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Transforming the city: framing dynamics, the breakout of conflict, and political risk management in Toulon's urban policies

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Abstract
Policy initiatives are often at the outset of urban conflicts. Indeed, public policies imply resource allocation and distributions leading to the creation of "winners and losers". Is it possible to allocate resources while controlling the breakout of conflict and electoral consequences? This inherent tension brought about by politics is explored through the case study of the city of Toulon, a mid-sized European city located in the touristic French Riviera, and also the biggest military port on the Mediterranean Sea. In Toulon, the Navy and the marines are historically considered as an exogenous power and an isolated group, ensuring a redistributive function thanks to military public expenditure (with negative effects during phases of expenditure cuts), and having strong spatial effects. The paper focuses on political mechanisms allowing to legitimate and constrain the mobilization of Navy's resources (great extensions of urban land) in a local development project while managing the political risks of policy implementation. It argues that the ways conflicting interests are framed and new conflicts are managed have to be understood taking into account not only contingent policy goals but also the urban political culture, long-term established relations between actors, and strategies of blame avoidance.

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Transforming the city: framing dynamics, the breakout of conflict, and political risk management in Toulon's urban policies

Policy initiatives are often at the outset of urban conflicts. Indeed, public policies imply resource allocation and distributions leading to the creation of "winners and losers". Is it possible to allocate resources while controlling the breakout of conflict and electoral consequences? This inherent tension brought about by politics is explored through the case study of the city of Toulon, a mid-sized European city located in the touristic French Riviera, and also the biggest military port on the Mediterranean Sea. In Toulon, the Navy and the marines are historically considered as an exogenous power and an isolated group, ensuring a redistributive function thanks to military public expenditure (with negative effects during phases of expenditure cuts), and having strong spatial effects. As was the case in other European cities, Toulon's political elites in power developed a policy agenda in favor of a greater engagement on behalf of the army, considered as an actor in control of key strategic resources. Great extensions of urban land and seaside currently occupied by the Navy are targeted as resources to be mobilized in order to implement a policy agenda of urban transformation.

The paper focuses on political mechanisms allowing to legitimate and constrain the mobilization of Navy's resources in a local development project while managing the political risks of policy implementation. It argues that the ways conflicting interests are framed and new conflicts are managed have to be understood taking into account not only policy goals but also the urban political culture. In other words, the paper articulates policy decision and implementation, political competition and conflict regulation in the analysis of urban policies.
The contribution shows that changes in national policies addressing urban and regional development, along with a change in local government representatives open a window of opportunity for a new policy agenda whose goals are the differentiation of the dependence of the city upon military (and military related) activities in favor to the enhancing of touristic activities related to Toulon's location on the French Riviera. The emergence of conflicts between urban elites - local government and the military administration- is therefore explained by the targeting of the land held by the Navy as a key resource for the implementation of urban transformation. It is argued that politicians' strategies in dealing with conflicting interests are explained both by the need for appropriating the land and by the wish to control for possible electoral sanctions coming from the military employees. In fact, Toulon's political culture, the nature of the public involved, and the political resources of the Mayor in charge favor strategies aimed at keeping the issue off from the public debate and the conflict to be managed behind closed-doors.

1. Groups and urban governance: theoretical perspectives

Even if relations between urban governments and the army have not been addressed by theories about urban politics, the relations between urban governments and those actors who control relevant resources in cities (financial and material resources, human resources and

organization, political and symbolic resources, knowledge and know-how) have been widely studied. Considering the army an actor external to urban government and having an authority upon significant resources, the main theories this article refers to are concerned with the relations between social groups, economic interests and local policies. Three main groups of literature help to understand these relations.

1. The European sociological tradition in urban studies, stemming from a question about how social and political orders are constructed, analyzes city governments and social regulation processes in cities specialized in some activities (one-company towns, city-ports...). Those researches start with a general analysis of the influence of particular activities to determine the social structure of the city (Bagnasco 1986; David et al. 2006). Then, they focus on regulation, intended as *coordination* of different activities, *resource allocation* and *conflicts prevention and solving* (Lange & Regini 1989). Rescaling social analysis from national state to cities, this kind of research empirically demonstrates that different kinds of activities in cities entail different arrangements in urban policies and politics. In other words, urban policies and social and political regulation of a city whose development is closely linked to a specific activity (a port, a big industry) cannot be understood without taking into account, through a sociological analysis, the groups related to this activity, their elites and the influence they exercise.

In some terms, they therefore claim for the uniqueness of social and political arrangements and for the need to differentiate among different urban actors. Moreover, they suggest that a proper understanding of conflicts in cities requires a broader analysis of its specific patterns of social and political regulation.

2. The political economy approach elaborated theories in order to explain urban policies from the interactions and the bargain between the urban political sphere and economic interests (Stone 1989).

For Marxists their main question is how political decisions are taken, "who governs" and which classes are ensuring their own benefits. In a similar perspective, Logan and Moltoch proposed a middle-range theory, more specific than the Marxist general framework, to understand urban policies. They focus on *urban growth coalitions,* defined as groups of private interests representatives oriented at local economic development (Logan & Molotch 1987). In Marxists approaches to local government policy plays a very little role. A stronger attention to the political sphere and to the wider city polity has been attributed to the tenants of the regime theory. Although they still focus on capitalist society, they take into account a wider range of actors than the economic interests, and they consider issues related to political competition. In fact, regime theory focuses on the relations between governmental and non-governmental actors in cities, in order to determine stable ruling coalition. A regime is therefore an informal yet relatively stable group with access to institutional resources that enable it to have a sustained role in making governing decisions (Stone 1989).

Since these mentioned theories share the U.S. as a common origin, their applicability in the European context has been strongly debated (Harding 1991; Stoker & Mossberger 1994).

Indeed, considering European cities, some elements have to be taken into account in order to prevent a non-reflexive theory from being taken out of context. These elements are the weaker place of firms in local politics (mostly in endorsing elections candidates), the smaller relevance of tax incomes in local budgets because of public transfers from the center, and above all the *higher role of the central state in determining local policies*, the weight of de-concentrated administrations of the central state within the cities, and the importance of public landownership which reduces the amount of urban land available in the market (Kazepov 2005).

