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# Trajectories of Administrative Reform: Institutions, Timing and Choices in France and Spain

PHILIPPE BEZES and SALVADOR PARRADO

*The influence of national administrative institutions on contemporary reforms has often been noted but insufficiently tested. This article enriches the comparative perspective of administrative reform policies by focusing on four interrelated dimensions: the choices of reformers, institutional constraints, timing and sequencing and long-term trajectories. This article tries to determine whether most similar administrative systems exhibit analogous contemporary reform trajectories in content, timing and sequence. By comparing the administrative reform policies of two 'most similar' Napoleonic countries, France and Spain, this article analyses the commonalities and divergences of decentralisation, territorial state reorganisation, civil service reforms and policies that focus on performance management and organisational design. The article identifies the 'causal mechanisms' that characterise the specific role of institutions and considers both the role of context and the importance of policy intersections.*

Although the New Public Management (NPM) approach is often analysed through the convergence doctrine, administrative reform policies in Western countries have differed in content, orientation and timing since the early 1980s. States have experienced multiple long-term changes in the institutional components of their bureaucracies: changes in their political-administrative relationships through politicisation or professionalisation; changes in their organisational forms by agencification or mergers; changes in their intergovernmental relationships by decentralising or recentralising; changes in their civil service systems; changes in their steering mechanisms through performance management; changes in their processes of allocating financial resources and changes in their relationship to users and the broader public. Each of these specific reform policies corresponds to specific power relationships between actors – reform promoters, veto players and other stakeholders – and to *ad hoc* institutional constraints. A comparative analysis of national systems shows that

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administrative reform policies change in content and timing. For instance, the United Kingdom first targeted the development of managerial tools through the Financial Management Initiative (FMI) followed by the government structure (by creating executive agencies), whereas Sweden initially favoured the decentralisation of power to local authorities and the decentralisation of personnel authority to ministries and agencies under the Government Modernisation Programme (1985).

This diversity of content over time raises comparative problems. Do these multiple reforms show coherent patterns within a country and among 'most similar' administrative systems? Or do they just have a specific logic and generate an indiscernible design of mixed trends? Several approaches deal with comparative research.

The first academic approach compares changes in specific policies: agencification (Verhoest *et al.* 2011); reform of civil service (van der Meer 2011); politicisation (Peters and Pierre 2004) and budgetary reforms (Wanna *et al.* 2010). Because an administrative system juxtaposes several 'institutional arrangements', issues and reform agendas (Bezes and Lodge 2007), reform policies can be analysed separately. However, the analysis of separate administrative changes does not allow for the development of an overall mapping of the reform pattern that impacts on a national administrative system because the different pieces of an administrative system 'bind together' and interact. Therefore, comparing changes among administrative systems requires examining what content has been favoured in each country from a general perspective.

A second comparative administrative method advocates an 'event-centric approach' and compares 'major episodes of public management policymaking' in different countries. This approach helps to identify conditions of change and sources of agenda setting, alternative specification and decision-making to find 'causal sources of political will and novelty in public management policies' (Barzelay and Gallego 2010). This approach is helpful in identifying change mechanisms and reveals the structural dynamics that generate change. However, this approach also has some limitations. It overemphasises the most visible administrative changes, it raises the problem of the national 'significance' of selected 'reform episodes' and it potentially introduces a restricted view for analysing large changes while neglecting 'low-profile' institutional changes, such as layering, conversion and displacement, as identified by Thelen (2003). Our method favours an integrated approach to governmental reform decisions on different issues to map the interrelatedness of administrative changes.

A more 'globally' comparative approach for detecting state transformation has been developed by Pollitt and Bouckaert (2011) through the articulation of 'politico-administrative regimes' (starting point), 'trajectories' ('a route that someone is trying to take') and different models of 'future states' (NPM, neo-Weberian state and New Public Governance). This framework helps to differentiate core *NPM states* that adopt marketisation and manage-

rialisation (United Kingdom or New Zealand), *maintainers* (Germany) and *modernisers* that are either oriented towards managerialisation (France, Italy) or participation (Finland, Netherlands, Sweden). Although useful in revealing national administrative changes and identifying convergence and divergence, this approach does not identify causal change mechanisms. Trajectories are often expressed in an abstract and sometimes rather teleological way. The approach does not show a preference for actors or their institutional constraints.

This article seeks to identify the specific mechanisms that link administrative institutions and actor choices in context – i.e. situations in which other factors may impact the same mechanisms differently. This study pays attention to four interrelated dimensions: institutional choices, constraints, timing and sequencing and the global trajectory of administrative reforms. Our goal is to improve comparative explanations by identifying ‘causal mechanisms’ (Falletti and Lynch 2009) that may be common to the ‘most similar’ Napoleonic countries: France and Spain. These countries were selected with the expectation of finding similarities in reform content, timing and sequence order. Some of the institutional features that were set up by Napoleon I in France between 1799 and 1815 and exported to Spain, Italy and Greece (Wunder 1995) have been resilient over the long term in these systems, and these features may have structural effects on the content of administrative reform. To consider the French, Italian or Spanish administrative systems as ‘Napoleonic’ is a reduction of their institutional complexities because each country has idiosyncratic elements; however, they share some relevant institutional features. In this paper, we ask whether most similar administrative systems exhibit analogous contemporary reform trajectories in content, timing and sequence order, and have these common ‘Napoleonic’ features been dismantled or maintained in the same way in each case?

Several scholars (Barzelay and Gallego 2010; Kickert 2007; Loughlin and Peters 1997; Ongaro 2008, 2009; Peters 2008; Wunder 1995) have already identified similarities between Napoleonic countries. The first similarity is that France (Rouban 2008) and Spain (Gallego 2003; Parrado 2008) lag behind other countries in the implementation of NPM reforms. However, few empirical studies (except for Ongaro, 2008, 2009; Barzelay and Gallego 2010) have tested how these institutional arrangements have influenced the content and results of administrative reforms in ‘Napoleonic’ states. Our assumption is that ‘Napoleonic institutions’ are significant for the analysis of contemporary administrative reforms if attention is paid to their specific content, timing and sequencing.

To answer these questions, in the first part of this article we offer a theoretical framework based on reform trajectories and timing. In the second part, we analyse commonalities and divergences in the content and timing of decentralisation policies, territorial state policies, civil service reforms and policies that focus on performance management and organisational choices. Finally, the

concluding section discusses the main findings of the study in light of 'Napoleonic' legacies.

### **A Framework for Comparing Causal Mechanisms: Serial Choices, Institutions, Timing and Trajectories**

The influence of administrative institutions on contemporary reforms has often been claimed but insufficiently tested. More broadly, Knill (1999) pointed at the '*ex ante*' impact of political-administrative structures in explaining variations in 'administrative reform capacity'. Hood and Lodge (2006) examined the possible links between the historical forms of 'public service bargains' and the national features of public sector reforms. Finally, Pollitt and Bouckaert (2011) also analysed national reform trajectories in different politico-administrative regimes.

