

## Federalism and Swiss police reforms

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### Abstract

The Swiss police system is a specimen particularly interesting to be studied in policing. It reflects an extremely complex federalist structures, resulting from historical tensions of different types between small states. The police system consist of autonomous entities of different sizes which have the duty to assist each other in a multi-level governance system. Vertical and especially horizontal cooperation and coordination mechanisms are numerous making the system difficulty readable, where responsibilities are scattered, and sometimes absurd, when it comes to obvious dysfunctions. At the same time, it evolves and adapts, mainly through bottom-up learning processes that bring out innovative and particularly appropriate solutions to deal with today's uncertain and complex environment. It also acts as a regulator, when it comes to the development of too ambitious and intractable centralization projects that frequently lead to major failures. An expression of a typical learning mechanism that underlies police reforms in Switzerland is presented as a synthesis.

**Keywords:** police reforms, intelligence sharing, situational learning mechanism, adaptive system.

### Introduction

Security systems consist of interconnected components of many types. The police is one of the main players of such highly evolving and complex networks. When they have to comply with a federalist organization of a country, reforms are not simplified.

Twenty-six small largely autonomous entities, called cantons, unequally delimit Switzerland, a country already small. Each of them have a constitution, a political system, and specific laws. In terms of security, canton's police are pivotal in a system that is complemented by a federal police and different local police of various size and coverage. This compose a multi-level (confederation / cantons / local) governance system, inherently redundant, difficult to

coordinate and which does not correspond a priori to a relevant spatial delineation of the reality of security problems.

Harmonization takes a long time in this system. For example, the criminal procedure is the same on the whole territory only since 2011. The police uniforms, at the level of the west part of the country, are identical since 2004. Basic education is still spread over several "academies" of police disposing of a high degree of autonomy, even if an harmonized education framework allows, since 2003, to obtain of a federal diploma.

Other components of the security system have been transferred early to the federal level: the centralization of the army, border guards and customs has been a reality since the nineteenth century. One can reasonably ask why the police remain a bastion of federalism in a changing international context and a digitalized society.

There is evidence, however, that the Swiss system is constantly evolving and adapting through various cooperation and coordination mechanisms (Aepli 2008; Jacot-Descombes and Niklaus 2016). It is rarely the result of radical transitions, as has happened in other countries (Terpstra and Fyfe 2015; Moggré et al. 2018). Some developments seem to be better achieved by small and reasonable bottom-up steps. This is an interesting pattern that deserve attention, when it is interpreted as a learning process used by a complex system that must adapt in an largely changing and uncertain environment. This approach leads also to innovative transversal and solutions integrating many interconnected dimensions. In policing, modeling is much more subtle than it might appear at first glance. Such a federalist system mitigates overambitions and reductionist approaches justified by seemingly obvious dysfunctions, as well as favor situational adaptive design of solutions to complex problems.

This paper, without any ambition of completeness, explains some mechanisms by which the federal state has been created to reach its current form. They are typical of how tensions are managed and the problems identified are solved consensually by mostly bottom-up iterative steps. They emerge as a pattern of how security issues and police reforms are dealt with in Switzerland.

### [From a confederation of States to a Federal State: the origin of the Swiss police](#)

At the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Switzerland was made up of a broad variety of territories connected by a set of complex alliances. This happened under the pressure of their

neighboring great powers, in the midst of a very unstable Europe. When Napoleon invaded Switzerland in 1798 for opening the road to the Alps and facilitate conscription, France tried to install a centralized Helvetic Republic inspired by its model. This never worked. Worse still, this created a situation of high tension, and a series of disorders. The cities and the cantons were not ready to renounce to their strong identity. Napoleon positioned himself as a mediator to decree the 'Act of Mediation' in 1803, by elaborating the basis for a federalist model. Within a global vision, he used a bottom-up approach, by starting to consult all the cantons in order to elaborate separated constitutions taking into account particularities. On top of that, he devised the structures and competencies for a central level (Andrey and Tornare 2017). He motivated his engagement as follows: « The nature has made your state federative; to oppose this can not be of a wise man. The principles to be applied must ensure the equal rights of your eighteen cantons; (...) a federative organization where each canton is organized according to its language, its religion, its moral, its interest, its opinion "<sup>1</sup>. The foundation of several canton's gendarmeries directly derived from the reorganization following the act of mediation (figure 1).

