

# Characterization of managerial innovations in local authorities

## *Caractérisation des innovations managériales dans les collectivités territoriales*

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### ABSTRACT

Encouraged by successive legislative changes, local authorities are required to innovate, to optimize their resources and improve their services. For local authorities, innovation often involves the deployment of methods or tools that break with previous uses. Although these innovations are not radical ones, they can change the way the institution operate. What are the characteristics of innovations in local authorities? This article is an answer to this question. Beyond this, identifying the objectives pursued by these institutions and the processes at work en-

abling them to innovate, is necessary. So we conduct a qualitative analysis of 13 reports about innovative projects carried out by local authorities and related structures. The analytical grid takes into account the theory of the dynamic capabilities. The results allow modelling the characteristics of innovations and show that local and regional authorities do not mobilize dynamic capabilities in a formal process.

### Key-words

*Innovation; Public management; Local authorities; Dynamic capabilities; Qualitative analysis*

### RÉSUMÉ

Incitées par des changements législatifs successifs, les collectivités territoriales sont amenées à innover pour optimiser leurs ressources et améliorer leurs services aux citoyens. Dans les collectivités territoriales, les démarches d'innovation se traduisent fréquemment par le déploiement de méthodes ou d'outils en rupture avec les usages précédents. Même si ces innovations ne représentent pas des innovations radicales, elles peuvent générer des changements importants dans

le fonctionnement et dans les modes d'organisation de la collectivité. Quelles sont les caractéristiques des innovations dans les collectivités territoriales ? Cet article constitue une réponse à cette question. Au-delà, il s'agit d'identifier les objectifs poursuivis par ces collectivités et les processus à l'œuvre leur permettant d'innover. Pour cela nous avons procédé à une analyse qualitative exploratoire de 13 rapports de projets innovants réalisés dans des collectivités territoriales et des structures rattachées. La grille d'analyse réalisée prend en compte la théorie des capacités dynamiques. Les résultats permettent

de proposer un modèle fondé sur les caractéristiques des innovations et montrent que les collectivités territoriales ne mobilisent pas les capacités dynamiques dans le cadre d'un processus formel.

## Mots-clés

*Innovation ; Management public ; Collectivité territoriale ; Capacités dynamiques ; Analyse qualitative*

## INTRODUCTION

According to Rogers (2003, p.12), innovation can be understood as “*an idea, practice, or object that is perceived as new by an individual or other unit of adoption*”. Research on innovation generally acknowledges that this definition refers more to the perception of a novelty by the individuals than to the aspect of absolute novelty. Innovation is characterized particularly by its impact on the organization's development, its intentional nature, the significant or radical changes it generates (Drejer, 2004, Toivonen *et al.*, 2007) and its acceptance by the organization, the market or society (Fuglsang and Sorensen, 2011).

De Vries *et al.* (2014, p.5) define innovation in the public sector as “*the introduction of new elements into a public service - in the form of new knowledge, a new organization, and/or new management or processual skills, which represents discontinuity with the past*”. Local authorities were initially treated as following the administrative and bureaucratic model which is the characteristic of the French public sector. However, the “decentralization” of 1982, through the transfer of powers from the state level, and under the impetus of successive decentralization movements, local authorities have been led progressively to innovate to modernize their operating mode. To do so, they integrated new management tools and methods, particularly adapted from private companies. Change and adaptation are thus required of local public actors (Soldo *et al.*, 2010).

In local authorities, innovation often result in the deployment of methods or tools that break with previous uses. Although, these innovations do not represent radical innovations (Geroski and Markides,

in Prax *et al.*, 2005), they can generate a significant change in the functioning and the organization of the community. That is particularly true for the managerial innovations defined by Birkinshaw *et al.* (2008, p.825) as: “*the invention and implementation of a management practice, process, structure, or technique that is new to the state of the art and is intended to further organizational goals*”. Managerial innovations in local and regional authorities can be induced by contextual and environmental elements or result from endogenous actions of these organizations' leader.

However, as pointed out by Carassus *et al.* (2014), although managerial innovations and modernization approaches in local authorities are increasing, little research have been devoted to analyzing the factors that favor the appropriation of these innovations. Therefore, we need to understand the different stages of their introduction, their development, and their implementation (adoption decision, implementation, integration, abandonment or replacement).

The purpose of this article is to identify managerial innovations in local authorities. Specifically, its objective is to answer the following question: What are the characteristics of innovations in local authorities? Beyond this, the paper aims to identify the objectives and the processes used by these local authorities allowing them to innovate.

Based on a qualitative exploratory research, this study analyzes 13 reports of innovative projects carried out in local authorities and related structures from the perspective of dynamic capabilities theory (Teece, 2007, 2012). This article proposes an answer to the question.

This research is presented in four stages. The first part presents the theoretical framework of the research. The next part of the article describes the methodology used. In the last part, the results are presented and discussed.

## 1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Firstly, we specify the scope of managerial innovation, and after, we explain the framework for analyzing innovation in the public sector. Then, we consider the innovation dynamics which the local authorities are in line with.

### 1.1. Scope of the managerial innovation

Innovation is generally presented by the creative destruction resulting from the work of Schumpeter (1942). This oxymoron reflects a contrast between the logic of innovation that involves accepting the uncertainty of ends and means, and that of the organization that aims to reduce uncertainty by planning, programming and standardizing (Alter, 2013). Thus, innovating involves taking risks, going beyond established rules and professional routines. That implies to destroy the existing stable and certain in favor of a better possible uncertain, in the future.

Innovation seems positive through change towards a cultural transformation. However, innovation can also be seen as a test of resistance to change. Exceeding these constraints requires dynamic capabilities defined by Teece (2007, 2012) as high skill levels that determine the organization's ability to integrate, build and reconfigure resources and skills (internal and external) to adapt to a constantly changing environment. In addition, "*dynamic capabilities can usefully be thought of as falling into three clusters of activities and adjustments: (1) identification and assessment of an opportunity (sensing); (2) mobilization of resources to address an opportunity and to capture value from doing so (seizing); and (3) continued renewal (transforming)*" (Teece, 2012, p.1396).

Innovations are not the same every time. They have a degree of originality more or less pronounced

independently of the kind of organization concerned and the capabilities of the managers. Geroski and Markides (in Prax *et al.*, 2005, p.50-52) propose a typology of innovations that distinguishes, incremental innovation, major innovation, strategic innovation, radical (or disruptive) innovation.