More specifically, scholars studying 'Napoleonic' countries (Kickert 2007; Loughlin and Peters 1997; Ongaro 2008; Peters 2008) have broadly claimed a common pattern of reform content and a general resistance to change. They have mainly relied on the large components of these systems whose real influence is difficult to grasp: the set of values (conceptions of the state as an overarching entity), the cultural dimension (Jacobean organisation, the 'one and indivisible Republic'; technocratic policy style; the direct imposition of state authority over citizens, the relative fragility of constitutional regimes) and some structural elements (a politico-administrative system, prefects, all-purpose elites). This article proposes a way forward by identifying more specific commonalities and differences among Napoleonic countries by mapping changes that consider causal mechanisms, reform choices, the content, timing and order of these reforms and the global and national trajectories of these reforms.

Firstly, our approach suggests that each country has experienced their government's serial choices (and non-choices) of administrative reform policies, as in other policies (Baumgartner and Jones 1993). Governments repeatedly shift their attention by bringing in new expertise, formulations, content and interests into the reform process. A way of comparing administrative reform patterns is to track these evolving formulations and content over time. Our assumption is that the content reveals the focus and choices of governments at a given moment. Furthermore, when considered in series as a repeated chain of decisions, the content is able to reflect the influence of administrative institutions – i.e. the strong inter-linkages among collective actors over time related to specific issues and upon specific rules and structures which have developed through time in one country (Bezes and Lodge 2007).

Secondly, we emphasise the importance of timing and sequencing because 'placing politics in time' matters (Meyer-Sahling and Goetz 2009; Pierson 2004) because '*when* an event occurs may be crucial' (Pierson 2000: 263) and because they help to describe and compare changes in bureaucracies. Although 'Weberian' public administration has been challenged since the late 1970s, not

all countries followed the same 'first steps'. Thatcher's government initially developed the Financial Management Initiative in 1982, whereas France opted for decentralisation and Sweden combined the decentralisation of powers to counties and the devolution of HRM practices. These initial episodes have been described as 'critical junctures' (Collier and Collier 1991) in which institutional design choices were made by new political coalitions. The new patterns 'place institutional arrangements on paths or trajectories, which are then difficult to alter' (Pierson 2004: 135). The sequence of choices may predetermine the alternatives that are available in the future. These alternatives are partly due to the restrictions of options that result from the initial choices and from the consequences and side effects of these first choices. Falleti's studies (2005, 2010) on the decentralisation policies of Latin America illustrates how certain choices at particular junctures placed states on specific reform trajectories. Following these arguments, we assume that initial choices and the sequence of those choices may impact on the long-term transformation of bureaucracies. Using Pierson's argument, administrative reform policies are institutions *per se* that may produce lock-in effects, change the distribution of power among different actors, and develop constraints on future reform initiatives. Therefore the transformation process cannot be similar when countries 'start' by decentralising to local authorities or when they initiate an 'agencification' process. Paying attention to 'first moves' is also likely to reveal the most salient issues for an administrative system, possibly the initially most mutable or vulnerable institution.

Thirdly, serial choices are not free of constraints and are influenced by 'existing institutions', e.g. *robust rules* (specific administrative legal orders, bureaucratic recruitment and training organisations, the distribution of powers among the various levels of government, the division of labour and the organisation of ministries and the like) and the *interlinking of actors* 'playing their games' to maintain and reproduce these rules. Administrative institutions are a set of several co-existing institutional arrangements that become essential parts of the administrative system and produce 'legacies'. These administrative institutions may structure dominant issues, discussions regarding the design of reforms, and may also 'filter' environmental pressures and external shocks, such as economic crises, European constraints or international ideas. Institutional arrangements unequally distribute resources among actors and can generate a status quo when veto players want to stop changes that may endanger their positions of power. Institutions then generate survival mechanisms to avoid these reforms and lock-in effects. Institutional arrangements offer different kind of 'opportunities' for change. Certain institutional components of an administrative tradition may be less entrenched or less tied to solid coalitions, and therefore more 'mutable' (Clemens and Cook 1999) and more easily targeted by reformers. Finally, institutional arrangements offer repertoires for change. They embody logics at work, legitimate values and rules, conceptions of the state and collective action and, when associated with political systems, they can credibly frame

preferred forms of change. For instance, the style of French policy has been traditionally described as a 'heroic' (Hayward 1973) or represented as a 'crisis-related' (Crozier 1963) mode of change associated with certain features of French polity. This style relies on a combination of strong political leadership, small circles of 'functionally politicised' top bureaucrats with experience in diverse departments or the private sector and asymmetrical relations between the parliament and the executive, in favour of the latter.

We searched for similarities and differences in terms of issues, content and timing that could be linked to institutional influences in similar Napoleonic countries. In other words, did Spain and France address the same reform issues, challenge the same institutional components, share the choices and timing of administrative reforms and face similar vetoes in their reform processes? The article focuses on *how* and *through what mechanisms* these historical administrative institutions produce inertia and/or shape administrative changes in the contemporary period. There are some caveats to this analysis: so-called similar administrative systems do not have identical administrative institutions; a national administrative system cannot produce one homogeneous effect because it is not composed of a single piece – each system juxtaposes different 'institutional arrangements', each with their own temporal underpinnings (Orren and Skowronek, 1994; Bezes and Lodge 2007) – countries with similar administrative systems may possess different contexts (political and electoral systems, welfare states and the like) that also affect administrative reforms; and similar administrative systems may not be exposed to the same external shocks.

Therefore, the influence of administrative institutions cannot be described *ex ante* by considering the formal administrative institutions and their potential effects, as other scholars do for the Napoleonic countries (Kickert 2007; Loughlin and Peters 1997; Ongaro 2008; Peters 2008; Wunder 1995), that is, in terms of mechanisms of centralisation and uniformity, the differentiation and superiority of administrative law, and the use of a *corps* system to organise the civil service. No doubt that the institutions that were 'invented' in the early decades of the nineteenth century have been resilient over time and have structured the main institutional arrangements of the French and Spanish administrative systems. However, we begin by examining administrative reform policies to assess the extent to which existing institutions structure their design (choice of content, scope of reform, indecision, blocked issues, etc.). To do so, we rely on the 'causal mechanisms' perspective developed by Falleti and Lynch (2009). They focus on the interaction between causal mechanisms and the context in which they operate. According to Falleti and Lynch, causal mechanisms are 'relational concepts' that describe the

relationships or the actions among the units of analysis or in the cases of the study ... Mechanisms tell us how things happen: how actors relate,

how individuals come to believe what they do or what they draw from past experiences, how policies and institutions endure or change, how outcomes that are inefficient become hard to reverse, and so on. (Falleti and Lynch 2009: 1147)

Examples of causal mechanisms are power reproduction, learning mechanisms, modes of change (layering, replacement, conversion, policy drift) and similar means. Each type of causal mechanism may have subtypes. For instance, power reproduction refers to the subtypes of boundary control in institutional changes (to preserve from outsiders' influence) or the circular flow of power through the politicisation of administrative structures. Some mechanisms can be individually based, but most of them apply to collective actors and collective action in social systems. Falleti and Lynch (2009: 1147) propose that mechanisms are 'portable concepts, distinct from the variables attached to particular cases' that 'operate in different contexts'. Therefore, as 'mechanisms interact with the contexts in which they operate, the outcomes of the process cannot be determined a priori by knowing the type of mechanism that is at work'. Contexts may be 'multi-layered' with different dynamics: political, institutional and slow-moving background processes (long-term transformation of population, markets, budgets, economy, etc.). This article assumes that 'most similar (Napoleonic) administrative institutions' are likely to generate similar causal mechanisms if we observe both similar content in administrative reform policies and a similar ordering of administration reform episodes. However, the differences in context between France and Spain are used to explain why the same mechanisms may operate differently.