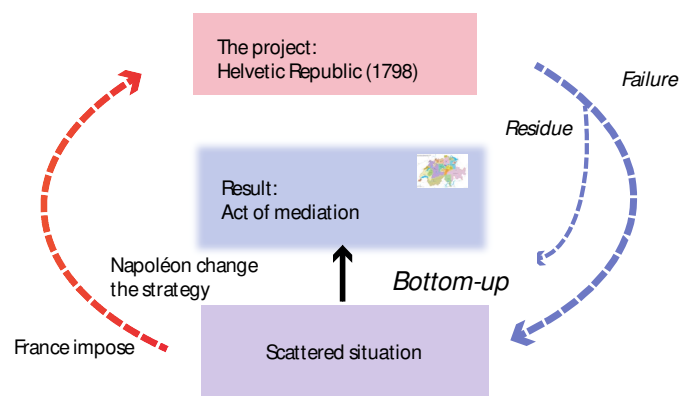


Figure 1. From a scattered situations made of disparate territories in tensions, Napoleon tried to impose a centralized Helvetic Republic. The project failed and Napoleon had to revise its strategy by defining the basis of a confederation of largely autonomous state, in a bottom-up way. However, some aspects of the Helvetic Republic remained as a residue of the project.

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<sup>1</sup> Own translation, *L'Acte de médiation du 19 février 1803. Texte intégral*, édité par Antoine Rochat avec la collaboration d'Alain Pichard, Introduction de Denis Tappy, Cahiers de la Renaissance vaudoise, 2003

The treaty of Vienna, in 1815, was then a powerful driver for creating a space of independence and neutrality in the middle of Europe. It was imposed, in order to create a buffer zone between the great powers. The Federal pact of 1815 resulted from this context. It was aimed at simplifying the network of alliances, and giving some competencies at the central level to conduct a credible external policy. Tenets were, however, still very weak. The dynamic of acquaintances and commerce of each cantons with neighboring countries were continuously and independently changing. Neutrality and independence was challenged many times by the revolutions, interests, and alliances across Europe (Humaire 2018).

In 1847, the civil war of the Sonderbund (secrete alliance between seven of the most so-called conservative cantons), was a confrontation resulting from a complex set of divisions in-between and within the cantons (religions, visions of the society under the influence of the European revolutions, and many other divides). This happened within an unstable Europe, under particular economical difficulties and starvation. The Sonderbund was rapidly defeated, and a federal state was arranged in 1848 as a result. The Swiss constitution then definitely ended up the total autonomy of the cantons, but with a lot of consideration for mitigating the consequences for the defeated cantons. Homeland security has been maintained at the cantonal level (as is the case now), but ways of asserting the independence and neutrality of the whole country have been strengthened at the central level of the confederation (figure 2).

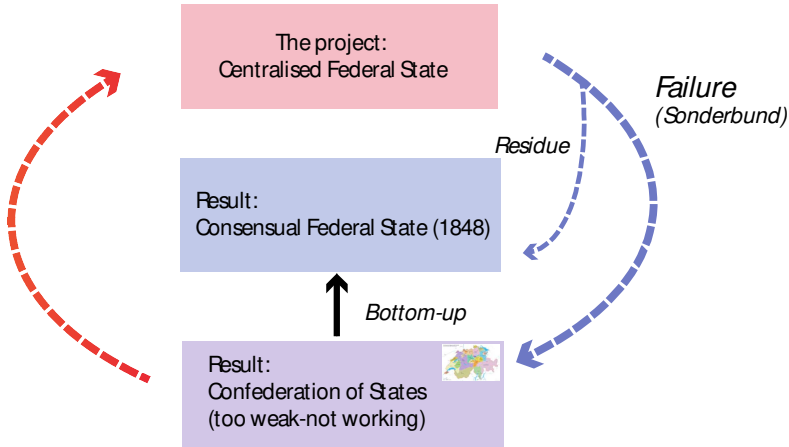


Figure 2. In a complex context made up of tensions (religious, political), economical concerns, and starvation, the plan for an ambitious centralization was challenged by the Sonderbund alliance leading to a civil war. The concerns of the quickly vanquished alliance were, however, largely taken into account in the drafting of the Swiss constitution and turn from a confederation of States to a Federal State.