In order to explain the underlying mechanisms and to evaluate the degree of innovation, Hatchuel and Weil (2009) have proposed an innovative design theory or CK theory. This latter relies on the dualism between two spaces in expansion. The first is the space is the one of concepts (C), a set of undecidable propositions without logical status. The second is the space of knowledge (K), a set of propositions having a logical status (true or false). In this context, the design is a cognitive process by which a concept will generate other concepts that will be transformed into knowledge. This formalism of the C-K theory can be implemented according to various objectives such as project management, portfolio management, knowledge management, etc. Evaluation criteria make it possible to objectify and measure a C-K model. With this evaluation (Value, Variety, Originality, Robustness) the work of the CK theory offers a way to the decision-makers through innovative design, and an alternative to traditional methods (Agogu e *et al.*, 2013).

This research shows the central role of the manager, in driving the innovation project both on: (1) risk-taking and change the organization (Schumpeter, 1942, Alter, 2013), (2) the high levels of skills needed to create dynamic capabilities (Teece, 2007, 2012), and (3) its ability to plan by design space rather than by goal (Hatchuel and Weil, 2009; Agogu e *et al.*, 2013), determining the degree of breakthrough innovation (Geroski and Markides in Prax *et al.*, 2005).

The central role of the manager is also underlined by research on managerial innovation which is a recent concept. Before, research long focused on technological innovation to explain business performance (Birkinshaw and Mol, 2006, Hamel and Breen, 2007, Birkinshaw *et al.*, 2008, Damanpour and Aravind, 2012, Jaouen and Le Roy, 2013). Managerial innovation is defined as "*the adoption by an organization of a managerial practice or method that already exists but new in relation compared with current management practices and methods; the organization does not develop innovation and is not required to adopt*

*it first; it's the success of the organizations that have adopted this managerial innovation that leads it to adopt it as well"* (Leroy *et al.*, 2013, p.85).

Mol and Birkinshaw (2008) identify a managerial innovation according to four criteria: 1) it concretely modifies the work of managers, 2) it represents a significant advance in the state of knowledge at a given moment, 3) it's deployed in an operational way in the organization and 4) allow the achievement of the objectives of the company. According to these authors, the Balanced scorecard, for example, falls into this category because it is a new method that facilitates the integration of the different information needed for the decision. Managerial innovation is characterized more by the perception of the members of the organization of its novelty than by its innovative character (Godowski, 2003). This perception determines its acceptance (Leroy *et al.*, 2013). According to Martineau (2009), this characteristic makes it possible to extend the term of innovation to management tools as *"any formalized device allowing organized action"* (David, 1996).

For Hamel and Breen (2007), among the different types of innovation, only managerial innovation is capable of provoking a real sustainable break because it is based on a complex combination of resources and know-how that are particularly difficult to overcome, identify and duplicate for a competitor.

David (1996) distinguishes three types of managerial innovations:

- those centered on the production of knowledge, which according to Leroy *et al.* (2013), correspond to "managerial technics" in the sense of Hatchuel and Weil (1992);
- those focused on relationships, such as a new decentralized structure, the creation of project teams;
- mixed innovations that concern the knowledge produced and the relations between actors.

## 1.2. Innovation in the public sector

Hierarchy and top-down processes which are typical of bureaucratic administrations can negatively impact innovation (Moore, 1995, Spieth, 2013). However, this underlies the attempts to modernize the "administrative bureaucracy" in France, to make it more professional, efficient and close to the citizens. This approach are largely inspired by the New Public Management (Hood, 1991) or NPM. NPM has its origins both in the course of the "new institutional economy" and in public sector management inspired by "international scientific management" (Hood, 1991). But the perception of the NPM may differ: for some, it is the *"only way to correct for the irretrievable failures and even moral bankruptcy in the 'old' public management"* (Hood, 1991, p.2); for others the NPM is perceived as a destruction of the specificity, ethics and culture of the public service. Like many countries sensitized to these precepts, the innovations of administrative processes in France can be linked to the emergence of NPM (De Vries *et al.*, 2014). These reforms have been deployed through a package of managerial knowledge (Bézes in Lacasse and Verrier, 2005) and management systems inspired by the private sector (quality approach, management control, evaluation, etc.). If these knowledge and devices rarely take into account the specificities of public organizations, they could be presented as the solution to their management problems. In this perspective, societenumerique.gouv.fr (2019) considers public innovation as *"This movement is made up of concrete initiatives, both for the user and for the administration itself, is supported by public actors (State services, operators, communities, hospitals) throughout the territory, and in all administrations"*.

Furthermore, Leroy *et al.* (2013) indicate that managerial innovation in public organizations can refer to the adoption of an existing management method or practice that is new to the organization adopting it, in order to improve overall organization performance, in other words, all the functions of the organization and the organization as a whole).

The French law of 2007, General Review of Public Policies (called RGPP) is an illustration of the state's volition to rationalize. But in fact, these reforms have focused on the adoption of new tools, rather than

on the ends to be achieved, and on the conditions for mobilizing and setting up services for the necessary modernization actions (Trosa, 2010). These innovations are essentially procedural ones following De Vries *et al.* (2014). Therefore, the administrative reforms have neglected the success factors related to the appropriation of the tools by the actors. This finding leads Trosa (2010) to contrast the model of the modernization of the French State, which strongly questions the managerial practices of public organizations and the employment conditions of their agents, with the learning model, based on innovation. Indeed, these reforms have challenged the knowledge and routines of the actors and led them to modify or refuse management tools.

Thus, managerial innovation, change and management by performance (convergent, global and integrated, in the sense of Bouckaert and Halligan 2008), have gradually become essential, even as survival issues in the public sector (Carassus *et al.*, 2012). And currently, innovation is increasing in the public sector through several practices such as co-development, co-design, learning networks, design thinking, participatory workshops, etc.

### 1.3. Local authorities and managerial innovation dynamic

Changes in the institutional context as well as modes of public action seem to be crucial for local authorities to be in a managerial innovation dynamic.

#### 1.3.1. Changes in the institutional local authorities' context as a factor of innovation

During a long process of decentralization initiated in 1982, local authorities have been able to experiment new ways of managing (Froment and Sayah, 1998), in order to improve their quality and performance. French decentralization law has gradually changed the distribution of powers to the benefit of local actors and has led to managerial innovations. Local authorities' management would therefore encourage innovation, as indicated by the De Vries *et al.* (2014) in a research on the publications about the

innovation in the public sector. These authors show that most of these researches focused on local government organizations. For Dupuis (2015), there is four major periods of introduction of management in local authorities that characterize the decentralization process in France between 1982 and 2015.