3. Finally, scholars addressed the evolution of European city governments since the 1970s, and they pointed out patterns of convergence in policy making in European cities. Scholars identified a process of *redistribution of political authority* between levels of governments. Many European countries have experienced reforms in their institutions of local governments by adding power of sub-national elected authorities and transferring responsibilities to sub-national political units (Bobbio 2002). Therefore, the latter have increased legal resources for the definition and implementation of public policies.

Further, a change in state policies addressing cities problems and local development has undermined the redistributive function of territorial policies in Western Europe, in favor to competitive-based allocation policies. Until the 1970s the state was the main actor ruling economic and planning policies in cities. But, the shrinking of state resources and the limitation to its economic interventionism introduced by European Union entailed the displacement of urban policy production to cities themselves. Territorial policies became oriented at promoting local actors' mobilization rather than focused on redistributive issues or direct sustain to economic development. In a context of limited public resources, cities have to elaborate their own projects in order to compete for the allocation of central state resources (Béhar & Estèbe 1999; Pinson 2009). Furthermore, economic change has intensified pressures on municipalities (Scott 2008). Large enterprises and public sector organizations that used to provide stable employment in many localities have been restructured, and the shrinking of traditional industries and the increased mobility of capital and labor put cities in competition in attracting factors of production. The needs of *locally elaborated development projects* to get financial transfers from the center went with the increase of number and type of actors implied in urban policies.

In turn, Mayors leadership has evolved. In fact, city officials have now to mobilize actors controlling relevant resources in cities (firms, universities, local elites). They play a role in aggregating interest and solving conflicts, which could reveals a manner to increase their political authority and enhance legitimacy and recognition (Borraz & John 2004). This entails the research for general and shared policy agendas, for new and more negotiated decision venues and for institutional thickness (Pinson 2009). In other words, the diminished significance of nation-states has created new opportunities for urban policies, and political opportunities for local leaders (Le Galès 2003).

In this field, empirical research focused on the processes allowing actors' resource mobilization and paths leading to the emergence of bargaining venues for collective action in

cities. Embedded in the more general debate about governance in Western society, these researches showed the emergence of new reflexive and procedural forms of political coordination (Bang 2003). Urban governance can be defined as a process of coordinating actors, social groups, and institutions to attain particular goals, discussed and defined collectively in fragmented and uncertain environments (Le Galès 1995). Thus, key elements are the densification of information exchange networks, the recognition of shared interests between actors and the consolidation of a common framing of policy problems (Stoker & Mossberger 1994; DiGaetano & Strom 2003; Kilburn 2004; Pierre 2005). Here, consent and commitment between actors are "criterions of success" (Jessop 1993).

However, beyond the rhetoric of governance widely adopted by political actors and diffused by international organizations, even procedural and reflexive coordination can fail. In fact, the focus on the soft power of persuasion and negotiation somehow led to neglect of the hard realities of power (Stoker 2011). In inter-organizational negotiation process, gridlocks and interruption are far from being rare, making collective action a possible but uncertain output. Moreover, the locally-specific uneven distribution of resources between actors helps to understand the particular ways policies are formulated and the reasons why some possible outputs are systematically left aside (Bachrach & Baratz 1963). In other words, governance is not linear and it is often incomplete (Jessop 1993).

Drawing on the discussed literature, this article stems from two main hypothesis. The first one is that devolution, new national policies and the transformation of mayoral leadership provide incentives for the emergence of local projects implying the mobilization of resources controlled by the Navy in Toulon, i.e. a powerful actor in the city. As a consequence, new forms of conflict can raise.

The second one is that a sociological analysis of a group in the city helps to understand the ways conflicts are regulated and dealt with. When public policies impose losses to a group which is relevant in the political competition, then strategies adopted to deal with conflicts are more likely to respond to logic of blame avoidance.

This work was developed on the basis of a research carried in Toulon in 2010. Data were collected from thirty semi-structured interviews with Toulon city officials and military commanders. The main local newspaper, the Municipality official report, and city documents concerning urban public policies have been analyzed. Data on Toulon's inhabitants related to the Ministry of Defense have been obtained from the Ministry.

1. An actor in the city: the Navy as a public administration and a group of voters

a. Toulon: the first military Mediterranean port or a touristic spot on the French Riviera?

Spatial fix, long-term economic activities, and social structure can be considered as hard data which structure locally-based forms of social and political regulation (i.e. coordination of different activities, resource allocation and conflicts prevention and solving). However, whether or not governments wish to influence and modify them depends on the ways they are perceived and framed as policy problems. Therefore, how the army and Ministry of Defense control resources in Toulon and how local civilian authorities frame the question must be clarified.

Toulon is the first military port on the Mediterranean Sea, and currently 70% of the French fleet of warships is located there. In Toulon metropolitan area (around 500,000 inhabitants), 24,000 people work for the MoD. Toulon's development followed the upside-downs of national defense strategies and policies; thus, the city is considered by local civilian authorities as being historically dependent on the military presence in three relevant and related issues.

The first one is political. Since the army is a hierarchical organization whose headquarters are located in Paris, decisions concerning local development were taken at the national level. By then, the local interest is perceived as having been systematically subdued to the military (and national) one.

The second issue is related to urban economy and employment (Table 1). For centuries, the Navy has been the first employer in the area, mostly because of the activities related to warship construction and maintenance. For this reason, each evolution in defense public expenditure had strong effects on local employment rates and more generally, on the economy of the whole city. During the 1990s, the shrinking of public expenditure in both naval and military sectors created a steep increase of unemployment rates in Toulon (20% of the active population was unemployed in 1999)[1], the failure of military subcontracting firms, and negative net migration rates. The Ministry of Defense is still the first employer in the city: it provides more than 17.000 direct jobs and 12% of Toulon inhabitants in activity work for the military administration (23% of the total).Moreover, Toulon benefits from redistribution of public money through military pensions. Indeed, the city is characterized by a high share of retired inhabitants (16% of the population is retired and 27% is more than 60 years old). Among them, 8.000 people perceive a military pension.

