Inclusion as a norm. Multi–scalar influences on the recognition of people with disabilities in French national sports organizations

Flavien Bouttet

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Inclusion as a norm.
Multiscalar influences on the recognition of people with disabilities in French national sports organizations.

From the 1990s to the end of the 2000s, the sports system in several countries evolved due to the increased recognition of disability in the non-disabled environment. Studies carried out in Canada (Allard & Bornemann, 1999), in Norway (Sorensen & Kahrs, 2006) and in England (Thomas & Smith, 2008), showed how national mainstream sports organizations widened the scope of their responsibilities and actions concerning the practices of people with disabilities. These changes implied the transfer of practices management from disability sports organizations – historically regulating sporting activities for people with disabilities in the second half of the 20th century – to mainstream federations and therefore marked a shift in the institutional center of gravity for the sporting practice of people with disabilities (Demailly, 2012).

Despite the specificities of the attention given to handicap in each federation – as explained in Thomas' research paper on the situation in England (2004) – the common temporality and similar processes at work in all the various federations and national contexts lead us to look for the reasons behind those facts through causes that are external to the federations. Despite their complexity, national harmonization processes are undertaken by the National Paralympic Committee or by the public agency in charge of sports activities, depending on the country concerned. The research papers cited above present these programs as a source of influence for the federations when they have to take into account people with disabilities. The study of the "sports and disabilities" space[1] in France confirms this situation. Since 2003, the Ministry has been focused on the issue and has developed sport activities practices for people with disabilities in an able-bodied sport environment. The end of the 2000s was then marked by investments directly targeted at mainstream sports organizations – in addition to the investments towards disability sports organizations[2], by increased resources granted for tackling this issue, by the request of the appointment of a disability persons contact in every federation and, in 2013, by the publication of a "national framework for the controlled and lasting development of sports activities for people with disabilies". The influence of these public institutions – regularly placed at the forefront of the institutionalization of sport practices (Juhle, 2009; Savre, 2011) – should not be overstated. The studies carried out in federations show that the actors are critical of

[1] "Sports and disabilities" space must be seen here as a set of power relationships existing in a particular institutional order (Gasparini, Polo, 2011) and occupied by all those contributing to its existence (Faure, Suaud, 1994).

[2] The 2003 policy identified resource persons in departmental services and provided human and financial resources for the two national disability sports organizations (NDSOs). Historically, two NDSOs have structured the practice of people with disabilities in France. The Féderation Française de Sport Adapté (FFSA) whose action is aimed at people with mental or psychological impairment and the Fédération Française Handisport (FFH) which is concerned with people with mobility and sensory disabilities. The French Sport Federation for the Deaf, the third NDSO, was included in the FFH in 2008.

those ministry policies and they promptly stress other external influences, with more potent effects on the federations concerning the disability question.

The first of these influences is international and Paralympic. As an essential dimension of the environment around the federations (Ramanantsoa & Thierry-Baslé, 1989), the international sporting context has changed due to the question of the inclusion of people with disabilities. Through political and statutory evolutions, efforts have been made to transfer discipline governance from the International Paralympic Committee (IPC) to independent international federations with a view to normalization. This situation represents a challenge for a national organization ruled by disability sport organizations and therefore urges national sports systems to rethink their administration. The pressure is all the more difficult to deal with now that there are second exogenous logics at work in parallel in these processes. Locally, sports clubs have embarked on a restructuring movement so as to give access to sports activities to as many people with disabilities as possible. Therefore, these organizations and their members outline new problematics which cannot be solved locally and expect appropriate solutions from national sports institutions. Questioning the way actions aimed at people with disabilities are implemented, those transformations are part of an inclusive method inside sports spaces – from the local to the international level – and relocate sports practice from adapted to mainstream sports facilities. These shifts are the expression of a movement towards new governance for sporting practices of people with disabilities. The response from national sporting institutions is therefore inevitable in order to ensure continuity between the various geographical levels of practice, i.e. the basis for the institutionalization of sport (Gasparini, 2007).