- Mimicry, between 1983 and 1995, which covers the experimentation and the implementation of tools of management of the world of the company in the local authorities.
- Hybridization, from 1995: managers of local authorities and general councils seek to combine logic and methods of the public and private sectors, always according to the experimentation mode and then deployment. The aim is to improve the services provided to users.
- The performance, starting in 2007, which concerns all local authorities, and based, in a context of scarcity of resources, on the search for internal and external performance via the efficiency of organizational processes, the diversification of intervention methods, etc.
- Territorial and inter-territorial governance, it is more recent and fleets the impact of institutional reforms and the rise of territories on the management of local authorities. These, mainly because of vertical and horizontal partnerships with public and private actors, stakeholders in territorial development. Thus the organization adopt logic and mechanisms of territorial governance.

During the first two periods, the use of *Bricolage* (Weick, 1993) seems to have prevailed to adapt the tools of the private sector to the specificities of local authorities and general councils. But these adjustments have been formalized *a posteriori* as innovations (Fuglsang and Sorensen, 2011).

The nature of innovation in local and regional authorities can be questioned from the perspective of neo-institutional theory (Di Maggio and Powell, 1983), frequently used to analyze the modernization of public organizations (Van Geestel and Teelken, 2006; Chatelain-Ponroy and Morin-Delerm, 2012, Petitjean *et al.*, 2014, Soldo *et al.*, 2010). Indeed, as

questioned by Maurel *et al.*, (2011), is it a real innovation or a phenomenon of mimicry? For these authors, the pathways of imitation and innovation often merge in changes introduced in communities. Innovation that combines the implementation of solutions deemed effective in the organizational field, with specific changes adapted to the context of the organization can be qualified as mimetic.

### 1.3.2. Innovation management by local authorities

Local authorities face many challenges: territorial reform, digital transformation, satisfaction of users waiting for easily and efficiently available services, and even new services, etc. Local authorities have to do this in a turbulent environment linked to the decreases of state, the definition of new perimeters inter-communalities and new regions, skills transfers, etc. This environment may challenge management practices of local authorities, but also allow them to prove their agility and innovative capacity.

Research has identified three areas around which local authorities have developed innovations:

- Digital management: digital modifies the communication of the local authority with users who can question its effectiveness and efficiency in real time (Habib and Keramidis, 2009). It can also concern the dematerialization of their HR process, or their financial communication (Michel-Clupot and Rouot, 2013).
- The implementation of the pooling scheme within an EPCI (french public industrial or commercial company) under the Law RCT of 16 December 2010, which assumes shared political porting, can be a factor of innovation. David (1996) and Martineau (2009) considers the co-operation between two entities of an organization as an organizational innovation favoring a vision of organizational relations based on the pooling of knowledge and representations of problems.
- The implementation of local performance approaches in local authorities (Favoreu *et al.*, 2015; Carassus *et al.*, 2011, 2012, 2014; Maurel

*et al.*, 2011) as part of a voluntary transposition of the principles of the 2001 LOLF law, which concerns them only indirectly.

These innovations can be addressed directly to users such as e-government-related remote procedures (Bourcier 2013, Koubi 2013, Ubaldi 2013), the use of digital frames (Bied and Metzger 2011) or Participatory methods for “citizen grievances” (Spieth, 2013). They may also concern local authority staff such as public policy models (Grenier and Guitton-Philippe, 2010), participatory methods (Garabige, 2012) or serious video games for the training of EHPAD staff (Cohard and Marciniak, 2014)

Managerial innovation essentially involves changes in organizational structure, administrative procedures, information systems and HRM (Damanpour and Schneider 2008). The deployment of these innovations in local authorities requires new skills internally and efficiency to allocate them. Political time is short because it is related to users’ vote while the time for the transformation of management can be long. In addition, the partition of services and sectors can be a brake for the acquisition of new skills especially in terms of organization and transversal working.

It is why management strategies are based on the “development of initiatives and innovations” that do not generate additional expenses (Dupuis, 2015, p.158). A renewal of HRM practices, based on a business approach, appears as a first element of response. The question of skills and resources therefore seems crucial in the capacity of local authorities to innovate.

From this perspective, dynamic capacities could be an innovation engine (Teece, 2012, 2007). They initially cover the identification and evaluation of opportunities, such as the optimization of expenses and the improvement of user services. In a second step, the mobilization of resources (internal and external) is necessary to face the opportunity and capture the value from it (seize the opportunity). The New Territorial Public Management can then be understood as the capacity of local authorities to seize opportunities (Dupuis, 2015). These elements, which reflect the adaptation of local authorities to the opportunities of their environment, are

integrated into our theoretical framework. The latter, articulated around the dimensions related to the management of local authorities and innovation, is presented below.

This table constitutes the approach of the case studies which are presented in the following section.

## 2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

We now present the implementation of the exploratory qualitative research. According to Baumard and Ibert (2007), research in management science offers two main orientations: the test of a theoretical object and the construction. The researcher turns towards verification if he knows exactly what he is looking for. Conversely, he will move towards the construction of knowledge through an exploratory approach if he still ignores the content of his study. The qualitative approach allows to detail the elements of context and to develop a precise understanding of the elements

at stake. The limit of this approach is the contextualization of the analyzed elements which restricts the generalization. But external validity can be improved by cross-referencing different data sources from multiple organizations. The hermeneutic approach that we mobilize is part of this construction of knowledge through the interpretation of the research material made up of the project reports studied. This approach of interpretation - theoretical construction is based on the work of Lincoln and Guba (2013).

The analysis is articulated around two parts. The first part presents the collected data and the second part proposes a qualitative analysis of these data by the method of Miles and Huberman (2003).

### 2.1. Analyzed data

The data of the study were collected in reports of projects carried out in local authorities and related structures. We studied 21 reports. The selected final corpus includes 13 reports of innovative projects: 6 municipalities or structures attached to a municipality (tourism

DIMENSION	REFERENCES
<b><i>Objectives of the innovation</i></b>	
Advantage	Godet <i>et al.</i> (2010); Eggers & Kumar-Singh (2009); Pollitt (2003)
Optimization (efficiency)	Dupuis (2015); Eggers & Kumar-Singh (2009); Pollitt (2003)
<b><i>Dynamic capabilities</i></b>	
Sensing	Teece (2007, 2012); relays (Crozier & Friedberg, 1977)
Seizing	
Transforming	
<b><i>Designing and driving innovation</i></b>	
Kinds of design (design office method, value analysis, innovative design)	Agogu�e <i>et al.</i> (2013) ; Hatchuel & Weil (2009); Le Masson & Weil (2010)
Reduction of uncertainties of creative destruction	Alter (2013); Schumpeter (1942)
Kinds of innovation (hardware, software, service, management method)	Moore (1995); Spieth (2013); Bied & Metzger (2011); Bourcier (2013); Koubi (2013); Ubaldi (2013); Garabige (2012)

Table 1 – Dimensions of innovation retained for the analysis

office, mixed-economy structures called SEM, Local Centre for Social Action called CCAS), 5 EPCI (French public groups of local authorities), 1 general council and 1 metropolis (grouped cities). The data were collected between 2010 and 2016, during which time local authorities have undergone institutional changes. These 13 reports are summarized in Appendix 1.