However, military-related activities are not the most dynamic sector in metropolitan economy. In fact, the region has both increased its touristic attractiveness and it has become a favored destination for wealthy retired, who move there from other French regions. As a consequence, leading sectors are currently those around *consumption* and *care*.

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[1] Source : Institut National de la Statistique et des Etudes Economiques

Table 1. Part of Toulon's inhabitants having relations with the Ministry of Defense*

	Number	Percentage	
Inhabitants			
Toulon inhabitants (2006)	167.816		
Toulon inhabitants in activity (2006)	70.764		
Toulon inhabitants working for the MoD (2009)**	8.310	11.7%	of inhabitants in activity
whose are career soldiers	5.807	8.2%	of inhabitants in activity
Retired inhabitants (2006)	38.870		
People benefiting from a military pension (2010)	8.053	20.7%	of retired inhabitants
Weight on the market job			
Jobs in Toulon (2007)	75.931		
MoD direct jobs (2009)**	17.177	22.6%	of total jobs

*Reliable data on families and children were not available
**Data on people working for the military procurement agency (DGA) were not available. The total number of workers is therefore slightly underestimated
*Sources: INSEE, AUDAT, Ministry of Defense*

The third issue is Toulon's urban layout. Toulon developed within a thin space between the hills and the seaside, which constrained urban extension. Today, 8% of the land is owned or legally controlled by the army[2] and 8 kilometers of the seaside are dedicated to military activities and closed to inhabitants and tourists (Picture 1). The Ministry of Defense is a dominant public landowner in the city, which has several consequences. Its land ownerships are out of the land market, whereas their location would make them an easy investment for the creation of a surplus value related to touristic developments. Moreover, some parts of the city are submitted to building restrictions, because of the technological and environmental risks related to military activities (nuclear batteries of the submarines and weaponry deposits). Finally, the legal status of bay waters is military, which entails restrictions to the circulations of civilian boats (ferries, private boats, trade ships). In other words, relevant shares of urban space are regulated (organized and steered) according to a hierarchical organization model, upon which local governments or various organized group have little capacity of action.
This contrasts with the general path of urbanization of Toulon urban area. In fact, after WWII the city developed widely unregulated, thanks to private developers initiatives (and speculations) responding to the increased demand related to the decolonization of Algeria and the retours of thousands of French colonials. Furthermore, since the 1970s the French Riviera has become a coastal line attracting tourists on a world-wide scale and a profitable marked of second-houses developed in the metropolitan area. In this context, Toulon's touristic activities, both in terms of touristic flows and share of second-houses, are underdeveloped compared to those of neighboring municipalities.

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[2] Source: Préfecture Maritime de la Méditerranée

To conclude, the military administration in Toulon is considered as an exogenous power, ensuring a redistributive function thanks to military public expenditure (with negative effects during phases of expenditure cuts) and having strong spatial effects. By then, the idea of dependence is deeply rooted in Toulon's city officials perceptions of the city.
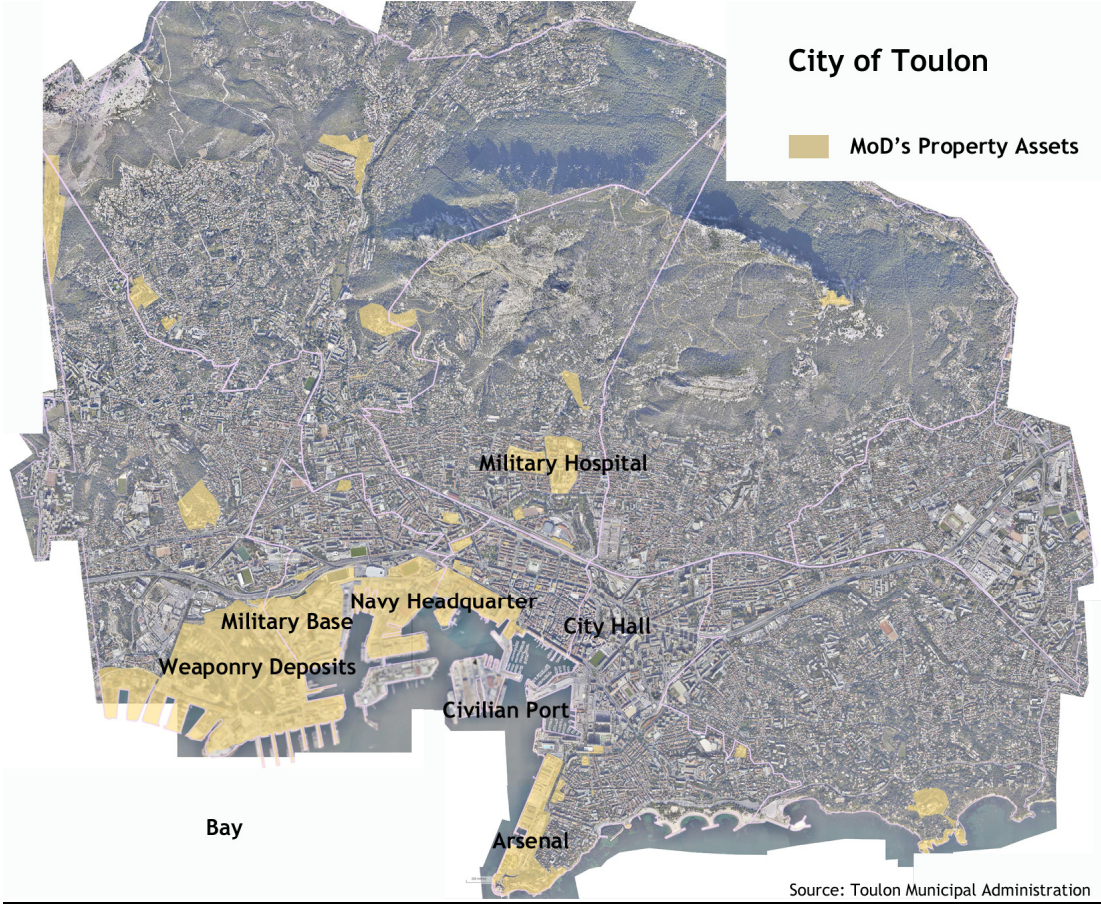
Pic. 1 Toulon and Ministry of Defense property assets

Pic. 2 Part of Toulon waterfront, East side (Credits: F.Artioli)

Pic. 3 Part of Toulon waterfront, East side (Credits: F.Artioli)

a. Soldiers and war veterans in the political competition

The some 8.500 people living in Toulon and working for the Ministry of Defense are a relevant part of the urban electorate. Therefore, it becomes important to understand the ways they are considered by politicians as potential voters, how their political preferences are interpreted by candidates, and which strategies are used in order to obtain their support in the political competition.