The purpose of this work is to present the influence of these contexts – both local and international – on the federations and their actors, already bound by their national environment. The federations are described as institutions seen in a macro social context in which they must, as noted by Bonny (2012), integrate *"influences and external regulations in their specific rationality, which do not depend on the institution's internal finalities or on differences of interpretation and implementation, but on its methods of societal incorporation"*. This multiscalar approach thereby provides the opportunity to widen the understanding of the change processes on the part of sports institutions regarding people with disabilities by questioning the relationships between sporting contexts situated at various geographical levels. This article presents the consequences of these influences on the debates and arguments inside the French sports area and it also tries to expose the weight of these influences on the decision-making process. From there, it explains how individual or institutional actors use and interpret those macro-social rationales strategically in order to position themselves inside new areas in the making. These last analyses thereby make it possible to put into perspective the singularity of the federations mentioned and also question the different types of inter-institutional relationships in the social and sporting treatment of disability.

Data collection method.

The present study first relies on the observation of two federation assemblies organized by the Sports Ministry (February 2012, June 2013). Since 2010, the public institution has decided to organize a two-day event held every 18 months with the actors in charge of disability from every sports federation authorized by the Ministry of Sport. The agenda is always the same with an introduction and a conclusion given by a key ministerial actor (Minister or Director of Sports), presentations of the ministerial action

by its members, of the work carried out by administrators (elected or technical members) in disability sport organizations, of the national and international Paralympic context by the executive director of the French Sports and Paralympic Committee (CPSF). A time of discussion is organized after each presentation with the 60 federal participants (delegates or technical members[3]) and other moments of formal discussion in smaller groups can also be organized. In the face of current international challenges, the 2012 gathering was also the opportunity to listen to a member of the International Paralympic Committee. The observation of these assemblies relied on an analysis grid taking into account the evolution of the sports system from the local to the international level and also the inter-individual and inter-institutional exchanges heard during the discussion times. The entirety of the assemblies was transcribed and an analysis of the text is added to the data from the observation.

In a second time, the analyses take into account 26 interviews (24 were recorded and transcribed[4]), 14 being conducted with representatives of mainstream sports organizations. In majority, the interviewees were technicians (two delegates, two salaried federal senior technicians and ten sports and technical advisors) and they all had a role of "referent" or "project manager" for disability questions in the federation and were internally regarded as specialists. Federations were selected according to their size and purposiveness in the objective of representativeness[5]. Nine interviews were also conducted with managers (delegates or technical members) of two disability sports organizations and with members of the Sports Ministry responsible for missions related to disability. In the context of a research work about the organization of practices for people with disabilities within sports federations and with the use of the transcriptions, a thematic analysis of the different contextual influences was carried out. On the other hand, an important work of contextualization has been accomplished in order to highlight the meaning between the various discourses and the visible evolutions at different scales of analysis. To complete this work, official documents published by the International Paralympic Committee were also used.

Mismatch with international organizations

Transformations of the IPC and consequences on the national context.

> *"The evolution of international regulations results from the IPC's decision to delegate the organization of major competitions to international federations. It is here a question of sports regulations, but their dimension is supra-national and they sometimes create conflictual situations on questions of selection, registration, etc…. The French model appears to be in tension[6]".*

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[3] Delegates can be elected local members involved on a voluntary basis at the national level or elected members of the federation's steering committee. Technicians can be salaried members of the federation or civil servants appointed to the federation (sports and technical advisors).

[4] Two disability advisors refused to be recorded.

[5] Sports and Gymnastics Works Federation, Modern World Physical Education Federation, UFOLEP (affinity federations), French federations of football, tennis, canoeing, cycling, basket-ball, judo and athletics, (Paralympic sports federations), the French Cyclotouring Federation, Federation of French Alpine and Mountain Clubs, sailing and handball (non-paralympic sports federations)

[6] Intervention by a member of the Ministry of Sports, second federations assembly, February 2012.