This is a widespread mode of collection (Platt, 1981), which is implemented through different approaches including hermeneutics. According to Ricœur (1969, p.38), “*the semantic approach maintains hermeneutics in contact with the methodologies actually practiced and does not run the risk of separating its concept of truth from the concept of method. In addition, it ensures the implantation of hermeneutics in phenomenology at the level where it is the most certain of itself, that is to say at the level of the theory of meaning, elaborated in logical research*”. The analysis of these 13 cases was supplemented by an analysis of the appendices of the reports studied.

## 2.2. Data processing

The data processing used the method of Miles and Huberman (2003), which is recognized for its many validations. Firstly, we conducted an analysis with concepts deduced from the literature; in a second time we integrate in our analysis concepts induced by the research material. The research process is schematized below.

The literature review allowed us to identify concepts related to innovation (advantage, optimization, detection, capture, transformation, design, destruction) and categorize them (innovation objectives, dynamic capabilities and design and driving). These concepts represent so many dimensions of innovation. The analysis of data, based on concepts deduced from the literature, aims to identify the presence or absence of these dimensions in the research material.

Our outward and return on the research material have led us to identify categories of emerging concepts, called induced concepts. These concepts were highlighted by counting occurrences (presented in Table 2) to analyze their weight. They contribute to enrich the analysis with a contextual description of the concerns of the organizations studied.

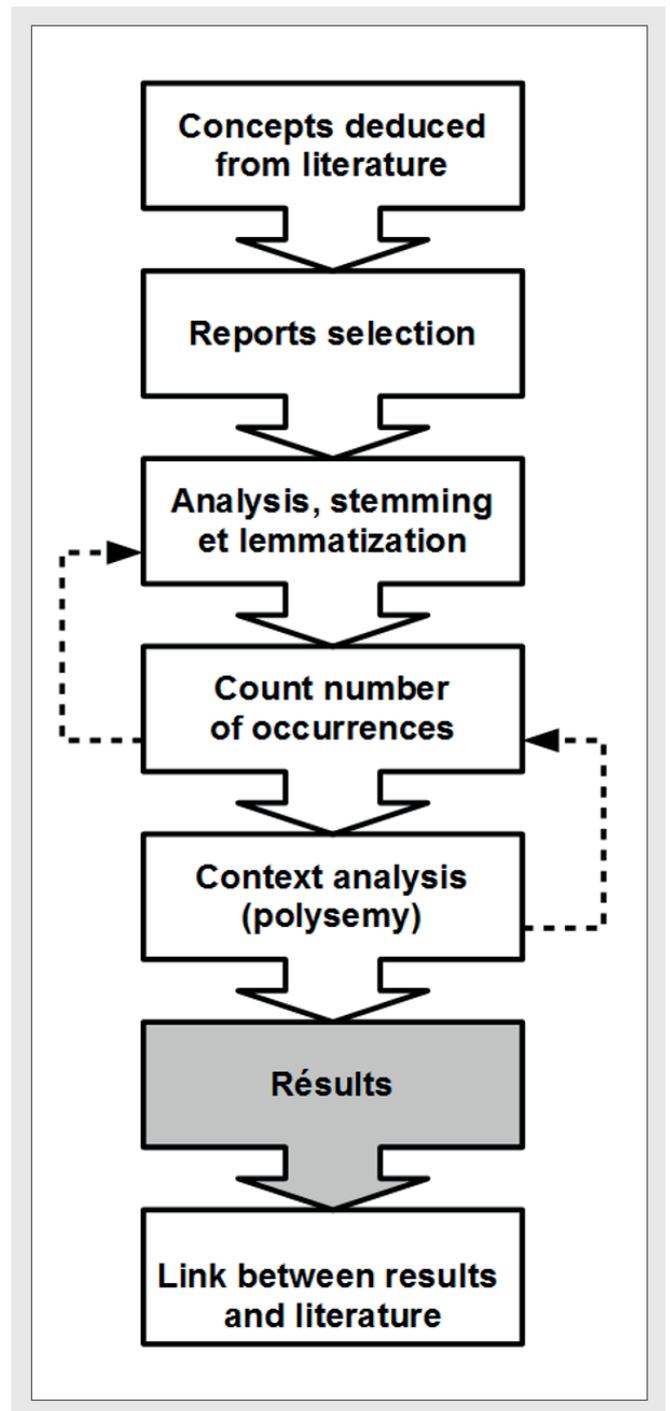


Figure 1 – Research process

In this analysis, we used the text mining method of Turban *et al.* (2007) who proposes to replace the terms by their morphological or root theme to eliminate plurals, conjugations and declensions; for example, “demat” replaces dematerialization, dematerialized, dematerialize. This method is called stemming. We then considered the polysemy of certain terms. Finally, we calculated the weight of the different occurrences by counting.

### 3. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULT

We successively present the results obtained by data analysis based on concepts deduced from the literature and by data based on induced concepts.

#### 3.1. Analysis based on concepts deduced of the literature

This analysis aims to identify the presence or absence of these dimensions in the research material.

The first Advantage concept, which represents the intentionality of obtaining an advantage, is strongly represented in the material. These advantage can be competitive: *“these resources will then be allocated to try to have a competitive advantage (C1)”*, managerial: *“the dimension of dematerialization of the activity with all the advantages that it can provide (G3)”*, or technical *“the dematerialization has many advantages: the financial circuit of the communities is improved and accelerated [...] (E1)”*. This advantage dimension provided by the innovation project is reflected in the 13 projects of the corpus.

Optimization is also strongly represented in our corpus, what is consistent with the literature (Pollitt, 2003). For example, concerning a tourist office (OT) the author indicates: *“[We must] have a website, if they want to optimize their visibility”*. Then the author adds: *“the OT wants to optimize the promotion by internet. For this, he must review his internal organization by implementing some adjustments (C1)”*. In another report, the author notes that *“The scheme of pooling services is a great tool for optimizing and valuing resources, making municipal and community policies consistent, and strengthening the links between municipalities and the community (E4)”*. This optimization reflects this desire for efficiency and cost reduction.