Moreover, it is argued that the perception of a constituency and its political preferences contributes to structure not only the political offer during electoral rounds, but also some choices in public policies, how they are decided, implemented and publicly legitimized. This political dimension of public policies has to be understood in two complementary manners. In fact, policymakers are usually seen as seeking through their activities and votes to "claim credit" with constituents and clientele groups for actions taken in their interests. The capacity of politicians to ascribe to themselves favorable results of public policies is one of the main aspects of political work. However, as Kent Weaver (1986) made clear, patterns of behavior of elected officials have also to be understood taking into account their interests in *avoiding the blame* for (perceived or real) losses imposed to some groups and constituencies. In Weaver's view this is due to the *negativity bias* of electoral behavior, intended as the tendency of voters to be more sensitive to what has done *to* them rather than to what has done *for* them (Weaver, 1986). Obtaining support through credit claiming and avoiding the blame are therefore two complementary elements of politicians motivations and activities.

The analysis of the perception of the electorate linked to the military activities requires some preliminary remarks about the forms of political participation of career and voluntary-soldiers (about 6.000 people in Toulon). In fact, law limits their freedoms in the expression of political opinions and in political participation. Their professional status forbids to publicly support politicians, to be elected and to strike, and mobilizations are extremely rare[3].

In France, there are no surveys dealing specifically with political orientation of armed forces. The results of two surveys conducted at national level after Presidential elections in 1995 and 2002 give some hints for the understanding of the behavior of this professional category in comparison with national trends (Table 2). The small number of individuals in the category of interest (N=49 and 32) and the inclusion of both policemen and soldiers forbid regression analysis and more precise inference. However, it can be reasonably argued that they tend to be systematically more right-oriented than the general mean. In 2002 elections, opposing Jacques Chirac (right) to Jean-Marie Le Pen (far-right), the score obtained by the far-right among policemen and soldiers was 14 points higher than the national mean. The same, in 1995 second round for presidential election, these professional groups largely preferred the right candidate to the socialist one.

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[3] The *gendarmes*, a military corps in charge of public order, stroke in 2001 for the first time in post-war French history. They mobilized asking for better working conditions despite their legal interdiction to protest publicly.

Table 2. Results in Presidential Election (National panel)

Election	Vote	Policemen, Soldiers	Panel *
Second round for presidential elections, 2002	NR	4.01	3.6
	J. Chirac	71.4	81.9
	J-M. Le Pen	22.4	8.1
	Blank vote	2	6.4
	(N)	*49*	*2461*
Second round for presidential elections, 1995	NR	6.2	3
	L. Jospin	28.1	43.8
	J. Chirac	56.2	47.6
	Blank vote	9.4	5.3
	(N)	*32*	*2862*

*The panel includes 26 professional categories
Sources: Panel électoral français 1995 and 2002(CDSP-CEVIPOF)

Moreover, compared to national means, career-soldiers and voluntary engaged can be considered as a highly mobile (geographically) population and electorate. Indeed, they move for professional reasons from a city to another every 3-8 years (depending on their rank), most of the time followed by their families.

Toulon has been ruled by right parties since the end of WWII, and the far-right is strong in the city and the metropolitan area. In the city, Toulon career-soldiers and voluntary engaged are considered as a relevant but mobile electorate, whose vote is more due to political orientations and values rather than to an evaluation of previous local policies. They are represented as characterized by *loyalty* to power and largely right-wing oriented. Moreover, it should be noticed that urban elected officials interviewed (both in the right majority and the left opposition) tend to consider career and voluntary soldiers, veterans (and their families) as being part of a big "*whole military world*" which heavily characterizes the city social structure and is "*extremely important*". Therefore, this *"whole word"* each politician in Toulon has to "*speak to*" and to address political messages during and before electoral rounds.

In the electoral rolls of last two municipal elections there were retired marines both in socialist and right rolls, even if they were more numerous and higher ranked in the right ones. Retired marines were recruited by leading candidates of both parties because of their professional belongings: as the socialist leader of the municipal opposition said "*if we do not have these people on the rolls, a share of the population of the city is missing*". In fact, urban electoral rolls demonstrate candidates' social representativeness, and their linkages with those groups who are considered to be relevant constituencies (Lagroye et al., 2004). One of the most favored ways to give symbolic recognition to this group in Toulon is therefore to recruit well-known retired marines to participate to the electoral competition.

Apart from the moment of electoral competition, once the current Mayor Hubert Falco elected, he appointed three councilors who are in charge to deal with military affairs and veterans, which is a quite significant number considered the total number of councilors (22). More precisely, one of them is in charge of the some 60 associations of war veterans

registered in Toulon. These associations are highly supported by the city council: they receive subsidies, a collective building paid by the municipality, and dozens of ceremonies a year are celebrated in the city.