Finally, the 'administrative reform trajectory' is used in the last section to map global patterns of change in these two systems. Here, a national 'administrative reform trajectory' is considered to be a chain of temporarily ordered administrative reform policies that have taken place since the early 1980s and have affected various components of the administrative system with different scope. The two first dimensions are the content and time order (or 'event orderability' (Abbott 1990)) of the different reform episodes. We ask whether the content of administrative reform in both countries is common and to what extent, and whether they appeared in the same or a different time order. A third element of a trajectory is the extent to which these administrative reform policies have been *self-reinforcing* (reproducing some historical common institutional arrangement) or *reactive* (trying to be 'path-breaking'). In the latter case, we ask whether reactive reforms developed their proper self-reinforcing mechanisms so that their destabilising effects have been long lasting and disruptive. This is a general concern of Thelen (2003: 222) in proposing to offset path-dependence theorists' excessive emphasis on inertia while seeking to 'understand the modes and mechanisms through which institutional evolution and change occur'. Finally, a fourth element is the intersection between differ-

ent reform sequences. In many cases, change evolves in one sequence of events in the same institutional arrangement (civil service, organisation or budget) or the same broad institutions (i.e. the evolution of the welfare system, the democratisation processes). However, in other accounts (Mahoney 2000; Orren and Skowronek 1994), the interplay of two or more sequences is relevant for explaining change. Our argument is that the global reform trajectory is conditioned by the time in which reform initiatives took place and when different reforms intersected, therefore generating self-reinforcing mechanisms or reactive ones.

### Mapping Similarities and Divergences in Contents and Timing

This section considers the variations in content and timing of reform trends in both countries. Table 1 offers a broad overview of the similarities and differences observed in the two countries. The following subsections develop the argument.

#### *Decentralisation Policies as a First Move: The Dominance of Territorial Issues in Napoleonic Systems*

In the early 1980s, both France and Spain first dealt with decentralisation policies rather than focusing on efficiency or managerial tools like other systems. The territorial decentralisation was a response to concerns about the distribution of political power, not about administrative inefficiencies. The mechanism at work was the ‘creation of power’ through decentralisation for the new majority or the elites of the new regime (see similarly, Falleti 2007, 2010) by reinforcing the legitimacy, representativeness and the power of subnational governments to achieve electoral and political support. In France in 1981, the territorial decentralisation of the *Lois Defferre* enhanced the status and power of local authorities and created a constitutional and political counterbalance within the French regime (Le Lidec 2001). The reform was promoted by the new coalition government of the

TABLE 1  
OVERVIEW OF THE SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES IN FRANCE AND SPAIN

Timing	Similar	Divergent
Similar	Decentralisation policies in the early 1980s Blocked games in reorganising state local units in the 1980s and 1990s	Attempts at reforming the <i>corps</i> system and the civil service
Divergent	Managerial reforms: Budget Act (France) vs. agencies (Spain) in the 2000s	Reorganisation of state local units by mergers in France (2007–2009) vs. drift and progressive loss of relevance of state local units in Spain

socialist and communist parties that had been in opposition since the creation of the Fifth Republic in 1958. Mostly elected by local authorities when right-wing parties controlled the national government from 1958 to 1981, the new incumbents of the executive identified their cause as the one defended by locally elected officials (Le Lidec 2001). Using Falleti's categories for causal mechanisms, the French decentralisation of the early 1980s was first (Law of 2 March 1982) a political decentralisation, which devolved political authority to subnational actors and activated new or existing spaces for the representation of subnational polities (Falleti 2010: 38). The 1982 Act abolished administrative controls over subnational authorities. It reinforced their autonomy by granting the presidents of *conseils généraux* (départements) and of *conseils régionaux* (regions) political authority and powers that were previously exerted by the prefects. In a second move (Law of 7 January 1983), power was transferred to local authorities in several domains (social action, housing, education, culture, transport, maritime affairs) but without clearly distinguishing between state and subnational governments.

The Spanish decentralisation differs in context and in scope from the French one. However, similar causal mechanisms are at work. The policy of decentralisation also came as the first major move. At first, a strong political decentralisation took place in the context of regime transition, and this was followed by administrative decentralisation. The 1978 Constitution granted political autonomy to local authorities and framed the creation of politically autonomous regions. As in France, territorial decentralisation was meant to respond to the demand for autonomy voiced by part of the opposition during Franco's regime. Since then, most state powers have been transferred to the autonomous regions and not to the local authorities. At first, the devolution of powers was asymmetrical and favoured some regions over others. A more symmetrical devolution of power was achieved after the 1992 autonomic pacts between the two major national political parties. The administrative decentralisation policy, unlike that in France, provided the regions with a higher proportion of power and resources, probably due to the different context of democratisation and regime transition. A stronger power coalition generated stronger and more systematic transfers of power in Spain than in France. Finally, while the French government opted for a *local decentralisation* that relied on the existing types of local authorities, the Spanish government chose to create *ex novo* a quasi-federal system (*regional decentralisation*).

To sum up, decentralisation policy was first generated by a similar mechanism of 'power creation' and activated by new elites carrying out a significant change and realignment of the political regime. The Napoleonic features of France and Spain favoured centralisation and provided governments with robust control tools by granting power to local prefects and providing central ministries with direct influence over local issues through ministerial territorial units. In both cases, decentralisation is 'the' major early 'reactive' reform that

induced reinforcing effects and changed the ‘Napoleonic’ state. In opposition to the Napoleonic centralising feature, local representatives always played a major role at the central level within Republican regimes in France and obtained benefits (Le Lidec 2001). In Spain, the demand for decentralisation took more political and radical turns with regional movements that had demanded autonomy since the late nineteenth century. Spain also managed to provide the right to self-government to some regions during the Second Republic (1931–1936).

As suggested by Falleti (2010: 232), ‘the sequence in which different types of decentralisation policies (administrative, fiscal and political) unfold over time is a key determinant of the evolution of the intergovernmental balance of power’. In Spain, as political and administrative decentralisation fused with a political dimension, we can confirm Falleti’s statement that political decentralisation is able to ‘generate a group of followers and engender self-reinforcing policy ratchet effects that will further strengthen the ability of subnational actors to negotiate more devolution of political and fiscal authority’ (Falleti 2010: 232). In Spain, there was an ongoing decentralisation process throughout the 1990s and 2000s through which financial resources and power were transferred. This process has resulted in the negotiation of second-order regional constitutions in which the political power of the regions has been enhanced (or attempted) (Colino 2009). In France, several consequences derived from the decentralisation policies of the period from 1982 to 1985. Firstly, interdependencies between the national and local levels expanded because the decentralisation was not systematic and was therefore incomplete. The role of local authorities in public policy was strengthened, as was their capacity to demand the further devolution of political and fiscal authority. Supported by local politicians and benefiting from the influence of local authorities in policy-making, decentralisation remained high on the political agenda, as demonstrated by the approval of a new decentralisation act in 2003. However, because administrative decentralisation remained partial and was not accompanied by fiscal decentralisation (Le Lidec 2011), the power of the national executive over subnational governments remained stronger than in Spain. The French state may sanction (by punishing illegal activities), guide (by adjusting the level of financial aid) and promote local activities. At the same time, the state is compelled to negotiate with local authorities that have more autonomous decision-making power.