## The current situation

Despite successive and extensive revisions of the Swiss constitution, the police remained almost entirely the internal affair of the cantons. Each canton, however, has duty of assisting others in case of need (mutual assistance). The canton's police forces are organized specifically, and sometimes articulated with local police of varying sizes and legal competencies, using disparate policing models. Two city police (Lausanne and Zurich) still have an investigative branch deployed in the limits of their territory.

A federal police complete the system. It is responsible for the implementation of international cooperation agreements signed by Switzerland (e.g. Interpol, Schengen, Europol, Prüm), some coordination mechanisms, the centralization of the use of databases (e.g. DNA, AFIS), as well as protecting buildings and persons, in particular in accordance with international laws. Since 2000, the federal police has created an investigative branch, associated with the centralization of competencies related to high profile, organized, and international crimes<sup>2</sup>. Some structures around cybercrime are also being developed (open source surveillance, development of police specializations), but carefully avoiding to exceed its competences and to question the sovereignty of the cantons in the matter.

Signs of the existing disparities in the swiss police system can be found in different simple indicators<sup>3</sup>. Only 900 collaborators (3,5%) are employed by the federal police, 18'400 at the level of the cantons (75,5%), and 5'100 (21%) by the cities (including civilians working at the police).

The size of organizations ranges from 28 (Appenzell-Innerrhoden) to 3'491 employees (Zurich) for covering theoretically the same spectrum of competencies! The traditional indicator defined by the ratio 'number of police officer per inhabitants' offers also a view on this disparity. It ranges from 1/710 for the canton of Thurgau (mostly country-side), to 1/263 for the canton of Basel/Stadt (mostly a city), for a mean of 1/453 for the country. Some city police have been entirely integrated by their cantons, while one canton (Vaud, an exception) has still more employees in its regional police than in the canton (51%). The ratio

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<sup>2</sup> mainly around organized crime. For instance, the investigation of homicides remains in the sphere of competency of the cantons

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.kkpks.ch>, Conférence des commandants de police suisse – accessed the 27th of December 2018

civilian/police officer is very high at the federal police (50%), while it varies broadly in-between the cantons (mean of 20%). There are many explanations for those variations. The different cantons or regions are not confronted to the same kinds of problems, cities require different forms of policing than country-side regions, and the requirement for more specialized civilian employees increases with bigger organizations. These disparities also then create different cultures and approaches to problems: more specialization in larger police, a more generalist attitudes in smaller police organizations with strong links with magistrates – everybody has to do everything and to know everybody.

### Cooperation and coordination mechanisms

There are many cooperation and coordination mechanisms. The system function through vertical cooperation (confederation / canton / municipalities) that allow for some articulation in the distribution and achievement of tasks between levels (e.g. when it comes to distributing tasks in criminal investigations). The cantons delegate representative to working group organized by the confederation, in order, to develop central or coordinated projects, design information processes or contribute to the conceptualization of computerized systems. They have then the responsibility to implement them.

There are also structures for horizontal cooperation between cantons or cities for sharing knowledge, analyzing data, ensuring the availability of specialists, adopting a technology, organizing mutual assistance or arranging some harmonization of processes. The Swiss Conference of Chief Police Officers is the horizontal organ that is situated at a managerial level. Its task is to implement decisions made at the corresponding political level (The Swiss conference of the chiefs of justice and police departments). There are many such horizontal structures depending on police specialties. For example, forensic science departments of each canton are brought together via a Swiss association. In this association, sharing of knowledge is intense, and harmonization of methods is obtained in a consensual and democratic way. Good practices, elaboration of manuals or training requirements are voted, each canton count for one vote, regardless of the size. The decisions are not binding on the cantons, but are generally endorsed.

Those structures are duplicated at the level of regions regrouping a limited number of cantons and dividing Switzerland into 4 territories called 'concordats'. At this level, decisions are easiest and concrete projects for coordination and harmonization of processes are

numerous. This dynamic level deals for instance with intelligence and crime analysis, forensic science or order maintenance. All these horizontal mechanisms dedicated to cooperation creates complexity in the system. However, they have been heavily used in recent times for conducting concrete police reforms (Aepli 2008).