A second element to be taken into account for the understanding of the electoral stakes related to the "*military world*" is its potential support for the far-right. Indeed, the ruling right party fears that they can endorse and support far-right parties, which are at the opposition in the city council. In Toulon the far-right party *Front National* has been reaching great electoral scores since the 1980s and it ruled the city between 1995 and 2001. The military world, and more precisely war-veterans associations, is considered to be ideologically close to *Front National.* Studying Toulon organized civil society John Veugelers demonstrated that many war veterans associations are linked to *pied noirs'* ones. In fact, after 1962, some 40.000 *pieds noirs* left Algeria and settled in Toulon metropolitan area. With their families and descendants they are highly organized in associations, both at local and national level. In Toulon, the two groups (veterans associations and *pied noirs* ones) organize events jointly, exchange visits and have members belonging to both.
Veugelers pointed out the existence of a specific *political subculture* in Toulon, related to the unresolved question of Algerian war and decolonization. He stated that "those who were once the main partisans of *l'Algérie française* - the European settlers in colonial Algeria, as well as the thousands of soldiers who between 1954 and 1962 were engaged in the fight to keep Algeria a part of France- are carriers of a subculture that still today celebrates the *mission civilisatrice* of French colonization" (Veugelers, 2005). Surveying veterans and *pieds noirs* association members in 2002 presidential elections he concluded that they voted far-right two times more than the mean in Toulon and three times more than the national mean.

To conclude, although not completely homogenous, the "*military world*" is considered by local politicians as a relevant constituency in electoral competition. For the ruling Mayor the political risk of electoral sanction is high, and partially related to the fear of a shift of votes towards far-right. Discontent in military-related public opinion is something to be avoided. Therefore, both the logics of credit claiming and blame avoidance have to be taken into account for the analysis of Toulon urban renewal policies.

2. The emergence of conflicts as a consequence of the new policy agenda

a. A window of opportunity for a new urban agenda

Conflicts upon territorial issues can raise because of changes in actors resources, which allow them to put forward new claims and attempt to modify long-term established power relations (Dupuy, Halpern, 2009). It is argued that changes in national policies addressing urban and regional development, along with a change in local government representatives open a window of opportunity for a new policy agenda whose goals are the differentiation of the dependence of the city upon military (and military related) activities in favor to the enhancing of touristic activities related to Toulon's location on the French Riviera. More precisely, two

main changes explain the emergence of a policy program aimed at transforming Toulon in a "*Mediterranean metropolis*" whose economy is differentiated from the military function. On the one side, Toulon's political elites elected in 2001 had increased political resources than the former municipal government. On the other side, national policies addressing French urban development increased legal and material resources of local government by transferring competences and encouraging collaborations among local actors. In other words, a change in Toulon politics and incentives provided by national policies opened a *window of opportunity* (Kingdon, 1984) for the emergence of a new policy agenda around urban development. The agenda requires the mobilization of resources held or controlled by an actor perceived as powerful, the Navy. Conflicts between urban elites - local government and the military administration- are therefore explained by the targeting of the land held by the Navy as a key resource for the implementation of urban transformation.

For a long time military public expenditure ensured a redistributive function in Toulon. In this context, locally elaborated projects for the city were weak or nonexistent. City civilian authorities describe the lapse of time from the end of WWII until the 1980s as a period where "*we didn't need anything*" and nobody felt the necessity for developing city projects. Indeed, high public expenditure benefiting the city was sufficient to ensure social order and the re-election of the mayor in charge. Maurice Arreckx was the city right-wing Mayor for almost thirty years (1957-1985), and ruled a political system based upon corruption and patronage and fed on by the easy availability of public money.

During the 1990s, a moral, economic and political crisis affected the city, and part of the leading class (both economic and political elites) was swept away by lawsuits and scandals (Ardid 1995; Martin et al. 1999; Di Iorio 1998). After a highly contested far-right term (1995-2001), the right-wing mayor Hubert Falco was elected[4]. Hubert Falco became city mayor by a large majority of votes, and benefited from a strong political legitimacy and central government support because of his defeat of a far-right city council. Moreover, like most current French Mayors of big cities, he held both a central and local post. At the national level he has been holding ministerial posts since 2002, the latter being at the Ministry of War Veterans[5]. The city council and the Mayor elected in 2001 (and largely confirmed in 2008) therefore had strong political resources, both in terms of local recognition and legitimacy, and in terms of capacity of dealing with the national government in order to defend local interests and to get resources form the center.

Secondly decentralization and three national policies for territorial development offered incentives for the emergence of locally elaborated development projects. In fact, since 2003, the city responded to three "calls for projects" launched by the central government in order to allocate public resources by concentrating them in some leading places. The first one required the elaboration of a *metropolitan project* dealing with several metropolitan planning issues. It was based upon the cooperation between institutions located in the same metropolitan area as a way to overcome administrative boundaries and metropolitan fragmentation. The second

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[4] He is a member of the political party *Union pour un Mouvement Populaire*

[5] Sécretaire d'Etat aux Anciens Combattants

project, oriented to economic development, was an attempt to enhance the collaboration between R&D institutions and local firms. And the third one, related to decentralization laws, transferred to willing local authorities the ownership and management of the civilian port. By then, local government acquired legal resources for the control of the bay waters, which was formerly shared by the Ministry of Defense and by the Ministry of Transportations.

All the three initiatives are presented by new city officials as part of a general development agenda around the Mediterranean identity of the city and benefiting of its position on the French Riviera. A new encompassing vision for the city is put forward, embedded in the idea of "*opening the city to the sea*". This would be done through the development of touristic activities on the city marina, the enhancement of maritime civilian transportations, and the development of R&D in marine and submarine fields. In this context, the Navy is framed as the most relevant partner for a successful local development. More precisely, for elected officials transforming Toulon in the so called "*Mediterranean metropolis*" implies the mobilization of two kinds of resources locally associated with the military institution. Since the city does not hold a relevant university and all the most advanced research centers are related to the Navy, its research and development activities are considered as the main source for further developments in R&D. However, what is seen as decisive for the implementation of urban projects is the urban space controlled by the Ministry of Defense.

b. *Opposed interests about the use and control of urban space*

Taking into account the nature of the resource targeted by the Mayor helps to understand the diverging interests of actors involved, and conflict that followed. In fact, the conflict between administrative and political elites is about the appropriation of the urban rent and about the definition of most suitable investments to be made in land and properties. Following Haila, investment in land and properties includes the purchase of land *and* the placing of money or work or capital in land (Haila, 1988).