Otherwise, the detection of innovations and new needs only appears in two reports. For example: *“By detecting new needs, it can encourage the creation of new activities and even sometimes jobs. (B1)”* or *“we have detected opportunities and threats that could impact*

*the Park, if [...] the current management modes were not changed (E5)”*. This could indicate a weakness of the process for monitoring and sensing of opportunities. The same goes for the concept of seizing: *“thus to develop this aspect [increase in the number of tourists] it is necessary to satisfy the expectations of the customers and to seize the opportunities offered by the environment (C1)”*, and for that of transformation: *“Organizational transformations, ranging from the reconfiguration of reception desks to the creation of telephone platforms, contribute to a personalized monitoring. (B1)”*. The capture and transformation of innovation opportunities is poorly represented. That seems consistent with the weakness of detection. But it also reflects informal innovation processes that do not integrate the different phases upstream of innovation and its transformation. There is a significant margin of improvement in these structures.

The design appears strongly in the material. We found mainly three types of approaches. The process can be participatory: *“Before starting the design of the dashboard, a phase of discussions with the stakeholders involved is necessary (G3)”*; this can be compared to the Guba and Lincoln (1989) fourth generation constructivist evaluation process, by seeking equity in the expression of the demands of all stakeholders. The design approach can also be based on hierarchical legitimacy: *“The implementation of the BSC is done through several stages with the definition of strategic objectives, the identification of cause-and-effect relationships and the design of dashboards allowing the monitoring of the strategy”*. The author specifies that this approach is legitimized by the different levels of action: *“the design of these dashboards requires the participation of the entire hierarchical line of the SEM [mixed-economy structures] because all the tables cannot be created with the same content. Thus each user must receive information that is specific to his mission (E5)”*. The design is considered with an institutional and contractual approach: *“The first step is related to the design phase. A schedule has been proposed by the DGA (second general director) and the director, as well as a scoping note containing the important elements of the pooling (objective, organization of resources, budget, moving of services...)”*. The author then states that the whole appears in the specifications. This approach reflects the importance of the legal dimension within the projects of local authorities.

Finally, the concept of destruction, in the sense of Schumpeter (creative destruction), represents the fear of this destruction and its perception as a risk. This is the case, for example, of the replacement of a functional human process by a dematerialized process that could be defective: *“it would be counterproductive to dematerialize a process that works perfectly if it must lead to complicating it and reducing its value (E1)”*. The second risk mentioned is a minimization of the changes that would hinder the ambition of this innovation: *“the actors thus having to emerge from a minimalist vision of the pooling, which would consist in reducing it to an approach of optimization of the management through looking for economies of scale (F2)”*.

### 3.2. Data analysis based on induced concepts

Our outward and return on the research material led us to identify categories of emerging concepts, called induced concepts. These concepts were highlighted by counting occurrences with context analysis (coding) to analyze the weight of the different concepts. They contribute to enrich the analysis by providing a contextual description of the concerns of the organizations studied. We now present this analysis.

The calculation of the weight of the different occurrences by word count allowed us to obtain the following results (Table 2).

We note that the terms deduced generally represent a lower weight than the induced terms (except the terms constraint and design), as shown by our previous analysis. This can be explained by a less formalized innovation process. But the induced concepts show that there is innovation on the strongly represented themes: the pooling (mutualisation) and the dematerialization. These innovations are deployed through projects: the project mode is also strongly constrained by the legislative system (for example: the NotreE law<sup>1</sup>, public contracts). The innovations concern both artifacts with a communication or decision-making dimension, and managerial innovations that improve or optimize coordination, cooperation and integration of the organization. The development, quite strongly represented, testifies

<sup>1</sup> New organization of the territory of the Republic.

Concepts	Weight	Deduced/ Induced
mutualization	448	IND
project	268	IND
dematerialization	238	IND
resource	173	IND
control	120	IND
decision	108	IND
elaboration	87	IND
cooperation	74	IND
change	73	IND
communication	68	IND
advantage	55	IND
user	54	IND
coordination	53	IND
integration	53	IND
optimization	49	IND
design	48	DED
value	47	IND
client	47	IND
law	34	IND
constraint	30	DED
risk	20	IND
innovation	20	DED
sensing	6	DED
transforming	4	DED
seizing	NSP	NSP

DED: deduced concept, IND: induced concept, NSP: Non Significant Polysemic

Table 2 – Weight deduced and induced concepts

of the importance of the design approach, especially in the case of the pooling scheme. The risk testifies, among other things, to the fear of upheavals in the structure: “*we perceive here the risk of drifting which would be to pool at all costs while at the local level the territory has no real needs (E4)*”, or “*as part of the implementation of online sales [...], the risk is to impact the internal organization and in particular its mode of operation (C1)*”. The notion of upset is also present: “*the management processes will be upset by dematerialization (E1)*”. Finally, the terminologies of client and user are also represented in similar proportions. This may indicate a move towards the integration of management concepts from the private sector and towards a hybridization of the client-user in local authorities.

This analysis supports the observation that public organizations, in particular local authorities, innovate according to several dimensions at their level, including at the managerial level by importing and adapting concepts, methods and artefacts from the entrepreneurial environment. These elements of analysis show a potential to innovate.

The following working model is based on our review of the literature and our qualitative study (Figure 3).

Our future research will go through a series of interviews that will validate (or amend) the structure of the model. This latter will then be tested by a quantitative analysis based on a questionnaire survey.

## 4. DISCUSSION

Optimization has been mentioned in the literature (Dupuis, 2015, Pollitt, 2003) and our qualitative analysis confirms its importance. Indeed, our analysis specifies that the optimization can relate to the technological (website, dematerialization, etc.) or managerial (pooling scheme, etc.) dimension. It is very marked because it passes by concepts of very strong weight of pooling resources (448), dematerialization (238), even though the term optimization (49) is less formally mentioned. This can mean the existence of conflicts between optimization and improvement of the quality of the service provided to users (Dupuis,