Since 2010, the so-called 'National network for security' is shared by the cantons and the confederation. It is a sort of political and operational platform that 'oils' the complex apparatus. Its scope covers currently global operations to disrupt radicalization, safeguard critical infrastructures, or develop abilities in cybercrimes that have to be implemented in a coordinated way by the cantons and the confederation.

When they have kept a local police, the cantons arrange the relationships between levels on an entirely specific basis. The canton de Vaud (one of the biggest in size of its territory and population – 10% of the population of the country) has recently revised its law on the organization of the police, with the aim of building a coordinated and integrated system. This requires that several municipalities be brought together to operate a regional police. These police must respect minimum criteria, and comply with the decisions issues by political, strategic and operational committees bringing together representative of the canton and municipalities. The system is still continuously challenged and evolving, mostly because of its economical model, as well as many weaknesses identified (*e.g.* weak governance, intelligence sharing, chain of commands) (Canton de Vaud 2017).

### Dysfunction of the system

Aepli *et al.* (2011) identifies four key 'ideal' principles for making a police system achieving its goals:

- *Delegation* (treating the problem and deciding at the adequate level)
- *Coherency* (articulation of the components, crossing levels)
- *Interoperability* (knowledge and information can be shared through compatible equipments and technical tools)
- *Flexibility* (engagement of resources)

The Swiss system is recognized as intrinsically not optimal to comply with those principles. A comprehensive list of dysfunctions is not possible to establish.

Responsibilities are scattered at all the levels. For example, it is the choice of each police to establish recruitment processes, to adopt or not policing models, to approach problems, to integrate a particular technology, or to decide the intensity with which to intervene at crime scenes. There is no single protocol to intervene at the scene of a deceased person, rates of attendance to similar crime scenes differ dramatically, or the intensity of the use of the centralized DNA database shows no pattern between the cantons (Bitzer 2016).

The public can difficultly understand that a local police officer has not a delegation to solve his problem, and must call on another level. Arguments are also weighted in order to give priorities to local/cantonal views on issues within their area of security and legal competencies. Highly visible problems that cause immediate harm are prioritized, in comparison with many serious security problems crossing jurisdictions, that require more global responses (Brodeur 2010). No evidence-based doctrine emerge across the country to solve similar problems.

Coherency is also not easy to achieve. There is virtually no harmonization in the formation of security and criminal policies or strategies. Local and cantonal police revendicate the use of alternative policing models on overlapping territories. Relevant channels to transmit observations and intelligence potentially related to more global problems are not always evident to find. Conversely, the local police are generally unaware of the essential aspects that enable them to recognize critical situations of general interest that they may face.

This is particularly relevant in terms of radicalization, where many signs must be detected and interpreted locally. This is also an issue according to high volume and harmful mobile criminality, all too often mistakenly considered as petty crime occurring at a local level. Moreover, it is not uncommon for teams of investigators from different cantons to realize that they are working on the same case. It is eventually not clear which jurisdiction should take the lead in repetitive cases. The competencies of the investigative branch of the federal level has been largely determined by what is defined as major and more global crime in the law. This is unclear, depending on the progress of an investigation, when a case meets judicial characteristics that require its transmission to the next level.

There is few flexibility in how to engage and concentrate resources specially when major commitments are required. Too many persons occasionally participate to decision making



processes. The organization of a security system dedicated to the G-8 conference at Evian-les-Bains made it possible to experience all the disadvantages mentioned (Aepli *et al.* 2011).

Globally, responsibilities are diluted and too many people, at different levels are involved in decision-making (Aepli 2008; Aepli *et al.* 2011). The federalism might amplify the problem of linkage blindness (Egger 1984), *i.e.* the lack of knowledge and information sharing, as well as coordination. In such a system, informal networks of confidence are at the heart of problem-solving.

It is unclear, however, too which degree those problems are exacerbated by the federalist structure. Other countries experience similar problems in other kinds of structures. Poor management or professional behaviors, complexity, as well as intrinsic tensions pervading in policing belong also to the possible causes. It might be not fair to point systematically to federalism as the culprit. However, from intelligence to policies, strategies and operation, a federalist system impose not a *a priori* favorable delineation to detect and resolve all kinds of security problems, especially in times of digitalization and globalization.