### *Restructuring the State Field Administration: Similar Blocking Games*

In both countries, decentralisation policies impacted on the state field administration, as the centre tried to better coordinate services in the periphery. The reorganisation of state territorial units was repeatedly put on the agenda in both countries from the mid-1980s to the early 2000s but garnered little success due to a repeated blocking game between three actors that each defended their own

institutional logic (sector ministries, prefects/government delegates and state territorial units). The mechanism at work was linked to the attempt to *reproduce the power* of the centre in state field administrations and the power of individual ministries in their peripheral units to protect their own *turf*. More specifically, the reproduction of power was translated into *boundary control* (see Falleti and Lynch 2009). Boundary control was exerted with the aim of defending the state field administration from encroachment by outsiders, and it triggered different games. The government tried to preserve the power of the centre through their representatives, like the prefect, in the state field administration. Individual ministries tried to avoid this encroachment by protecting their area of responsibility from the supervisory powers of the state representative. This mechanism was present in both countries, although with some differences.

State local representatives were historically important in both countries, although they were more structured and powerful in France. The initial French Napoleonic model created a local administrative organisation (departments), the prefects and sub-prefects (appointed state representatives in the territory) and the mayors, initially appointed by central governments or prefects. This structure was aimed at the development of more centralised steering and relied on an (idealised) uniform and hierarchical administrative model with the prefects as its cornerstone (Hayward and Wright 2002; Wright 1992). Gradually, several laws granted prefects strong and broad powers in political and public matters and power over local authorities. This steering mechanism is simultaneously hierarchical (prefects have authority over central state personnel and over local government) and political (they are appointed by the head of the executive). From the early Third Republic, however, the creation of many new sector ministries favoured the development of a sector-based culture, which was fostered by (sector) specialised *corps* of civil servants. Ministries gradually established their own territorial network of local units without respect for the traditional prefectural system, organised by department (Bezes and Le Lidec 2010). These strategies reveal both a distrust of ministries towards the policy principles upheld by prefects and the desire to short-circuit them (Le Lidec 2006). The strategies also reinforce interdependent relationships between central administrations, state local units and local authorities. Furthermore, the *cumul des mandats* allows an official to hold multiple elected offices in several levels of government that mediated by state, ministry and territorial interests (Grémion 1976; Le Lidec 2001).

In Spain, the 1812 Constitution, inspired by French revolutionary principles, attempted to set up a system with provinces and appointed *gobernadores civiles* as central government delegates in 1833 (García Madaria 1980). As in France, during some periods mayors were appointed by the government (large cities) and by the *gobernador civil* (small cities). The conception of uniformity was different in Spain. On the one hand, unlike the French prefect, appointed *gobernadores civiles* did not belong to a

*corps* of civil servants, and they had power over public order and control over local authorities. Further, the *gobernador civil*, whose name changed in the 1980s to government under-delegate, was not placed at the head of the state field administration at its inception. Thus, the state field administration flourished, as in France, as part of a ministerial strategy to deliver services in the territory (Nieto 1977). On the other hand, the *cumul des mandats* is far less important in the Spanish system. Therefore, any integration of centre and periphery was due to the role played by the *gobernadores civiles*. In any case, there was the aspiration to centralise state structures in both countries.

These state field units and the role of the prefects were challenged in both countries from the decentralisation policies of the early 1980s to the 2000s. The reorganisation of the territorial state and the redefinition of the position of prefects were repeatedly put on the agenda, but the games at work in these reforms – opposing central ministries, state ministerial units, prefects and local authorities – resulted in incremental reforms that were barely implemented. After the first French decentralisation act transferred power and the staff of the health, social security and infrastructure ministries to local authorities, state field services became weak and highly fragmented. Simultaneously, the prefects also lost their dominance to local authorities as a consequence of the devolution of power. A committee created in 1982 to plan for the future of state local units and prefects was dismantled without having made any decisions. In the late 1980s, the Ministry of the Interior launched several initiatives without any real effects (Bezes and Le Lidec 2010); the ATR Act (the guidance Law of 6 February, 1992 on the territorial administration of the Republic) and the accompanying Devolution Charter aimed at better coordinating territorial services and national policies under the authority of the prefect. From 1992 to the early 2000s, several strategic plans tried to reorganise the vertical chain of command in ministries and enhance the autonomy of the state field services, while strengthening the coordinating role of the prefect in the *départements*. A report from the Cour des Comptes (2003) indicated that this reorganisation had been poorly implemented due to considerable opposition from the ministries. In 2004, the French government created eight focal subject areas in the regions while legally reinforcing the powers of prefects. State field services were placed under the authority of regional prefects with the objective of implementing a ‘nationwide territorial administrative framework’ and granting more tools for the coordination and steering of local services. The effects of this reform remained limited because it relied on weak incentives, intersected with budgetary reforms initiated in 2001, and suffered from incompatibilities with the new budgetary and managerial rules. Twenty years after decentralisation, the two competing logistical systems of the French state resisted reforms. The *boundary control* mechanism faced tension as a consequence of two contradictory logistical systems: the horizontal coordination system defended by prefects and the Ministry of the Interior and the

vertical coordination system defended by ministries (Bezes and Le Lidec 2010). In these interactions, French local authorities supported state local units.

The decentralisation process also triggered the reorganisation of Spanish state field services in several waves and with similar kinds of games. In 1977, three executive orders aimed at placing state field services under the authority of the governor. The regulations of 1981 and 1983 mandated the double dependency of state fields, coordinated by the governor and functionally dependent on sector ministries, which weakened the coordination capacity of the governor (Castells 1995). The governor only had hierarchical powers on public order and the possibility to abolish a local authority that transgressed the law. With the creation of the autonomous communities, the *government delegates* (Law 16 November 1983) were placed as government representatives in the regions. Like French regional prefects, they coordinate provincial government representatives, are responsible for interprovincial state field services and represent the government in the regions. All these roles, with the exception of the last one, have been rather formal. The *government delegate* lacks the administrative machinery to coordinate services, and the relationship with autonomous communities is monopolised by the staff of the central ministries through intergovernmental bodies. Between 1997 and 1999, the 6/1997 Act and other executive orders (again) placed all state field services under the authority of government representatives as a proof that previous attempts had not been successful. In 2003, only 5.5 per cent of staff from ministerial local units were placed under government delegates (MAP 2005), which illustrates the failure of trying to strengthen government representatives.

From the early 1980s to the 2000s, both countries experienced paradoxical situations (the reorganisation of the state local units and the prefects/government delegates) with the same mechanism at work (boundary control as reflected in cross-cutting gamesmanship among various veto players: state representatives, state fields units, central ministries) resulting in status quo or modest changes. The prefectorial system represents a Napoleonic logic: a political role representing the state, accountability to the executive and adapting specific territorial demands of local politicians and constituents. However, the historical legacy is not just 'Napoleonic'. There is also a 'Republican' legacy since the Third Republic (1871) that was characterised by the emergent tendency for ministries to expand their power through the development of ministerial local units.