The extract above symbolizes the observations made during the February 2012 gathering and the analysis of the interviews done within the federations: the actors of the French sports environment feel some pressure from international sports institutions. This pressure results from formal transformations of the International Paralympic Committee (IPC) leading to a break-up between French and international organizations in matters of sport management – essentially for high-level sport – for people with disabilities. Ever since it was created in 1989, the IPC has never ceased to evolve, shifting from a participatory form of sport for people with disabilities – on which it was initially based – to an economy founded on high-performance sport, more recently put forward by the IPC's desire to sell their games and international competitions as shows (Howe, 2008). This development has appeared in a movement of normalization of Paralympic sport, in particular through agreements between the IPC and the International Olympic Committee (IOC) compelling the restructuring of high-performance sport for people with disabilities (Purdue, 2013), therefore upsetting the international structure. People in charge of disability within French mainstream national sports organizations have been conscious of this movement of normalization and they have questioned it in terms of national organization, as stated in this intervention during the federations assembly of February 2012:

> *"It is a fact that it is the International Rowing Federation, a member of the IOC, which organizes and structures the international circuit. From my own point of view "as a participant", there is a strong movement towards closer links [between the IOC and the IPC]. International structures have already moved closer and national structures are bound to come closer soon enough"*[7]*,*

The second federations assembly took place four months after the general assembly organized in Beijing by the IPC with a number of decisions making these transformations easy to observe. The General Delegate of the French Paralympic and Sports Committee declared during this assembly that it had been decided at the assembly that "*from the opening day of the Paralympic village of the 2020 Games, sports not under the management of an autonomous international federation would be left out of the schedule of events*"[8]. A manager of the IPC who had been invited to the assembly confirmed this declaration by stating that the goal of the organization was to see every sport become independent, "*whether they depend on the international mainstream sports federation with a department in charge of disability in this sport, like it is the case today for cycling or rowing, or whether there exists an actual independent international federation such as the International Wheelchair Basketball Federation (IWBF)*[9]" This opinion is in no way surprising. Since the early 2000s, the IPC had delegated the organization of Paralympic sports to mainstream sports federations or to autonomous disability sport organizations. Since 2003, the IPC recalls in its "Handbook" , through "the IPC's missions" and in every one of its annual reports that the goals is to *"promote self-governance for each Paralympic sport, each one being an integral part of an international sports movement for able-bodied athletes, or as an independent sports organization*[10]*"*. The evolution with this 2011 decision was that an ultimatum seemed to be set in addition to a strategic development plan stressing the

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7 Intervention by a technician of the French Rowing Federation, second federations assembly, February 2012.

8 Intervention by the General Delegate of the CPSF, federations assembly, February 2012.

9 Intervention by a member of the IPC, federations assembly, February 2012.

10 IPC Handbook, April 2003, Paralympic vision and mission, Section 1, Chapter 1.1

IPC's desire to accompany national Paralympic committees on the one hand so that they obtain more influence within their national context and, on the other hand, international federations so that they increase their responsibility in the management of Paralympic sport[11].

Nevertheless, no official document, not even the official record of the Beijing general assembly, mentions this decision. This unclear situation could be accounted for by the institutional difficulties related to these transformations. At the international level, eight sports were still managed by the IPC when the decision was made. In 2014, some of them – paramount in the Paralympic world such as athletics or swimming – did not have any recognition process undertaken by an independent organization or by their international federation. Then it seemed complex for international senior managers to decide on the disappearance of such major sports. A manager of the Fédération Française Handisport had no doubt about it when he spoke about athletics, while expressing some organizational uncertainty about the future management of the sport: *"athletics will be present in the Rio Games, athletics will be present for the Games in 2020, but will the IPC be in charge of athletics or of other sports between 2016 and 2020, I can't say and I think nobody can"*[12].

Box 1: Paralympic sports and different types of international governance (2014).

