education. Indeed, *le recteur* still retains most of the authority in the educational system (controlling the teaching personnel, establishing teaching norms and procedures). Meanwhile, local actors have a new but partial autonomy, allowing some of them to develop new curricula (mainly in the vocational education system) and facilitating for others the setting of spatial interdependencies. In this context, catching areas tend to loosen their binding nature in favor of a spatial organization of education in a network of interdependencies. Many middle schools and high schools are reorganizing their educational supply on a larger scale. New interdependencies are being developed between school principals: in sharing the distribution of the school population, in the geographic distribution of educational supplies and curricula, and in developing educational niches. These educational spaces of interdependency are also the ground for concurrence between schools. Far from just applying national policies and norms, local education stakeholders (school principals, regional department of education) use their spatial capabilities to produce hybridized policies in education between contingencies of inherited republican norms (catchment areas, republican directives or equity) and a limited autonomy mixing interdependencies and concurrence. Local educational stakeholders show a capacity to produce territorial arrangements that differ strongly from one location to another, are heavily dependent on local issues, and are alternating spaces of interdependencies and concurrence.

Finally, an on-going hybridization of norms and practices occurs. Local school and educational planning strongly articulates three territorial logics:

- State centralized and republican norms: The state is still in charge of teacher training, wages and management, and education programs.
- Partial local and regional autonomy: in school planning and locations
- The introduction of quasi market logics: school choice for high school, introduction of business needs and objectives

Conclusion: Neoliberal Educational Order or Institutional Tinkering?

Many observers of the spatial governance of education regard the French situation as one of territorial complexity. It is obviously organized into spaces of educational interdependencies that have succeeded to the local educational order inherited from the first phase of decentralization. The reforms of 2012 and 2015 instituted a growing but partial regionalization of education. These changes lead to a hybridization of norms and practices, mixing on different scales: an inherited state centralization, a partial regionalization, and neoliberal norms. But behind an apparent territorial complexity—and much more than a neoliberalization of education—, we can see how the local adapts to changes according to the logics of hybridization, institutional arrangements, and territorial tinkering. This hybridization seems to be poorly institutionalized and spatially produces what can be described as territorial arrangements or tinkering in which stakeholders face state directives, paradoxes, and social needs and implement their own strategy in accordance with multiscale dynamics. This territorial tinkering can be explained by the omnipresence of the state, partial regionalization, and local cooperative and regulation relationships. Beyond this territorial complexity, one can find a sociospatial organization structured by local educational spaces of interdependencies with uncertain and changing perimeters, multiscale governance, and a profusion of initiatives according to various relationships experimented by stakeholders. What has been claimed as a deterritorialization of education through regionalization can be first described as a further step in the long process of adapting the local to education reforms alternating territorialization, deterritorialization, and reterritorialization. If local authorities have been granted only a limited educational autonomy, local educational stakeholders (school principals, regional and local departments of education, associations involved in education) have benefited from a new context allowing them to implement territorial strategies and to organize spatial networks of interdependencies.

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