### Drivers of changes

Changes are stimulated by many drivers. The weight of each of them is different, and evolve with the context (Terpstra and Fyfe 2015). In particular, profound reforms in the distribution of tasks and in the public finance system have been voted by the population in 2004, and introduced in 2008 (Frey *et al.* 2006). They have obvious influence on the police system.

Recent influential drivers are first external. They result mainly from globalization of crimes and external pressure exerted on the swiss system necessarily to adapt to a more global vision of security. Since the late 1990s, the new law on money laundering and the financing of terrorism<sup>4</sup>, as well as the integration of the notion of organized crime in the criminal law have modified conceptions around economic crime, and has led to centralize investigations at the federal level

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.admin.ch/opc/fr/classified-compilation/19970427/201901010000/955.0.pdf> (accessed March 4th 2019)

Switzerland has concretely to adapt to the European security system. It was forced to comply with normalized processes and deliver services through centralized single points of contact (SPOC). The number of International cooperation tasks transferred to the confederation tend to grow substantially, conducting to the reinforcement of the federal level (Jacot-Descombes and Wendt 2013).

Awareness that terrorist attacks may occur in the country creates general concerns that also challenge the system. The national network for security in charge of coordinating the federal and cantonal levels, has elaborated a concerted national plan against radicalization that is implemented by every cantons. This is simultaneous to the implementation of a voted law opening new possibilities of surveillance to the federal intelligence service. This is a service that is hosted by another federal department than the police, but which has direct connections in the canton's police.

Police officers themselves are pushing reforms forward. The Swiss Federation of Police Officer has voted a resolution during their general assembly in 2014: "Federalism should not weaken security in Switzerland!"<sup>5</sup>. The uniformed branch of the canton's police of Vaud has itself even initiated a referendum that demanded the creation of a unified police on the territory. It was rejected by the population in 2009. However, this has led to the elaboration of a new law, the elimination of many local police, and their restructuration around urban centers.

At the level of the cantons and their relations with municipalities, a movement towards the unification of the police system has also been undertaken (e.g. Bern and Neuchâtel). A complementary movement of regionalization occurred in other regions (e.g. the already mentioned Vaud reform) (Jacot-Descombes and Niklaus 2016).

The better expression and diffusion of policing models (community-policing, problem solving, intelligence-led policing, predictive policing, reassurance policing) might also play a role. Crime analysis and intelligence are now more central and put the basis for a better cooperation. A move towards community policing is also obvious.

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<sup>5</sup>In french: la Fédération Suisse des Fonctionnaires de Police (FSFP)

[https://www.vspb.org/fr/actuel/assemblee\\_des\\_delegues/page\\_pour\\_les\\_medias/](https://www.vspb.org/fr/actuel/assemblee_des_delegues/page_pour_les_medias/)

Contrary to other countries, Switzerland has not experienced sufficient spectacular failures (such as the affaire Dutroux in Belgium or diverse sorts of miscarriage of justice) that would have triggered a rupture in the evolution of the system.

Digital transformations act currently also as a potentially powerful driver. Vendors put also a lot of pressure on the system by claiming that smart policing based on artificial intelligence commercial tools constitute the emerging model for the future. Those changes and their relationship to the federalist model are real, but still difficult to grasp.

### Failures and successes

In this context, there have been many alarmist claims about the weaknesses of the current system since several decades. Argument generally advanced resume in the following way:

«Underpinned by the principles of New Public Management discourse, which include a focus on results, commercialization, performance measurement and reward (...), centralization is generally assumed to simplify and standardize practices and processes, leading to higher effectiveness and efficiency» (Moggré *et al.* 2018: 388).

This principle has found echoes in Switzerland, leading to many attempts oriented towards centralization in the governance and structures. Three of them are particularly emblematic.: the so-called projects KIS (information system), USIS (security system), and CICOP (crime analysis and intelligence system).