– *Sports for which the IPC is the international federation*: athletics, biathlon, Nordic skiing, ice-hockey, weightlifting, sport shooting, swimming.

– *Sports governed by specific international sports federations*: boccia, five-a-side football, seven-a-side football, goalball, judo, fencing.

– *Sports with autonomous and disability sport organizations representing only one sport:* volleyball, basketball, wheelchair rugby.

– *Sports governed by mainstream international federations:* archery, cycling, horse-riding, rowing, table tennis, alpine skiing, sailing, curling, (triathlon, canoeing : incorporated in the Paralympic games in 2016)

These transformations create inadequate national spaces in their environment. Governance of Paralympic sports by mainstream or independent federations actually leads to problems in the relationship between international and national federations. The IPC's counterparts at the national level are disability sports organizations. But, following the transformations previously mentioned, some mainstream international federations only agree to have the mainstream national sports organization of the sport concerned as counterpart (see box 2). In France, however, a system of delegation granted by the Ministry confers disability sports organizations full responsibility for organizing the practice of people with disabilities (regulations, try-outs, French championships …). In this context, the delegate general of the French Paralympic and Sports Committee (CPSF) explained that the French organization was, as regards the international organization, "*at a point which is far from representing a conflict, but which does represent a problem*", before adding that "*the evolving international context compels us to consider a certain number of significant elements at the national level*[13]".

[11] IPC Development Strategy 2013/2017, June 2013, IPC.
[12] Interview with a technician of the French Handisport Federation, November 2013.
[13] Intervention during the first federations assembly, June 2012

The CPSF has indeed been affected by this standardization policy. Up until the beginning of 2013, this organization was governed by the managers of the two disability sports organizations (FFH and FFSA). With the president of the FFH as governing manager and with articles of association preventing mainstream federations from being represented, the disability movement clearly signaled its grip on the organization. The updating of the IPC's statutes in 2009 challenged this monopoly by stressing some obligations for the national Paralympic committees, in particular the one requiring to accept as member "*all national federations – or their representatives – affiliated to international federations governing the sports of the Paralympic program*"[14]. As it is clearly demonstrated in the following quotation, those arguments were used by some actors of the Paralympic federations to apply for membership of the CPSF "*(…) on the basis of the statutes of our international federation, which is recognized by the IPC, and the IPC which provides in this case for the membership of the federations to the Paralympic committee".*[15] By updating those statutes in early 2013, the CPSF laid the foundation of a national transformation to remain in the international and Paralympic frameworks and also directed the beginning of a more representative policy for the national governance of sport aimed at people with disabilities.

Federations under pressure and inter-organizational difficulties

Reflecting speeches from the CPSF, those international transformations could not but spur a reaction from French organizations. Managers of disability sports organizations were the first to point them out when they presented them as a risk of loss of responsibility and of range of activities in favor of mainstream sports organizations. When the Ministry allowed them to express their views on the situation, they seized the opportunity. An FFSA delegate reported on the current situation in 2012:

> *"The IPC is in charge of athletics and swimming, it organizes competitions, selection processes and we are in direct relationship through the CPSF. Besides, it has delegated the organization of sports for persons with a disability to different international federations such as the UCI (cycling), the ITTF (table tennis) and the FISA for rowing. We will be in charge of some aspects of practice organization, but as far as the access to the international level is concerned, we will have to work together (*with the other mainstream single-sport federations*). (…) Today, we are under the strain of the international context."*[16]

In parallel with the delegates, technicians – civil servants working with these federations – try to regard this working obligation with mainstream federations as a possible opportunity. In doing so, they stress diverging discourses within organizations, though they can be explained by statute differences. Indeed, inside the changing processes, macro-social logics mix with other logics, in particular those associated to the actors (Bonny, 2012; Le Lidec & Bezes, 2011). From their point of view, technicians speak of evolution rather than loss of their range of action and of the opportunity to become a contact federation working along mainstream sports organizations.