If content and mechanisms have been rather similar, then some differences are linked to context. The Spanish government delegate has been transformed into a less powerful actor than the French prefect because he was perceived as the legacy of an authoritarian regime (Franco), not of an administrative model (Napoleonic). Spanish state local units were as important as French local units until power was transferred to the regions. This transfer dismantled many services provided by the state field administration.

Finally, distinct from the Spanish example, Sarkozy's General Review of Public Policies (RGPP) in France helped to strengthen the state regional level by merging 23 ministerial regional directorates into eight directorates whose boundaries match those of the new 'large ministries'. At the departmental level, the organisation of state services was solidified with the creation of three inter-ministerial directorates that unified a dozen existing ministerial directorates and departed from the logic of ministerial boundaries (Bezes and Le Lidec 2010). Prefects were simultaneously reinforced. The regional prefect is now considered the guarantor of cohesion and the coordinator and mediator of state inter-ministerial action. Regional prefects have gained stronger formal power over the eight regional units and over other ministerial services. Furthermore, the regional prefect now has authority over departmental prefects, except with respect to public order. This reform did not dismantle France's 'Napoleonic' orientation. It reactivated some of its logics (the prefect and the political chain of command, the territorial dimension of the state) but also redirected its main institutions through a process of institutional conversion (Thelen 2003: 228) by giving new orientations to their developments (Bezes and Le Lidec 2010). The regional merged units now include multi-policies and multi-sectors; the department level is inter-ministerial; the roles of the prefects have partly changed at both levels. In Spain, there has been no reinforcement of government delegates, and this Napoleonic feature is being dismantled. In the Spanish case, the mode of institutional change was more similar to a process of drift (Mahoney Thelen 2010: 17) when the impact of an institution weakens as a result of shifts in external conditions. Here, radical decentralisation gradually alters the power and the substance of government delegates.

#### *Similar Content but Different Timing of Civil Service Reforms*

The two Napoleonic countries are characterised by what Bernard Silberman (1993: 10) has called an 'organisationally oriented civil service'. An organisationally oriented civil service means the following: (i) early commitment to a bureaucratic career during the educational process; (ii) organisational boundaries that structure early commitments (specific university training in law or engineering or specific civil service schools for top civil servants like the French *Ecole Nationale d'Administration* (ENA) or the Spanish *National Institute of Public Administration* (INAP)); and (iii) an integrated internal labour market channelled by departments but dominated by 'corps' that are ministerial (diplomats, etc.), inter-ministerial (civil administrators in both countries) or related to controlling bodies (*Cour des comptes*, *inspection des finances*, or tax inspectors in Spain). The *corps* is a robust structuring element in both countries as the entry point to civil service and is influential in the career and rewards of its members. However, two institutional differences are apparent. The first is that the Spanish INAP plays a minor role in recruiting top civil servants compared to the ENA. The sec-

ond is that Spanish *grands corps* enjoyed significant influence under the authoritarian Francoist regime in the absence of democratic competition and political parties (Alba 1997).

There are two different types of mechanisms regarding this area of policy. On the one hand, there is again a mechanism for power reproduction but it is expressed in a different way than the aforementioned reform. The power reproduction triggered a power struggle to control the upper echelons of the administrative hierarchy between political parties and *corps* of civil servants. This is illustrated by the politicisation of the apex through political appointments, the strengthening of ministerial cabinets and the attempt to reduce the power of *grand corps*. This mechanism operated similarly and simultaneously in both countries. On the other hand, another mechanism at work is related to organisational inertia (positive feedback) whereby the staff of the whole state (central, local and regional level and in any policy sector) should be covered by the same umbrella legislation (civil service statute). This generic positive feedback is translated into organisational inertia characterised by a homogeneity and uniformity of the conditions under which public sector employees are managed. The dynamic at stake is that institutions and policies – here, the civil service statute created for state agents – endure by creating their own constituencies and expanding their scope. This mechanism is especially important after processes of decentralisation. Although these mechanisms were similar in both countries, the timing differed considerably.

The problem posed by the civil service was framed similarly in both countries, although each has a different scope. In France in 1981 and in Spain in 1982, newly elected left-wing parties held discussions about the civil service and its problems (Bezes 2009; Villoria and Huntoon 2003). The main issue was the loyalty of higher civil servants to political masters in a context where a completely (Spain) or partially (France) new political regime was established. *Grands corps* members were viewed by the socialist and communist parties as representatives of the privileged class and were thus potentially disloyal civil servants of the new government. In Spain, this mechanism was amplified due to the major influence of the *grand corps* in the Francoist regime and during the transition (1976–1981). In both countries, but more intensively in Spain, the aims of professionalising the administrative system and reducing the power of the specialised *corps* were key. In both cases, these questions were not disconnected from the parallel policies of decentralisation that would most likely introduce new conditions of employment, careers and status while fragmenting the civil service.

The two countries initially addressed the issue of loyalty similarly but developed reforms of the civil service with a few notable differences. Spain initiated an early disruptive reform and decided to pass broad basic legislation on the civil service and on the incompatibilities of civil servants in 1984 (Gallego 2003; Parrado 2011a), while France initially developed a more protective framework and passed a series of laws that homogenised the rights and duties

of all civil servants (13 July 1983), rationalised the statutory conditions of state public agents (11 January 1984) and created new homogeneous conditions for civil servants of subnational governments (Bezes 2009). More path-breaking reforms came later on in France.

In Spain, the Civil Service Act of 1984 attempted to weaken the power of the *grand corps* by establishing a post system that had more relevance than *corps* membership for career and reward purposes, by restricting the ‘automatic’ allocation of some posts to a particular *corps*, by merging *corps* (similar initiative in France came much later; Rouban 2008 see below) and by introducing a formal system of performance-based payment. However, the power of the *corps* was unaffected, as the effects of these laws remained limited. The new government then reactivated another ‘Napoleonic’ feature, the politicisation of bureaucracy through the creation of new posts with political appointments (Cejudo 2006) and through the strengthening of ministerial cabinets (Parrado 2004). This evolution was sometimes considered a return to the *spoils system* (Alba 2001). With the advent of democracy, political parties presented a real challenge to *corps* power by reducing the monopoly that the *corps* had on the bureaucratic machinery during the Francoist regime, although they remained influential.

The main objectives of the three pieces of legislation enacted in 1983–1984 revealed France’s distinct strategy. The rationalisation of the legal *statut général des fonctionnaires* through a systematic rewriting and its ability to extend to local officials and health services was one strategy to assure the loyalty of the civil service. Whereas the Spanish government chose to introduce new principles of flexibility with a managerial flavour, the first 1983 Act reasserted the historical norms and values of the French civil service to produce loyalty: career-based civil service, political neutrality, self-regulation as a condition to loyalty and others. The three laws were also a consequence of decentralisation. The extension of the guarantees of state bureaucrats to local and health service public agents was granted in exchange for political support of decentralisation policies (Bezes 2009). Although common principles were claimed, the local civil service was reorganised with somewhat distinct features. A limited degree of democratisation with regard to entry in the ENA also took place to circumvent the influence of the *grands corps*. However, as in Spain, these initiatives did not break existing institutional arrangements. As a consequence, and relying on a similar mechanism observed in Spain, the victory of the left-wing parties led to the reinforcement of existing ‘Napoleonic’ ‘politicisation’ mechanisms. Recruitment to ministerial *cabinets* and the use of discretionary power to appoint top positions had been extended since the 1980s (Bezes and Le Lidec 2007). The power base of the *grands corps* remained unaltered because political parties did not embody the same symbolic significance of renewal as in the Spanish democratic transition.