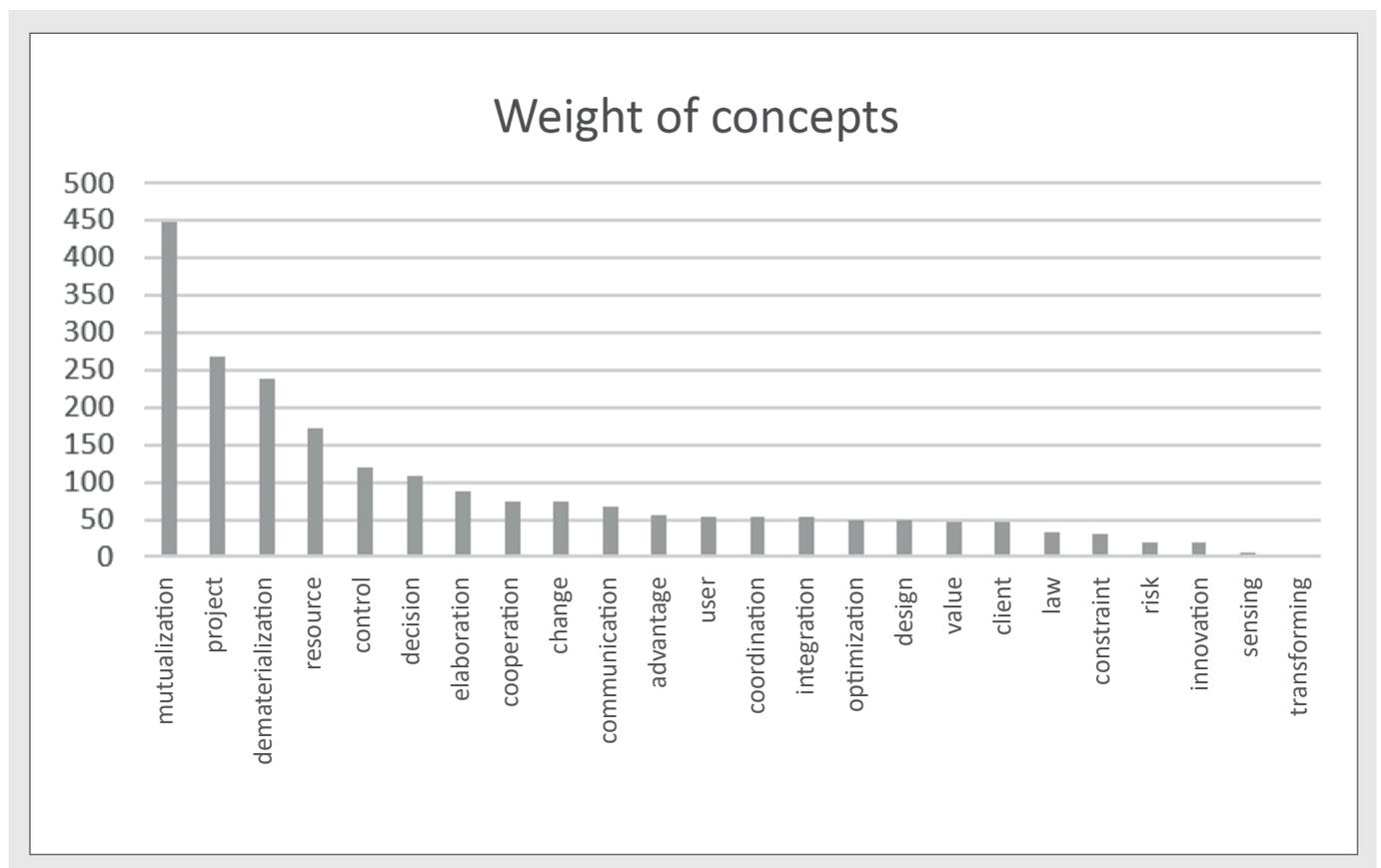


Figure 2 – Weight of concepts

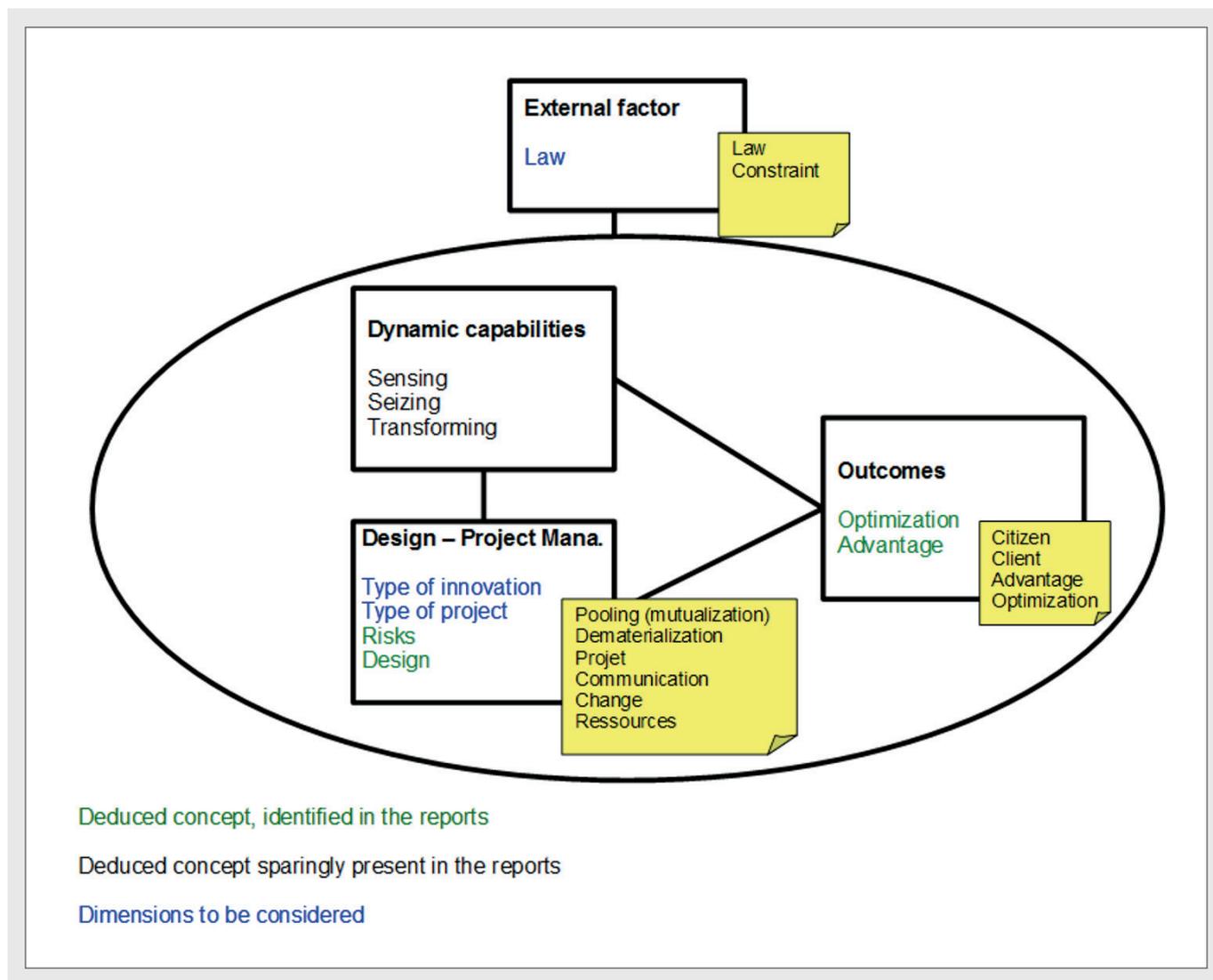


Figure 3 – Model

2015). That pushes administrators to present rather the potential advantages for the user than the reduction of the operated costs.