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[14] IPC Handbook. IPC.

[15] Interview with a technician of a sport Paralympic federation, Nov. 2012

[16] Intervention by a delegate of the FFSA, second federations assembly, Feb. 2012.

"I can see quite clearly that it is going to happen, that it is not going to happen suddenly because that's impossible and that's not even desirable. That this federation has a supporting and monitoring role – yes, it's a look-out and an expert companion, (...) we won't change the course of history and the course of history goes towards an advanced society, a society where every citizen with disabilities is better integrated. I am sure that all of this will keep evolving, that our delegates are also bound to keep evolving (...)"[17]

In response to the changes described here, they justify their position by mentioning also the internationalization of a growing number of sports, the difficulty in dealing with an excessive number of sports[18] and the need to pool resources. On mainstream sports organizations' side, those international transformations and the current delegation system do question their relationship and their cooperation capacity with disability sport organizations. Differences between federations can be observed on these matters. While actors from some federations speak of good cooperation, others have reservations, for example about the FFH, placing itself *"as the owner of people with disabilities (...) even if they plead to the contrary"*[19]. This situation reveals different stakes depending on the sport, whether it is Paralympic or not, whether it concerns many events and, therefore, many medals internationally or whether it was historically developed by the federation.

Box 2: Inconsistencies in organizational scales: the case of cycling

As far as cycling is concerned, talks in the IPC about the inclusion of practices for people with disabilities into the international federations' responsibilities began around 2002/2003. The International Cycling Union (UCI) soon used this idea as part of cycling's globalization principle. From 2003 to 2007, the UCI worked on para-cycling and, in 2007, the world championships took place under the auspices of the UCI, which, according to a technician of the French Cycling Federation (FFC), represented *"a rift and the foundation of para-cycling*". For years, the UCI had taken part in the redefinition of classifications and of the various practices. In 2007, it decided that only national cycling federations would be recognized for para-cycling, and offered a time framework for the different countries. So, the UCI supported the change and called for the FFH and the CPSF to get closer to the French cycling federation with the determination to let them organize their own relationship. The technician of the French cycling federation explained during his interview that, for 2007-2009, a convention was set up but everything had to be written again in 2009 because the UCI refused permanently to recognize the FFH and, as a consequence, everything had to be declared by the FFC. The FFH members and managers, and the federation in general were no longer recognized at the international level. The only counterpart for the UCI was the FFC. The technician recalled that the FFH could no longer fill in athletes files and that it was now up to the National Technical Director to do it. Yet, in 2013, the national organization and the delegation system set up by the state did not provide the FFC with the power to select and manage athletes at the national level.

[17] Interview with a senior civil servant appointed to the FFH, July 2014.

[18] A number of new Paralympic sports were not organized by the FFH and required with this integration an additional structure within the federation.

[19] Interview with a technician of a multisport federation, Nov. 20112.

Several federations therefore stress inconsistencies in the French sports system. As seen in the box above, cycling is a case in point and can be compared to similar situations in the management of rowing, horse-riding, triathlon or canoeing. Even when relationships between federations are good, there still exists a problem, as expressed by a French archery federation delegate: "*we are working together in perfect harmony on this question, albeit the recognition of difficulties on the part of the international federation, when the documents come from the handisport federation*."[20]

There is another source of tension, occurring in cycling or in other sports such as tennis – the international level is also perceived through competition results. Globally, normalization policy takes into account the number of Paralympic medals for ranking nations in some able-bodied international federations.

> « A*fter the world championships, in 2011, and before this delegation request, the FFCK was passed in the nations world ranking by countries far behind in the able-bodied sprint results, but with two medals in adaptive canoeing. So they said it was not possible for them to stand behind the Czech Republic just because they're good at adaptive canoeing while we kick their butts in the rest*[21]"

This development gave rise to a greater readiness for a rationalized management of high-level practice within the federations in order to apply their own mainstream model to the "handisport" model and, consequently, get better results according to the program proponents. A French canoeing federation technician used the following arguments to justify the recovery of the practices management of persons with disabilities. *"We are a federation with a strong sporting culture, and we know a tiny bit about getting medals. We don't always get them but we do have some notions. [22]"*

Taking part in international discussions not to be subjected to change.