The Navy and the city hold divergent interests concerning the urban space and the use of bay waters. On one side, the first interest of the army in Toulon is ensuring and maintaining the conditions necessary to its own functioning. Thus, land use, property disposal, spatially defined security rules, are the material bases for the institution to function. The necessity of maintaining a military sovereignty on those elements is a permanent goal of the military administration. The Navy holds judicial resources that ensure this sovereignty, such as property rights, authority in defining risks perimeters, decree ruling the transit in the bay and several others decrees concerning the security of military sites. By consequence, every change in the status quo either stems from the institution itself, or its need for approval. The effect on public policies by an existing veto player is that decisions concerning the material organization of the city are slowed down or blocked.

Moreover, it is worthy to underline that the military administration estimates Toulon its key military port in France, whose strategic relevance is going to increase (rather than decrease as it is the case for some ports in the Atlantic Ocean) as a consequence of the concentration of

geopolitical crises in the Mediterranean Sea. Military activities in Toulon are planned to be enhanced in the years to come and new infrastructures to be built up.

On the other side, the action over urban spaces is one of the most important and defining characteristics of city governments. The production and transformation of built environment and the autonomy of cities in defining land rules are at the heart of urban policies. In materialistic terms, land control provides a leverage which allows local authorities to influence which activities- both in terms of production and consumption- are located in the city. By then, it is an instrument helping to regulate the benefits that different groups can take from a specific pattern of activities (Harvey, 1985). Big urban projects contribute to increase the value of land assets (Pinson, 2009).

In Toulon, the decentralization of civilian port management has made the development of consumption-oriented activities one of the wished evolutions for the city to come (Picture 4). In this context, Toulon political elites put forward a project for the waterfront renewal, inspired by some well-known urban experiences such Genoa, Bilbao and Cardiff. This responds to a strategy of touristic development, fostered by the linkages between the Mayor, Corsica elected authorities, and the ferry-boats company linking the island to the coast (Debrie, Lavaud-Letilleul, 2009). Moreover, land prices in Toulon are boosted by the touristic function of the region: in the city they are three times higher than the mean of French middle-sized cities. That is why land properties owned by the military administration constitute an opportunity for the acquisition of land by the city at prices politically defined. Purchasing land at prices lower than market ones makes public municipal investment easier to realize, and public services more likely to be produced. In fact, it reduces the share of land expenses in total cost of public investment.

Urban projects have the double function of effectively changing the use of land assets, while symbolizing the urban renaissance and the effectiveness of political elites. Indeed, although neglected by rent theory, land use and investment are as much related to the *symbolic dimension of power* as to economy. Researches about social production of urban landscapes and architectures have underlined the relevance of symbolic dimensions in understanding urban change (Zukin, 1991). To go further, accounts of conflicts upon urban space also require the understanding of the discursive framing of the policy problems, of political strategies undertaken by actors, and of material outcomes on the urban landscape.
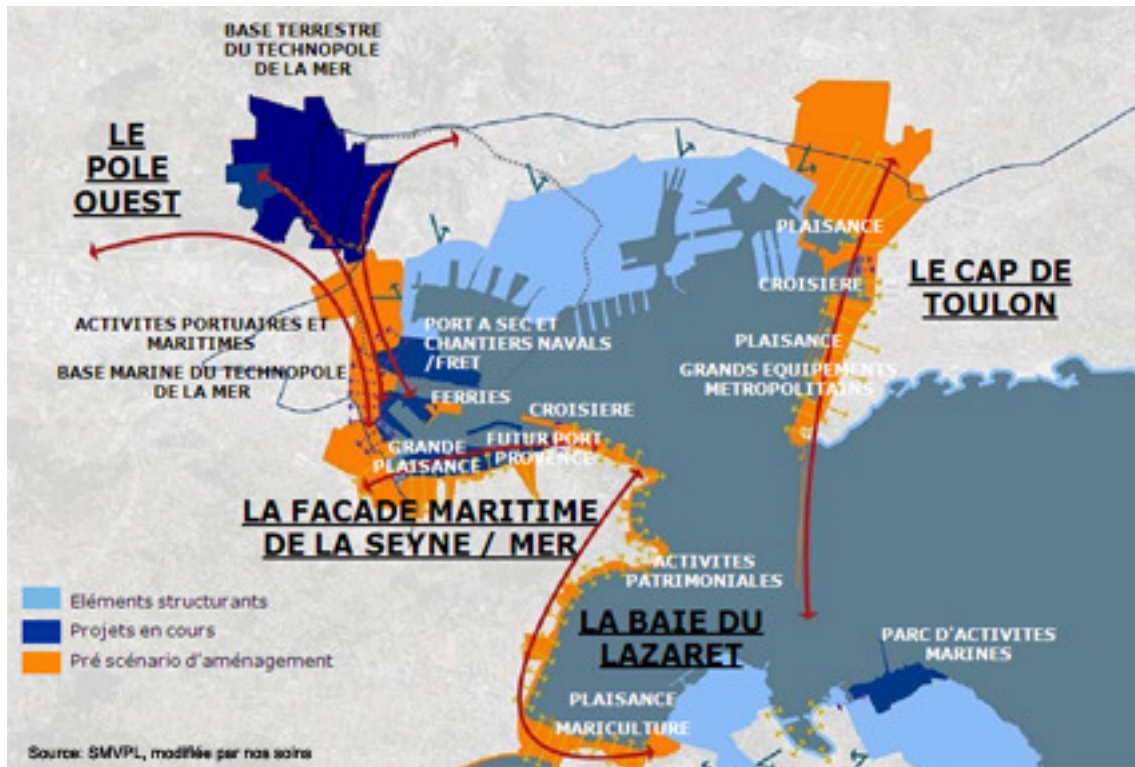
Pic 4 Master plans for the new maritime activities (Sources: SMVPL)

3. Political strategies to implement policy making and avoid the blame

Land being a rival and excludable good, opposed interests about use and investment in it are difficult to accommodate. Speaking about Toulon's spaces, interviewed city officials and military authorities described a power struggle in the making. When the land is at stake, the ideas of "*being solid*," "*keeping its own positions*" and "*showing who really rules the city*" are more than frequent. Moreover, there is a mutual mistrust about the definition of the *"strategic square meters",* intended as the spaces which cannot be other than devoted to defense purposes. Concerning this salient and controversial issue both sides are accused of lacking in clarity.