In both countries, initial choices (distinct on the civil service; similar on politicization) resulted in similar effects until the 2000s, namely the lack of a

departure from historical administrative institutions (the *corps* system) and the activation and reinforcement of politicisation. It is then significant that civil service issues were put again on the agenda in both countries in the 2000s, and new initiatives in favour of managerialisation have only recently been introduced but mixed, in Spain, with the harmonisation of different staff regimes due to decentralization, an issue France addressed in the early 1980s. In both cases, however, the institutions of the civil service were only gradually transformed while politicization remained robust.

In France, the merger of the *corps* into a limited number of larger occupational definitions appeared in 2002 due to the growing influence of the local civil service model and the model of private firms (Rouban 2008; Gervais 2010; Bezes and Jeannot 2011). The creation of job-based frameworks (as in health, security, social, financial administration, culture, training and general management) was discussed from 2002 to 2005 but was never transformed into legislation and was ultimately abandoned. More restrictively, numerous mergers of medium-level *corps* occurred, but the reluctance of *grand corps* to merge prevented any major impact. Other NPM instruments were introduced, but the effects are difficult to evaluate. From 2004, the government experimented with incentive payments and extended them to all directorates in 2006, but there is no evidence that performance pay has gone beyond increasing the wages of top civil servants. Although they were initially related to the decentralisation policy of the 1980s, recent civil service reforms have been linked to the managerial and budgetary reforms of the 2001 Budget Act (*Loi organique relative aux lois de finances – LOLF*) (Bezes 2010; Corbett 2010). By 2007, the newly elected President Sarkozy advocated for the abolition of the *corps* to develop a job-based civil service with a strong emphasis on mobility. Such a service would be inter-ministerial among the three civil services (state, local authorities, hospitals) and would offer financial incentives to leave the civil service. This overarching goal has only resulted in incremental changes. Gradual reforms tried to facilitate mobility between administrations and civil services (Chevallier 2010; Law of 3 August 2009 on mobility) and continued to favour smooth mergers rather than the abolition of historical institutions. Politicisation mechanisms have even been reinforced by other means; that is, through the reorganisation and merger of structures (Bezes and Le Lidec 2011).

Recent reforms in Spain addressed a different problem that is closer to the issue raised in France by the decentralisation policy of the early 1980s. In 2007, a civil service statute was launched to harmonise different staff regimes across sector's territories. Furthermore, the statute introduced more managerial instruments for human resources. It consolidates some aspects of previous legislation, such as the use of performance-related payment, which has been reservedly practised in some agencies (Parrado 2008). In sum, both countries addressed the fragmentation of the civil service caused by decentralisation with the launch of a civil service statute but with different timing: France (1983, 1984) and Spain (2007). The late arrival of the civil

service statute in Spain can be partially explained because in 1984 (when the Civil Service Act was launched), central government elites did not expect that the transfer of power to the regions would be as profound as it has been.

### *Different Routes but Similar Timing to Performance Management: Budgetary Reform vs. Agencification*

A focus on results, rather than inputs or activities, is a central concern of the NPM reforms developed by many countries. Two interrelated aspects have been developed internationally: the use of performance management for steering the bureaucracy and an organisational split between policy delivery and decision-making. This section examines how managerialist ideas have been introduced in France and Spain since the 1990s. A common feature is the late diffusion of these policies albeit with varied choices in each case.

Initially, both countries tried unsuccessfully to implement a version of the American planning, programming, and budgeting system (PPBS) in the 1970s and were reluctant to introduce new managerial tools in the 1980s. In the mid-1980s, the French Budget Division introduced cutback management and other instruments, such as the freeze on expenditures and the centralised budgetary regulation of ministries. In 1989, the 'Public Service Renewal' (PSR) policy developed internal contractualisation based on voluntary commitments from bureaus. The policy gave directors greater operational flexibility in exchange for a commitment to set up management control systems and achieve agreed-upon objectives. The evolution was rather similar in Spain. From 1976 to 1979, the Spanish PPBS focused on the instrumental improvement of planning techniques to assess public investment before resources were allocated and to provide a cost-benefit analysis of programmes in the area of public works and infrastructures (Ballart and Zapico 2010). According to these authors, the phase of 1984-1994 was marked by a form of programme budgeting that required each programme to have objectives and indicators. However, this reform failed because programmes were too broadly defined, managers were not trained to establish objectives and indicators, and programme budgeting did not support more strategic management.

Since the early 2000s, the route of managerialisation differed in both countries in terms of content, context and the mechanisms at work. In the French administration, performance management instruments were extensively diffused because of the 2001 Budget Act. Simultaneously, and contrary to the agencification reform of other countries such as Spain, the French government opted for systematic mergers in 2007-2009.

In France, the incremental budgetary reforms of the 1990s and the path-breaking 2001 Act introduced changes in the control and accountability of public authorities and individual managers through performance indicators. Because the instruments of the 1970s did not help the country to overcome the economic recession of 1991-1993, the French Budget Directorate incre-

mentally experimented with managerial tools to alter the relationship between the central administration and devolved services. The following initiatives were adopted: 'aggregated headings' intended to give ministerial managers latitude in how to (re)allocate appropriations; contractualisation between central administrations, state local units and the Budget Directorate was experimented with, and more control over spending at the territorial level was adopted. However, it is only the 2001 Budget Act that systematised these instruments to create a lever for further reforms. LOLF established programme-oriented budgets, a new performance management system, a 'real cost' approach to policy and a new accountability framework for parliament. Whereas the reforms initially aimed to restore the balance of power between government and parliament by giving MPs more control over the budgetary process, the managerial instruments, set up by LOLF, enhanced control within the executive. The reforms reasserted executive control over ministries and over many autonomous bodies (*établissements publics*). Organisational changes came in 2007, with a choice of mergers at the central and local levels and with links to the imperatives of the debt and deficit. First, the Fillon government redrew the ministerial boundaries in 2007 while significantly reducing the number of full ministers with the creation of large ministries. Second, the government merged several central directorates within ministries, such as the creation of the 'Pole Emploi' or the General Directorate of Public Finances in 2008, with other examples to follow in 2009. This movement was reinforced with mergers of the territorial state administration at the regional and *départamental* levels (Bezes and Le Lidec 2010, 2011).

The mechanism for introducing a more results-oriented culture is different in the Spanish context. In Spain, the *content* of budgetary reforms was less relevant for managerial modernisation (Ballart and Zapico 2010) than in France. The period from 1994 to 2006 was marked by a zero deficit goal through budget stability laws, which allowed for a balanced budget by 2000 and budget surpluses between 2005 and 2007. In 2001 and 2006, budgetary legislation was enacted to link the stability of surpluses and deficits to the economic cycle. More financial than managerial, this phase tried to demonstrate Spain's financial credibility to adopt the euro. The overlapping phase from 2003 to 2008 focused on performance management. The General Budget Law of 2003 emphasised budgeting by results and included some principles of micro-management, but they are of far less relevance than the managerial instruments promoted by LOLF. Performance management was introduced through organisational design.