Canoeing is a specific case. This federation is not so much in reaction against the international context as it takes part in the change and it demonstrates that thanks to certain actors, it becomes possible to influence the international organization. In the 1990s, an actor involved in the French "handisport" federation and in the canoeing federation was already taking part in a reflection on a European adaptive canoeing circuit with his English, German and Italian counterparts. With no recognition on the part of the International Canoeing Federation[23] (ICF), the international movement was being abandoned. The international question was asked once again within the FFCK in 2007 when an employee was hired to work on disability. With the establishment of this position, the goal for the federation was to put France back on an as yet underdeveloped international stage, despite some national dynamics. A World Cup event was created in France which allowed the FFCK to integrate a movement with Europeans and North-Americans. A working group including an FFCK technician was set up by the international federation. The federation therefore became an ICF counterpart on adapted canoeing matters without, paradoxically, having any responsibilities on this sport in France.

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[20] Intervention by an elected member of the French Archery Federation. Second federations assembly

[21] Interview with a FFH technician, July 2014.

[22] Interview with a FFCK technician, Nov. 2012.

[23] The IPC was never in charge of the sport.

> *"He* [a Canadian federal official] *came to meet us at our competition in Gerardmer. We had lengthy talks. Then they came to Paris again and we worked together. We – in the canoeing federation – are a partner. I can say it because it's true – we are a strong partner of the international canoeing federation for this sport's disability sector. (...) you can't easily get into international commissions and so we do have a situation which is recognized*[24]*."*

As a result of these transformations, requests from federations such as the FFCK[25] for responsibilities and change in the delegation system of people with disabilities' practices were better heard by disability sports organizations. Confronted to their organization's need to remain positioned on "sports and disabilities" space, disability sports organizations' leading officials, including more moderate technicians, established a defense and recalled in particular the difficulty for mainstream sports organizations to take into account every type and degree of disability. As they mentioned their own specific expertise while criticizing other countries' experience of similar processes, they suggested the idea of building a "French model". Without giving any real definition, the objective was to resist to international evolutions and find a mode of cooperative governance between disability sports organization and mainstream sport organizations. To be more convincing, they recalled during federations assemblies that sport activities for persons with disabilities were not limited to the Paralympic games. Not only did they denounce the lack of preparation, the lack of structures within sport federations but they also gave the examples of some federations which were trying to control all the aspects of sport practice while partly overlooking the participants or the sport. They also pointed to people with more severe disabilities and to paradoxical situations of exclusion in the able-bodied environment where practice is more complex to organize.

"The Paralympic games are not everything". The phrase was also used by all the federations – and there are many – which were not concerned by these games or, more generally, by top-level sport. During the assemblies, their delegates did recall that being lured by "international mermaids" should not overshadow the primary goal – defended by the Sport Ministry – of allowing people with disabilities to get access to sports activities. What's more, these federations represented a majority in the sports space. They therefore proposed to consider a sports space not governed by Paralympic motivations and referred to local issues and problems in order to govern the French national organization.

Federations confronted to their ground workers

A recomposed associative space

By making the connection between international and local practices management, the federations' representatives showed the need for a multiscalar approach in order to understand the transformations of the national "sports and disabilities" space. In the early 2010s, federal actors in charge of disability started to be more visible regarding the real conditions offered to people with disabilities by local organizations. These facts allow them to stress the development of inclusive sporting movements at the local level.

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[24] Interview with a FFCK technician, November 2012.

[25] In 2012, three federations applied to the Ministry to obtain this delegation in order to be in charge of managing the practice of people with disabilities in their sport.