The strategies undertaken by elected authorities in order to get the land can be explained trough the framework of the double work of political actors previously defined. Strategies are the outputs of tradeoffs between electoral motivations of politicians- i.e. to manage electoral risks related to the particular sociology of the city- and their willing to implement public policies. A *strategic use of history in issue framing*, the institutionalization of bi-lateral meetings, and the use of political resources to reach the central government are the main strategies developed since the early 2000s.

a. *Issue framing and competing causal stories*

Deborah Stone defined issues framing as process of "*image making, where the images have to do fundamentally with attributing cause, blame and responsibility (…). Conditions, difficulties or issues do not have inherent properties that make them more or less likely to be seen as issues to be dealt with trough public policies* (Stone, 1989). Rather, political actors deliberately portray them in ways calculated to gain support for their side. They use narrative stories and symbolic devices in order to manipulate the so-called issues characteristics, making them seem as natural. Problem definition – and more precisely the construction of arguments establishing causal linkages between events- is relevant not only to set a problem on the policy agenda, but also because it defines the range of possible manners to deal with it in the future, and therefore excludes alternative possible solutions. In other words, the attribution of responsibilities and the construction of causal stories interpreting the past allows for the public definition of a desirable future, seen as the most rational manner to deal with the legacies of the past. Political conflicts over causal stories are more than an empirical claim over sequences of events. They are fights about the possibility of control and the assignments of responsibilities. In that way, they have clear material consequences, since they often imply some kind of redistribution of losses and gains.

Toulon elected authorities developed a *new public framing* of the military presence in Toulon. A deconstruction of the two main propositions of the discourse and of causal links reveals a strategic use of history aimed at normalizing the military presence in Toulon (i.e. making the army an urban actor as another) and mobilizing the institution's resources. The first point focuses on the land issue. The lack of available land is accounted by city officials to the historical military presence. It stems from the idea that armed forces have been restructuring since the end of the cold war and that they shifted shifting from labor intensive to capital intensive organizations. City officials therefore claim that contemporary and highly

technologically armed forces do not need such a large amount of property anymore. By consequence, the military administration could easily transfer some of it to the city.

The second point is about the *normalization* of some benefits historically accorded to the Navy and its members. The idea of sharing ("*partager*" in French) recurs in all the interviews with city officers. It is justified by the fact that military activities are not the core of city economic development anymore. Therefore, the institution should renounce some of its exclusive advantages in the city, both in terms of spaces and services. Plus, soldiers and other army employees are "*Toulon's citizens equal to others,*" and they have no reason not to share their benefits with all Toulon inhabitants.

To resume, the public discourse starts from the idea that the army was an exogenous power ruling essential issues in the city. Then, it shifts toward the representation of a future where the city develops its own capacity of action. Based upon the construction of the chronological causal narrative, it implies a new labeling of the major resource controlled by the army in the city (urban spaces in the city center and on the seaside) representing it as available for a "civilian-use reconversion". As a consequence, the framing implies the perceived domination of the army over city policies to be transformed in an equal and negotiated relation.

In turn, the way the military presence in Toulon is framed by local government is very bad perceived by high-ranked commanding officers. Indeed, it is considered as an attempt to delegitimize the role played by the Navy in Toulon's urban development over the last five centuries. In their discourses, commanding officers mobilize urban history in an alternative way, claiming that the Navy was in Toulon "*even before Toulon itself*". Plus, the Navy used to considered Toulon as its own *"home"* and Hubert Falco public discourses are understood as an attempt to evict and expel the military administration from its "*natural*" place.

Local government and the military administration do not have equal resources in their capabilities to make competing causal stories visible. Of course, it is hard to argue that the military administration is a weak organization with limited access to political and institutional resources. However, as far as local affairs are concerned, its capability of going public in the urban arena are bounded by the limited freedom of expression of marines hierarchy and by their lower access to local media and public communication in general. Their alternative causal story is therefore overwhelmed.

b. *Institutionalized meetings and strategies of venue shopping*

Along with the development of a new framing of the military presence in the city, two main strategies have been undertaken by the municipality during the last decade in order to obtain satisfaction for its requests. They differ in two features: the bargaining venue and their public visibility. They are situated at different levels of bargain- i.e. the local and the national one- depending on the salience of the issue: at the local level, Mayor Hubert Falco tried to create a favorable and stable bargaining context with the military administration, widely publicized in the local newspaper. In turn, when salient issues were at stake he used its political resources to deal with the central government and obtain the disposal of the land owned by the Ministry of Defense.

The first strategy could be defined as an institutionalization of bi-lateral meetings. Striking a bargaining situation has provided both parties with some security and a reduction of transaction costs (North & Weingast 1989). In fact, following the emergence of the new policy agenda the number and frequency of meetings between the mayor and the Préfet Maritime (the highest military charge in Toulon) have sharply increased. Those meetings (always proposed by civilian local officials) are based upon established procedures: periodicity, location, and pre-defined orders of the day. It is a process of stabilizing relations between civilian and military hierarchies, in a city where the latter is considered as an exogenous power. Indeed, through the stabilization of norms, they become permanent and self-reproducing institutions which reduce uncertainty and enhance one's commitment. They functions as institutions created in order to solve the problem of collective action (Hall & Taylor 1997; Di Maggio & Powell 1997). Furthermore, some of the meetings have been given a name, "Les rencontres Mairie-Marine"[6], which make them easily recognizable, and the most well-known negotiation venues. They involve the mayor and the Préfet maritime, and imply the use of middle-men and experts in the everyday policy making. In fact, several retired Navy admirals have been hired in local government cabinets: one of them has been in charge for the launching of the "Rencontres Mairie-Marine," and others for some policies requiring close collaboration with the Navy. Retired admirals are both middle-men and experts in the policy process because they belong to both worlds (Hassenteufel 2008). They have been high-level commanding officers, they have personal relationships with several officers - who could even have been under their command - and they generally benefit from good consideration in military hierarchy. They thus have political resources and personal relationships, enabling them to lead debates and to be taken into account. In addition, they have a deep knowledge of how a military institution functions. In the everyday making of local policies, they are therefore the experts to be consulted concerning the organization chart ("*which is the right office to contact?*"), the values and the norms of the military institution, and the best language to be used. At the institutionalized meetings, retired Navy admirals help in reducing uncertainty by making answers foreseeable. Therefore, they stabilize civil-military relations and aim at creating a sense of equality.