We therefor question the drivers of innovation-optimization in local authorities. Eggers and Kumar-Singh (2009) reported problems with the selection, dissemination and processing of information that impede innovation cycles. Indeed, this desire for optimization through innovation implies increased communication that facilitates change management. The importance of this concept is strongly represented in our material, although its scope is also real outside local authorities. While the internal communication of local authorities has already made significant progress, in part via new technologies (intranet, groupwares, etc.), it should be improved by the use of administrative social networks or online collaboration

tools and agile methods for example. Externally, a dynamic is at work with the establishment of collaborative meetings with users, websites and Open Data. The internal and external collaboration of local authorities could further progress and be studied in our future research.

If the dynamic capabilities of sensing, seizing and transforming, concepts deduced from the literature (Teece 2007, 2012), do not appear strongly in our material, they seem very present in the local authorities that innovate. This low representation shows that local and regional authorities do not mobilize formal processes that take these concepts into account. These remain generic with valuable projects for the user or optimization for the community. However, since 2003, local authorities have the right to experiment to adapt laws and regulations to local situations

(Charrié and Janin, 2017). They could therefore benefit from the formalization of these processes in order to detect opportunities, grasp and transform them in ways that create value for themselves and their users. This implies an overcoming of the current institutional limits that generate mimicry and homogenization “*by providing models for action, cognition and emotions*” (Lawrence *et al.*, 2011, p.53). This seems to be a research perspective based on neo-institutional theories.

Design is an important activity of local authorities. It is embodied in the projects carried by the community, but also in the CCTP (Territorial and Provincial Advisory Council) which are the specifications developed by the engineers and managers. The design, which appears relatively strong (48) in our study, involves approaches derived from the analysis of the value and the design of office design (Hatchuel and Weil, 2002). This mode of design is generally close to the bureaucratic organization (Le Masson and Weil, 2010). The opening to experimentation could be an opportunity to introduce innovative design methods, including the CK theory (Agogué *et al* 2013, Hatchuel and Weil 2009). This should be adapted to this particular context of local authorities. At the project management level, the design could be integrated into cycles inspired by agile methods (like Scrum) that would bring greater flexibility.

The concept of creative destruction was described by Schumpeter (1942) as a process of mutation of processes and methods, destroying old ones to create new ones. The destruction is taken into account by local authorities in the form of the risk of loss of performance. This destruction makes it possible to provide the basic material (data, work basis, etc.) for a new creation. Although this risk is present in the minds of designers and managers, its management could be improved by the use of risk management tools (probabilities, decision tree, etc.). Further investigations would be needed to understand how these risks are integrated at the strategic and operational levels. These are again areas of research.

The results of our qualitative analyzes and their comparison with the literature lead us to formulate some proposals for the practitioners, in order to improve the innovation capacities of local authorities:

1. The creation of a formal process of monitoring to detect the opportunities.
2. The involvement of agents in the process of seizing opportunities, to better guarantee the start-up, support and follow-up of these projects
3. The analysis of the impacts of the transformation (advantages or optimizations) to situate the creation of value (user or collectivity) and to define the modes which will allow the continuity of this one.
4. The use of tools for risk management that facilitates the understanding of the impacts of on the change related to the project and allow monitoring of the risks.
5. On some projects, the design methods the design office can be replaced by the innovative design through the C-K theory.

Finally, we propose a model that links the dimensions of our literature review, confirmed by our qualitative analysis (objectives, dynamic capabilities, kinds of design and management) to the ability of the community to innovate. In future research, we want to confirm these elements through semi-structured interviews with project managers in communities. Then we can do a quantitative analysis to test this model.

Thus, our research concretize theoretical and managerial contributions.

## Theoretical contributions

The literature review dedicated to the innovation in the local authorities and its correspondence with our qualitative analysis made it possible to confirm the presence of various concepts deduced from the literature and made possible the emergence of induced concepts from our research material. This helps to enrich the concepts around the theme of innovation in local authorities.

The second contribution is made by the model deduced from deduced from our analysis and which makes it possible to link the dynamic capabilities, the characteristics of the design and the driving as

precursors of the achievement of the objectives and the innovation in the local authorities. This is a working model whose progress allows us to move on to the next stages of its constitution.

### **Managerial contribution**

Our review of the literature and our quantitative analysis made it possible to formulate five propositions for the use of the practitioner. These proposals can support the empowerment of communities by integrating them into formal processes, developing effective risk management, and suggesting the use of innovative design (C-K theory).

## **CONCLUSION**

Encouraged by a favorable legislative context and an internal dynamic, innovations are currently increasing in local authorities. This context is linked to a set of institutional changes requiring them to change, as well as a deeper movement of optimization and improvement that drives managers to innovate by importing tools and methods from the private sector. Our hermeneutic qualitative analysis is based on the method of Miles and Huberman (2003). This analysis is based on a corpus of 13 reports of innovative projects in local authorities. It shows that beyond the real potential of these organizations to innovate, they should formalize processes to better qualify and identify the innovation opportunities they can claim. This process could foster, among other things, the development of dynamic capabilities (sensing, seizing and transformation). Finally, our research offers several theoretical and managerial contributions.

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## APPENDIX 1

This appendix proposes a quick description of the cases studied. It focused on the main aspects of these projects: kind of territorial collectivity, project lead, contents of the project, principal modalities of the project development.

### **B1 (2011)**

#### **Tourism Office (TO)**

The project, led by the Administration / Finance Manager of the TO, focuses on the development of ICT: redesign of the website, creation of a ticket / online booking and downloadable applications, transfer of the tourist tax management to the TO, acquisition of a platform for dematerialization of public procurement of the TO.

The agents were involved in the project, participating in the choice of the management software for the tourist tax. They are involved in the ICT development process too: input of the data of the owners and quarterly processing of the declarations of the owners and hoteliers. An information meeting of all the reception agents on the collection of the tourist tax was also organized.

### **B5 (2011)**

#### **EPCI (5 grouped local authorities) – 154 agents**

The project, led by the General director (DGS) of the group, focuses on the implementation of management control in this EPCI, with the development of a Balanced Scorecard (BSC).

Executives of services, unequally motivated, have been associated with the project by an information meeting on the approach (SWOT diagnosis, grouping of services for the activity summary, presentation of the BSC method and its possible application to the EPCI). Service managers were also involved in defining the missions, objectives and indicators.

There was no communication on the activity report of the group.

