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"From municipal cooperation to metropolitan co-operation: change of paradigm in the French regional planning?"

The French regional planning has been characterised by the high level of municipal fragmentation and its corollary, the municipal cooperation. The Chevènement reform (1999) has reorganised urban institutionalization in order to reinforce urban governmental capacity. However, this initiative hasn't solved the lack of metropolitan area on the French territory. Since 2003, the DATAR has launched a new initiative, called "metropolitan cooperation", based on institutional flexibility and partnership with private and public actors, in particular on the strategic axes of the economic development and academic research. In July 2005, 15 metropolitan areas are retained by the DATAR for this new contractualisation. We proposed to explore two key issues: How the metropolitan cooperation do find its place in the history of French regional planning? How local actors, particularly elected officials, do succeed in fastening the official objectives of the metropolitan cooperation and the recent institutional dynamic of municipal cooperation?