However, as formerly argued, the military institution holds judicial resources ensuring its sovereignty and functions as a veto player in decisions concerning the land use. The type of interactions and whether or not they are very controversial are elements linked to power struggle and the degree of consensus between actors regarding problem solving. Indeed, a very controversial issue can lead actors to undertake strategies different than those associated with more concurring problems. Furthermore, in a context of multilayered governance, the existence of a constraint in a specific political venue or level of government can lead an actor to displace its action to a different level. Thus, he is likely to address a venue where power relations could be more favorable and its request taken into account more easily (Kriesi 2007). Considering the army and local government in Toulon, they are both embedded in a multilayered system. On one side, army commanders in Toulon belong to a hierarchical chain

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[6] The City-Navy Meetings

going to the Navy Etat Major and to the Ministry of Defense. On the other side, Toulon's mayor belongs both to the local and national level.

Political resources of Mayor Hubert Falco enabled him to reach central government and to obtain satisfaction in his claims about the land. A good example is a sports hall realized on a military parcel close to the naval base. In fact, the new public equipment was one of the main points of Mayor's political program in 2001, and being the first to be realized, it was supposed to symbolize the city *"renouveau"*. Here, the disposal of the land to the city was obtained thanks to political pressure on the Ministry of Defense in Paris. When the mayor got his first governmental charge in 2002, his double responsibility to the national and local system gave him direct access to the Ministry.

In 2004-5, conflicts about the land became harsher and civilian-military relations at the local level were interrupted. The *casus belli* stemmed from the agreement concerning the use and responsibility for the sports hall. Navy officers in Toulon thought that the public equipment was built up on *"stolen land"*, and that the Navy still needed it. Moreover, since the sports hall is located within the nuclear risk perimeters of the naval base, they formulated several doubts about the opportunity of such a location for public equipment. The hall built, an agreement regulated time-schedules between the inhabitants and defense employees and maintenance charges of the building, and it originated a harsh conflict, where both parties accused of reneging and escaping responsibilities. The episode entailed the suspension of relations between the municipality and the Navy for almost 4 years and the interruption of institutionalized meetings. Although concerning a unique parcel of land, it epitomized diverging interests, and showed the absence of locally constituted forms for conflict-solving about the land. Since then, the definition of parcels which could be given to the municipality is dealt with at the national level.

c. *Public strategies of blame avoidance*

Policies of urban renewal harm the military administration, and not directly the *"military world"* targeted as the group to be mobilized in the political competition. However, when public policies impose losses to an actor, then strategies adopted to deal with conflicts are likely to respond to a logic of blame avoidance and not only to a logic of credit claiming for implemented policies. Here it is argued that the ways diverging interests are framed by elected officials and the ways conflicts are managed have to be understood while taking into account policy goals and actors' resources *and* urban political culture and political risks management.

Two points help to sustain the argument. In Toulon, a strategy of blame avoidance consists in *keeping conflict and losses off the public sphere* (Weaver, 1986: 385). As previously underlined, the military administration has limited access to the public local arena. On the contrary, municipal government has very close links with the main regional newspaper, and distributes to all households a monthly magazine about municipal action. In both the publications conflicts between urban elites are kept invisible. In turn, the *"perfect harmony"* and the *"industrious collaborations"* between the Navy and the Mayor are put up on regular bases. The narrative is accompanied by the claim that the city will never attempt to obtain any

"*strategic square meter*" controlled by the Navy. The statement is understandable as manner to avoid the blame, since it establishes that the city (the local interest) is never going to harm national defense interests. On the other side, what is "strategic" is undefined, and therefore opened to conflicting definitions.

Thinking counterfactually, if the "*military world*" was not a relevant constituency in the city, the military administration could be directly blamed, and it would be possible to politicize the issue and make it of public concern. This is what takes place in other French cities. Here the electoral stakes and the political resources of the Mayor make invisible conflicts the best way of dealing with diverging interests.

Moreover, everyday political work in Toulon implies symbolic actions toward "*military sensible*" populations. As it was previously showed, career-soldiers and war-veteran are considered as an electorate whose vote is value-driven rather than policy-driven. Actions of symbolic recognition are therefore pivotal elements of political work and goes along with the strategy of hiding conflicts. This is reinforced by the *social construction of losses and gains*. What is argued in local government communication is that policies of urban renewal and economic diversification are going to generate benefits for everybody, including marines and other employees of the Ministry of Defense. Thus, it consists in shifting the issue *from the military administration* to its *members*, intended as city inhabitants and voters. The latter are therefore expected to benefits from urban policies, independently to what is obtained from (or imposed to) the administration they work for.

4. Conclusion

The contribution demonstrates that a proper understanding of urban conflicts requires to consider long-term patterns of social and political regulation. In fact, broadening the analysis from the moment of conflict to relations between actors, historical power struggles (and their perception), and electoral stakes help to understand the ways issues are framed and conflicting interests are dealt with. Further, the paper underlines the political dimension of public policies and analyzes the political motivations and strategies in allocating resources while managing electoral consequences.

Empirically, it was showed that changes in national policies addressing urban and regional development, along with increased political resources of municipal representatives opened a window of opportunity for a new policy agenda. The emergence of conflicts between urban elites - local government and the military administration- is therefore explained by the targeting of the land held by the Navy as a key resource for the implementation of urban transformation. Focusing on actions of local politicians, it was argued that the particular strategies used to deal with conflicting interests are explained both by the need for appropriating the land *and* by the wish to control for possible electoral sanctions coming from the military-related constituency. Indeed, the specificity of Toulon's political culture, the nature of the public involved, and the political resources of the Mayor in charge favor strategies aimed at keeping the issue off from the public debate and the conflict to be managed behind closed-doors.

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