A results-oriented culture was introduced through an organisational law. The 2006 Law promoted the creation of more autonomous agencies with the aim of increasing the quality of public services and fostering management by results through the use of framework contracts between the parent ministry and the agency. In the future, any new autonomous entity should adopt the agency model and be steered by framework contracts. The 2006 Act was another

attempt to streamline the variety of state units with autonomous or semi-autonomous status from central ministries. In the past, laws like the 6/1997 Act failed to achieve more uniformity in this area because in 2006, 47 public entities out of 138 had a distinct legal regime. The 2006 Act aimed to reduce the number of different semi-autonomous entities while putting a greater emphasis on performance management.

Spain started the systematic agencification of its central administration 15 years later than in other countries, although the budgetary Law of 2011 'temporarily' banned the creation of state agencies due to fiscal constraints (Parrado 2011b). The State Agencies Law only had a limited effect on the diffusion of managerial tools although it was intended to exchange managerial autonomy for management control through performance contracts. Whereas the French government linked budgetary reform and managerial concerns, the introduction of performance management in Spain was sustained more by an organisational act than by a budgetary law. Furthermore, some autonomous entities, like the tax administration or social security, had results-oriented cultures since the mid-1990s through a 'layering' process without the need for a special organisational law (Parrado 2008). What differences in mechanism or context can explain these divergences in nature and scope?

The economic and fiscal context, similar in both countries, is not an explanation: France and Spain experienced a strong recession in 1993, adopted the euro in 2002 after tightening public expenditures and have suffered from an economic recession since 2008. Similarly, both systems had to cope with devolved services, but in Spain, the transfer of services and the sharing of public expenditures with the regions was far greater, especially when health and education were transferred in 2002. However, the three mechanisms operated differently. The first is the significant involvement of the Ministry of Finance in managerialism. In France, budgetary concerns have not only tried to improve the health of public finances through macroeconomic measures but they have also helped to introduce a results culture. Since 2005, the French Ministry of Finance has become the dominant player in state reform in France, replacing a configuration in which three ministries (Budget, Civil Service and Interior) competed and attempted to impose their reform models (Bezes 2009). By contrast, managerial reforms in Spain were introduced by the then Ministry of Public Administration through organisational reforms (agencification among them), which favoured a legal orientation and a loose articulation to budgetary concerns. In Spain, the Ministry of Economy has been concerned with macro-level public finances and did not really attempt to control the budget through micro-measures. The Ministry of Economy has been consulted on organisational reforms, as it is involved in any legislative initiative, but its role is to keep public expenditures under control. Furthermore, the Ministry of Economy was involved in controlling the seven created agencies, but its involvement has been rather formal (Parrado 2011b).

The second distinct mechanism relates to the role of parliament in budgetary reforms. The Spanish Parliament was not involved in budgetary reforms, apart from endorsing and eventually discussing the draft law from the executive. At the opposite, LOLF was a consequence of the control that the French Parliament wanted to exert over public expenditures and the executive. A cross-party working group from the National Assembly was established in 1998 with this purpose. This search for control was supported by several members of the *cabinets* of the Prime Minister and Budget Minister and a few senior civil servants from the Ministry of Finance.

Finally, it is striking that France chose organisational mergers instead of agencification, as in Spain. The mechanisms at stake may offer some explanations of this divergence. In France, mergers have been undertaken for contradictory reasons (Bezes and Le Lidec 2010): achieving economies of scale, solving internal conflicts and reinforcing coordination through hierarchical control. To some extent, it seems that the more systematic creation of agencies reflects the weaker strength of integrative and centripetal dynamics within the Spanish state and the stronger role of decentralisation trends.

### **Institutions, Timing and Intersections: The Logics of Reproduction and Change in the Administrative Reform Trajectories of Napoleonic States**

This article has explored the DNA of diverse administrative reform episodes in France and Spain by focusing on the content of the reforms, their timing and sequence. The three dimensions have a considerable impact on the transformative effects of reform policies and on the institutionalisation of changes. They also reflect the influence and constraints of existing historical administrative institutions. Causal mechanisms are very helpful for comparing administrative reforms. The link between the same mechanisms and different contexts in two similar Napoleonic countries help to account for institutional changes. In this concluding section, we first take up the main comparative findings by paying specific attention to dominant content but also to the time dimension and the potential effects of intersections between trends. Second, we discuss the extent to which Napoleonic historical institutions have been influential but have also been challenged in recent reforms.

#### *Content, Timing, Intersections and Causal Mechanisms*

The global administrative reform trajectories in France and Spain offer two statements. First, a similar critical juncture was present in the late 1970s in Spain and in the early 1980s in France, initiating a significant reactive and path-breaking sequence through decentralisation policies. In the early 1980s, both countries began to redraw the boundaries between the centre and the territories by creating and decentralising power to local or regional authorities. In both cases, political reasons, not administrative efficiency, informed the decisions. Decentralisation clearly shows a departure from the Napole-

onic model. However, decentralisation progressed differently in each country. In France, uniformity was maintained in the process of decentralisation and the transfer of power. In Spain, local and regional autonomies were treated differently. Local authorities were given autonomy, but they did not benefit from the transfer of resources and power, as had the regions. Furthermore, Spanish regional decentralisation has been heterogeneous because some regions initially received more power than others. Second, a focus on results through performance management and new organisational choices (agencification or mergers) were only developed in the 2000s (contrary to the United Kingdom for instance), although in different ways in each country. Performance management was introduced in France in a systematic way with the 2001 Budget Act; whereas in Spain, its introduction was more fragmented and was linked to the development of agencies. In both countries, the creation of quasi-autonomous bodies had followed a gradual *ad hoc* trend linked to specific policy contexts because no overall administrative logic or strategy was established. However, in 2006 Spain began to develop a more systematic effort towards agencification with regard to its central administration but was forced to halt the process in 2011 due to the budgetary crisis. In France, a very distinct organisational choice was made in 2007 that favoured ‘mergers’ (and not agencification) for its central administration and state local units (Bezes and Le Lidec 2010).

Timing and intersections are important with regard to the early reforms that conditioned later reforms. With respect to intersections and the effects of interaction, two similar groups of administrative reform policies emerged in both countries: on the one hand, decentralisation and its effects on the reorganisation of state local units and civil service reforms; on the other hand, performance management concerns and reorganisation choices at the national and central levels.

Decentralisation was the first major reform movement in both countries and had a considerable domino effect in each case. Decentralisation placed new administrative reform issues on the governmental agenda, the most important of which were the reorganisation of state local units, civil service reforms and financial relationships between the state and subnational governments. Decentralisation then intersected with other policies. However, decentralisation did not systematically disrupt the historical components of these policies. The disruptive effects of decentralisation were counterbalanced by resilient administrative and institutional features. Rather, in both countries, decentralisation policies acted as a trigger for a layering process of global institutional change (Mahoney and Thelen 2010; Thelen 2003); the new rules guiding the division of tasks, power and staff and the emergence of a distinct civil service brought indirect changes by gradually altering the dominant centralised logic of the Napoleonic bureaucracies while other dimensions remained resilient, as illustrated below.