### Project KIS

Kreis *et al.* (1993) explains, in the early sixties, how attempts to set up a police information system at the national level failed. "The centralization of the fight against crime was considered necessary to respond to the increase in crime and mobility of criminals" (Kreis *et al.* 1993)p. 520 (free translation). In 1970, it was decided that this centralization should be coupled with computerization (KIS). The projects has been articulated around three main components:

1. Criminal record, centralized prisoner file, as well as a wanted and missing person file
2. Cantonal and municipal databases (personal data and *modus operandi*), identification files
3. Electronic comparison of fingerprints and voices (!)

Federalism was challenged repetitively during seventies in the context of this project. However, at the same time, Geneva and Zurich were already financially engaged in their own projects to serve regionally several cantons. This situation created a negative force to the central project. After many political vicissitudes, 20 years of existence and a vote of the population, the project was eventually abandoned. The centralized criminal record (convictions), an Automatic Fingerprint Identification System (AFIS), as well as a system for wanted, missing persons and stolen vehicles, were residual of the overall project.

### Project USIS and Police XXI

An entire revision of the security system began to be evaluated in 1999. It brought together many public stakeholders such as the army, border guards, the police, and the service of the protection of the population. After several years of huge effort deployed for establishing the state of the system and its complexity and elaborating recommendations (Swiss confederation 2001), the project has been simply and abruptly abandoned, with the arrival of a new chief of the federal department of the justice and the police.

“ The project has been unfortunately abandoned by the new chief of the federal department of justice and police. He estimated that the police questions are mainly the responsibility of the cantons, and it was not the role of the confederation to interfere” (Aeppli 2008: 470).

However, some of its components were eventually achieved, such as the elaboration of a national police crime statistic.

At the same time, the police was complementary discussing their collaboration through a project called police XXI. It has supported the expression of better coordination between the cantons, but found to be incomplete because of the failure of USIS.

### Horizontal cooperation: the CICOP project (regional analysis network)

Since the mid ninetens, it was realized that burglary was dramatically increasing and its structure changing since the fall of the Berlin wall (Killias *et al.* 2007). Mobility of criminals at the center of Europe became strongly resented, but poorly analyzed by the police due to linkage blindness and lack of analytical capabilities. A convention signed between the 6 swiss french cantons initiated a reflection for networking a systematic and coordinated analysis of high volume crimes. The system has iteratively developed during the next 25 years. The methodology integrates now innovatively the systematic use of traces for linking crimes

(DNA, images, shoemarks), together with more traditional spatial analysis and modus operandi comparisons. A shared computerized database, equipped with many crime analysis facilities has also resulted from this evolution.

In this example, the project was totally conducted in a bottom-up way. It evolved with the crime pattern itself. There were absolutely no participation of the upper level (confederation). The complexity reached by integrating systematically the components together, step by step, is very high. Adaptation to new kinds of data (DNA, images) and the evolution of serial crimes, were made possible without changing the basic architecture of the whole system (the methodology and the computerized system).

This project has eventually caused changes that can enter into the category of significant reforms. Beyond the many operational results obtained, this whole crime analysis system has highly improved knowledge on mobile crime across jurisdictions, as well as boosted the move towards more intelligence-led style of policing on the region covered (Rossy *et al.* 2013). Crime analysis structure have found an explicit position in the organization. Chains of command have thus been adapted in order to transform intelligence into concrete actions (Aeppli *et al.* 2011). New forms of cooperation have emerged with local police in the way the flow of information and intelligence are organized. Education has been impacted. A new legal framework has been implemented at the level of the region<sup>6</sup>. Its impact provokes now a debate on its possible adoption at a broader level.

### The dynamic of the evolution – an emerging pattern

KIS and USIS are only two particular projects among others, that have failed for many interrelated reasons difficult to identify. They range from the organization of projects, different sorts of resistances, and the number of disparate actors with various interests. Intrinsic, unseen, and underestimated complexity belong whatever to the main causes.

However, if many risks should have been anticipated, those projects had the advantage of having created the debate and forced to express many implicit aspects of police work,

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<sup>6</sup> Concordat réglant la coopération en matière de police en Suisse romande (<https://www.cldjp.ch/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/pr%C3%A9sentation-concordat-police.pdf>)

integrating constraints and knowledge from every levels. The whole system has learned from these failures that will be useful for undertaking the next steps.