A particular political context of the EPCI (perspective of the merger) did not allow to associate the elected representatives with the definition of the diagnosis and the strategy.

### **C1 (2012)**

#### **Local authority – Tourist Office (TO) – 15 agents (private law contracts and territorial agents)**

The project, led by the Administration / Finance Manager of the TO, focuses on the implementation of online sales.

The agents were involved in the project through an in-house training and the creation of a transversal team around online sales (associates all the clusters except the Development / Promotion / Press division) and a user guide of the online sales. But the user staff was not involved in developing the tool and uninformed about the setting of the online sales software. In addition, the Technical Center / New Information Technologies and Communication has no real decision-making power.

The TO is strongly controlled by the elected but its direction lacks visibility. The head of the Administration / Finance division also has decision-making powers and manages the staff of the TO.

### **C2 (2012)**

#### **Local authority – 1400 civil servants, 150 public law contractors and 50 private law contractors**

The project, led by HRD, focuses on the sharing of the Human Resources Function via the Intranet of the municipality. This project reflects an evolution of HRD's missions with the creation of services (Living Environment at Work, HR Information System and Project Management) and a position of jobs and skills planning Manager.

The challenges: professionalize the managers, manage retirements and career development, individualize the management of agents, motivate them and control the payroll.

A practical guide of the HRM rules has been posted on the intranet for the managers. But they lacked training in HRM and management.

### **D3 (2013)**

#### **Intercommunal Center for Social Action (ICAS) of a grouped local authorities created on January 1st, 2012 (36 Local authorities)**

The project, led by the Operational Services Department, focuses on the use of the ICAS activity report as an internal and external management and communication tool.

The activity report was drawn up on the basis of 1- a collaboration between the technicians (director of operational services, political coordinators and social cohesion) and elected officials; and 2- by meetings with the project manager and the director of development to define a method of creating indicators. The structures were supported for the creation of data.

There were tensions between the directors of the structures, dispersed in the territory, who do not feel integrated in the CIAS, and the managers of the services.

### **E1 (2014)**

#### **CCAS – Communal Center for Social Action – 80 agents**

The project, led by the Director of CCAS, focuses on the dematerialization of the accounting and financial chain.

The agents concerned were involved in the project by a two days of in-house training organized by the software publisher and accompanied in the implementation of the project by the director of the structure who organized meetings to explain the project and to consider its consequences.

The agents encountered difficulties related to software upgrades to the compliance of the third party database (requirements of the SEPA and AFNOR standards). And this, in a context of Reorganization of the structure (internal procedures and distribution of tasks).

### **E2 (2014)**

#### **General Council – 5441 agents**

The project, led by the Head of Service of the administrative sector and other sectors which deals with the development of the legal watch.

The goal is to develop the legal intelligence platform so that all HR managers receive weekly information that facilitates the application of statutory devices. This information is completed by service meetings to discuss the HR watch. But the exploitation of the legal strategic scanning is still limited to the prevention of litigation risks and the guarantee of legal certainty. There is a lack of reflection on the implementation of legal strategies to exploit contractual techniques or develop innovative managerial practices (jobs and skills planning approach).

### **E4 (2014)**

#### **EPCI – 15 local authorities – 150 agents**

The project, led by the local authority representative in charge of the pooling and the General Secretariat of the EPCI, focuses on the local implementation of the service pooling scheme.

Since the pooling of services plan is a politically sensitive and anxiety-provoking issue for potentially affected agents, a project approach has been implemented: setting up a project team of elected representatives and recognized agents, a pragmatic and evolutionary methodology, a concerted diagnosis with the communes.

However, there is a lack of confidence of elected officials in inter-local authorities governance, disparate information of agents according to the local authorities and different organizational patterns between the inter-local authorities structure and the EPCI.

### **E5 (2014)**

#### **Public Local Organization (EPL) in the form of a Society of Mixed Economy (SEM) in charge of the heritage, culture and management of various public facilities of the City – 130 employees**

The BSC implementation project is led by the Direction and the Management Accountant of the SEM.

Employees were involved in the project through participative management (by objectives), redefining the work of the management assistants according to their current and future skills, creating a new and more readable organization chart and software facilitating the sharing of information and project management.

However, there is a difficult positioning of the Management Accountant attached to the financial department, which reduces its possibilities of intervention with the other directors of the SEM. Its action is not perceived as pilotage but as financial control with sanctions.

### **F2 (2015)**

#### **EPCI – 26 local authorities (resulting from the merger of two local authorities) – 102 agents (contractors and holders)**

The project, led by the Director General of EPCI Services and a steering committee, focuses on the development of the service pooling scheme.

The context is not easy, characterized by different working methods and managerial practices between the EPCI and small municipalities, and the lack of a common vision of mayors and elected representatives with coalitions of refractory actors. The president of the EPCI is too the mayor of the city center. And the merger of the communities of communes can be perceived as a reinforcement of the hegemony of the city center, via informal transfers between the two structures, in particular of the agents of the common center, more numerous and qualified, to the new group.

### **G1 (2016)**

#### **EPCI – Agglomeration Community created on January 2014**

The project for the pooling of the purchasing department is led by the Deputy Managing Director of the EPCI General Administration Department accompanied by the Department Audit and pooling resources, the Change Management Unit and a consultancy firm.

The project conduct is internally based on a kick-off meeting, the participation of supervisors in the design of an agent communication tool and regular meetings with the management team and the General director - DGA.

The agents were associated by an interview on their positioning in the new organization chart. Some have been able to evolve with a new position of responsibility.

The harmonization of the practices and the standardization of the specifications are exposed to the criticism of a homogenization by absorption more than by true sharing.

## G2 (2016)

### Local authority

The dematerialization project is led by the second general director.

The local authority chose to go beyond the dematerialization of the accounting and financial chain by dematerializing all of its business processes. Elected officials support this choice.

It's a transversal project in its application and implementation in project mode: organization of meetings and workshops according to the priority choices of the municipality, collaborative work, identification of referents for each dematerialized domain.

The agents were supported by the supplier of Electronic Document Management software with meetings upstream of the project, then trainings and workshops, and by the referents to dematerialization, even by the IT department.

## G3 (2016)

### CCAS – grouped local authorities – About 800 agents

The project concerns the development of dashboards for the reorganization of the services for social insertion; it's led by the head of this service.

The service was reorganized during a 3-years project. The service project was developed from a service audit performed by a consultant and progress lines were transcribed in an action plan.

The reorganization is based on skills management tools (training, updating of business software, job descriptions and activity sheets), the creation of a repository of internal procedures and the participatory design of dashboards of medico-social workers.

The head of department brought desire of change in his service by preparing and supporting agents to change.