Firstly, the reorganisation of state field units and the repositioning of prefects/government delegates were slow processes in both France and Spain from

the 1980s to the 2000s. Both countries have followed the same ‘Napoleonic’ self-reinforcing sequence. On the one hand, initiatives were developed to strengthen the government representatives in the periphery by placing ministerial field units under their responsibility (Spain) or reinforcing their authority on these state territorial units (France). On the other hand, ministerial departments resisted the encroachment of government representatives by preserving their turf. This balance of power was less crucial in Spain than in France because decentralisation was more radical in the Spanish context. Decentralisation challenged the historical organisation of the territorial state in both countries. One cannot say, however, that decentralisation policies ‘caused’ the reorganisation of local units. The issue was perhaps more successfully tackled in 2007–2009 by President Sarkozy. It was at this time that reforms were launched due to both the budgetary crisis and a new coalition of reformers that involved the Presidency, the Prime Minister, the Budget Directorate, the State Modernisation Directorate and the Ministry of the Interior, all of which decided to drastically merge state local units (Bezes and Le Lidec 2010).

Secondly, in both countries decentralisation indirectly challenged the civil service through staff transfers and the creation of an alternative model of recruiting, training and promoting public agents, which was distinct from the dominant *corps* system, at least in France. Reforms have tried to reduce the heterogeneity of civil service statutes (teaching, health, central administration, local administration) and the proliferation of *corps*. However, the intersection of this sequence with decentralisation differs in both countries. In Spain, the ‘effective’ intersection between *civil service reform* and the *territorial devolution of power* did not take place until 2007, when a general statute regulated civil servants of different functional fields (health, education, central administration) and of different territorial levels. In 2007, the merger of fragmented groups of civil servants was not a crucial issue in Spain, which confirms the strength of its decentralisation. In the early 80s, many groups in France defended the (virtual but symbolic) idea of integration of different civil service statutes. The placement of staff from the central and local levels and health administration under the same umbrella (general civil service statute) was approved in 1983–1984 in reaction to decentralisation in France. This concern for maintaining a form of symbolic integration reflects a persistent concern for uniformity in the French context. However, the state civil service and its features, as a general model, are in decline as the attributes of the local civil service become increasingly appealing. At the same time, neither Spain nor France has really attempted to entirely abolish the *corps*, and the reform initiatives were not related to decentralisation but were linked to human resource management concerns. In both countries, there have been attempts at merging the *corps* through a layering process aimed at weakening their power base and structuring effects on human resources issues. In both countries, *grand corps* remained unaffected.

The second set of interactions and intersections between trends of administrative reforms refer to ‘focus on results’/performance and design choices for

public organisations. In both countries, NPM reforms of agencification and performance management originated in specific mechanisms and were not initially linked to the three other reform sequences. However, in both cases, they developed a distinct kind of spillover effect on other administrative reform policies. In France, while the Civil Service Ministry had a strong legacy in taking responsibility for administrative reforms during the 1990s, an unexpected coalition, composed of budgetary authorities and the parliament, played a disruptive role in the evolution of administrative changes in the 2001 Budget Act. In Spain, managerial changes were promoted by a weaker reform group composed of officials from the Ministry of Public Administration. Budgetary authorities only controlled excessive expenditures derived from reforms. In both countries, agencies were originally developed on an *ad hoc* basis, but Spain experienced a more systematic agencification process from 2006 onwards.

The spill-over effects of these reforms were different. In France, the path-breaking LOLF was a relevant step in initiating a new sequence in which managerial tools and budgetary frames would steer other changes: new forms of managerial steering, more devolution in personnel policies, and more differentiated career and pay structures through the use of performance-related pay. Performance pay was experimented with in 2004 and extended to all general directorates in 2006. From 2002, LOLF triggered other reactions by reorganising state field units in favour of prefects. In 2007, these projects were fully implemented through mergers. By contrast, performance management reform in Spain did not produce spillover effects in the rest of the system, limiting the effects of reform to organisational structure.

In sum, the two Napoleonic systems favoured many *sequential* reforms (*in seriatim*) and had solid veto points and difficulties in coping with *parallel* major changes (True *et al.* 1999). They experienced less domino or spill-over effects between reform trends than did other countries.

### *The Logics of Reproduction and Change: Are the French and Spanish Administrative Systems Still Napoleonic?*

The initial and dominant trend of decentralising reforms presents a considerable departure from two Napoleonic features: centralisation and uniformity. By giving local authorities more power and autonomy, the normative ideal of a chain of command that descends from the executive to local mayors through prefects/government representatives has been broken down. This reform relied on the same mechanism in each country. In both countries, local/regional elites and local governments, historically bound by Napoleonic institutions, obtained important state powers. The scope and degree of decentralisation varied considerably between the two countries, as the choice for a quasi-federal system was present only in Spain (*regional decentralisation*), while the French government opted for a *local decentralisation* with a more limited transfer of power and autonomy. The distinct character of

each case of decentralisation seems crucial in explaining the divergences in the long-term reform trajectories of these two ‘Napoleonic’ models. Simply put, regional decentralisation triggered challenging effects for the ‘Napoleonic’ Spanish system, whereas local decentralisation in France has not fully reversed its ‘Napoleonic’ nature.

Similar blocking mechanisms engrained in the Napoleonic model prevented the reform of state field administrations. In both countries, common configurations of veto players (state representatives, state field units, central ministries), historically set up by ‘Napoleonic logic’ (prefects) and opposed by Republican ministerial developments (autonomous expansion of ministerial local units), resulted in status quo for reforming state field administrations. However, in the ‘exceptional’ context of the Sarkozy presidency, along with a financial crisis, strong leadership and a new government coalition, French state local units were drastically reformed through mergers and the reinforcement of prefects (Bezes and Le Lidec 2010). This reform generated a hybrid model. On the one hand, it gave new inter-ministerial roles to existing institutions like state local units and prefects (institutional conversion). On the other hand, it also rediscovered and reactivated the ‘Napoleonic’ logic of prefects and a political hierarchy. Similarly, the structuring feature of the civil service – the *corps* system and the privileges and autonomy of the *grand corps* – opposed many reform attempts and constrained their design by limiting their objectives and scope. This reactive sequence favoured the maintenance and extension of another Napoleonic feature: the use of politicisation mechanisms.

Agencies and performance management were not part of the original Napoleonic administrative system. They were not introduced through the same channels in each country and did not benefit from the same support coalitions. The Spanish government was more inclined to accept trends towards agencification, whereas French reformers put a greater emphasis on hierarchy and control through managerial techniques in the steering of public organisations, including semi-autonomous entities like the *établissements publics*. It seems that the budgetary reforms in France that had managerial consequences have a stronger impact on other trends than the unsystematic organisational changes that were experienced in Spain. The reinforcing effects of these two trends have been different. First, France did not experience a quasi-federal evolution like Spain. Second, a systematic performance management system was established after the 2001 Budget Act. Consequently, the newly introduced managerial tools have been used to reinforce the centralising mechanisms already at work within France and have simultaneously reinforced previous ‘Napoleonic’ hierarchical means of steering and control. By contrast, no reinforcing effects were observed in the Spanish case, a context in which decentralisation led to federalism. Due to the weak introduction of performance instruments within agencies, no vertical reinforcement of steering capacities took place, and Spain is now more fragmented than before. We can conclude that Napoleonic components were less

resilient in Spain than in France. By considering administrative reforms in time and sequences, this article hopes to offer new opportunities to develop comparative perspectives of public administration.

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