Modeling the mechanisms behind these evolutions, failures and success is too ambitious. However, a pattern emerges from history and experiences: (Figure 3)

1. Drivers stimulate or impose evolutions (external or internal)
2. Even:
  - a. The problems are *a priori* clearly formalized (e.g. conformity to international formalized processes) or sufficiently simple, reforms are conceived, and undertaken. They lead to changes;
  - b. A too ambitious project of centralization is initiated and eventually fails (Helvetic Republic – KIS - USIS);  
From this failure, residues are remaining and a bottom-up more reasonable step is initiated (Pact federal 1815, Swiss constitution of 1848 – Centralized computerized systems – coordination mechanisms)
  - c. Bottom-up projects through horizontal cooperation are initiated. When successful, they mostly lead to slow evolution. Solutions are, however, innovative, adaptive, and deal realistically with complexity.  
From these projects changes are progressively, but slowly implemented.
3. Return to 1.

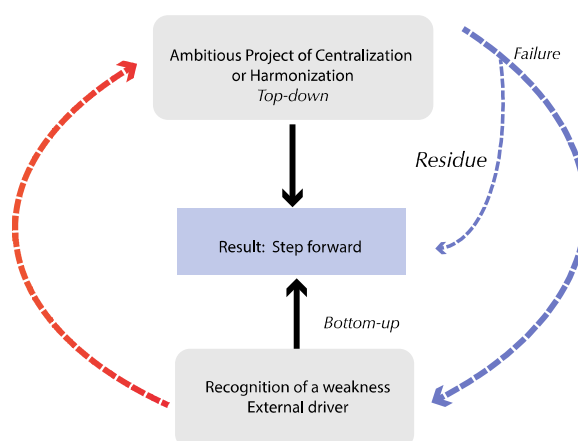


Figure 3. When a need for changes is felt, most often, a centralized project is envisaged. Some are failing for many reasons, such as unanticipated complexity or unrealistic efforts to be deployed for implementation. Residual aspects are, however, often effectively implemented. Horizontal cooperation favors a bottom-up alternative mechanisms having led to successful solutions.

Unfortunately the centralization fallacy is still commonly taken for granted in current discourses. However, probably more than elsewhere, the federalism orient the algorithm towards wiser small scales, bottom-up and iterative projects much more adapted to a large set of security issues. In this sense, federalism plays a regulative role, by hampering reductionists solutions to complex problem to be implemented.

## Conclusions

Reforms in the Swiss system are facing traditional strong forms of resistance. However, due to the global desire to keep as much as possible of the sovereignty of the cantons, they are made particularly difficult.

The Swiss system is, however, evolving at a pace that is more rapid than it may appear at first glance. Subsidiarity makes it necessary to favor an iterative bottom-up approach through horizontal cooperation, rather than going directly to centralization through top-down projects. In this sense, federalism might plays a role of regulator for dealing with complex problems. Indeed, resilience of complex systems in an environment requires a high level of redundancy, spaces for experiencing at small scales different solutions, contrary behaviors, as well as teams independently working on same problems.

To take advantages of these mechanisms, they must be expressed and accepted as a learning process that promotes a wise and timely evolution. Such an attitude should aims at identifying certain processes to be centralized and harmonized in order to benefit from scale effects. At the same time, it should help distinguish when delegation of decision-making at the lowest level is the best way to deal with the local context. This is highly subtle modelling processes, may be intractable or largely impossible to express *a priori*.

This is particularly important when considering digital transformations the society is experiencing. The temptation to build centralized and specialized structure to deal with those upheavals is very high. It has already been noticed that such an attitude toward specialisms has led to give the highest priority to rare, high profile and highly technological cases, by postulating a model of globalized cyber-attacks. It creates also a fragmentation in police organization and new forms of linkage blindness. Digitalization has, however, also to do with routine activities (Dupont 2017; Loveday 2018). For instance, the relationship with citizens cannot escape the development of electronic channels, complexifying community

policing models, and how it situates in the system. Social ties between cybercriminals keep a strong local and communitarian component to be also integrated in policing models (Leukfeldt *et al.* 2017). The traditional justice paradigm based on prosecution will not work for dealing with those changes, calling for a reconfiguration of partnerships (Dupont 2017). How the federalist police system will resist to these changes is not clear, but it potentially allows to initiate offensively the learning mechanism that is required to find out viable solutions to this new complexity.

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