"To speak of the Rhône-Alpes region, I've been collecting statistics for 6 or 7 years about the number of rowers. Well, we have roughly a 200% increase in the number of athletes with disabilities in the region considering we started off with 600 and now we've reached more than 2000 people practicing, which is a significant figure."[26]

"In this region, they have understood that things are getting organized, they have started to think about and build their stuff and today it is a victim of its own success because in almost every département*, there is a representative, they have clubs, they've managed to get wheelchairs, they've seen the facilities, some people are already practicing, and so now it's become one of the territory's priorities"*[27].

Examining studies on the recognition of disability in local sports space reinforces the demonstration of this inclusive practices movement in the able-bodied environment and highlights the relationship between mainstream and disability sports. The French sports space has indeed seen a rise in the number of local organizations and members in disability sports organizations (FFSA and FFH). But these federation officials believe that over 70% of new affiliations correspond to the creation of "sport adapté" or "handisport" sections within local mainstream sports organizations[28]. This leaves many clubs with two affiliations to different federations and people with disabilities part of both an adaptive environment with peers (representing the majority of practices in this affiliation category) and an able-bodied environment with which interactions can happen progressively. Thanks to this transformation, local disability sports organizations related to specialized institutions – which had mushroomed when the FFH and FFSA were created – are no longer the norm. They do not disappear though and they are often stepping stones to the able-bodied environment. They are in fact defended by senior leaders of the movement. Affiliated local independent organizations are another associative format which was already known in the "handisport" environment and enjoying a certain success in the "sport adapté" environment. They are affiliated to one of the two disability sports organizations but are not related to another sport club nor to another institution and they propose their own activities. They are often multi-sport organizations which create connections and build partnerships with able-bodied institutions or clubs in order to cater for the needs of people with disabilities (Bouttet, 2012). Similarly, specialized institutions have changed their views on institutionalization. Within the social health-care environment, there has been an increased interest on the part of specialized institutions for sporting practices and for an opening towards outside practice (Reichhart, 2007), even if it depends on the institution type and the degree of disability. Those transfers towards able-bodied environments can be part of a parallel process of institutional change throughout the social health-care environment. Ebersold (2012, 287) explained those processes when he stated that the object of the intervention was now to act on the environment to *"create the necessary inter-institutional and inter-individual interdependencies for the realization of the person's project. They are links woven by the different so-called integration project stakeholders so as to introduce or restore the conditions for the person's participation and involvement protecting people with disabilities against risks of marginalization and discrimination"*.

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[26] Interview with a technician of a non-Paralympic sport federation, Feb. 2013.

[27] Interview with a technician of a non-Paralympic sport federation, Jan. 2014.

[28] Interview with technicians of the FFH and FFSA, respectively in June 2012 and January 2013.

These various phenomena confirm an increase in the number of people with disabilities in the able-bodied sports environment and its gradual opening up to disability. However, the following interview extract with a federation technician outlines the difficulty to give precise figures about the number of people with disabilities present in the mainstream sports space.

> *"80% of clubs have a visually-impaired participant and , with the younger ones, they have a deaf and maybe there is a boy with Down's syndrome with the juniors but, we're not going to start a disability section, there's no need for that, those people are fully integrated, sometimes we even find it difficult to identify them".*[29]

The "Handiguide" (*Disability Guide*) is the government's online website listing sporting institutions (of any affiliation type) for people with disabilities. It indicates a constantly growing number of listed organizations. When the website was launched in September 2006, the registration period had recorded 3,250 institutions by February 2007. On September 1, 2011, they were 4,439 and after a new campaign following the website redesign, 5,200 were listed on September 1, 2012.

Box 3. Pressure exerted by a club and use of local resources

In 2010, the French Tennis Federation (FFT) published a four-page document introducing the social, educational and solidarity division which had been devised in 2009 by the new ruling team. The document presented initiatives carried out by four clubs on the question of disability and integration. One of these clubs is Ymare Tennis Club near Rouen. This club played a specific role in the recognition of disability by the FFT, in particular as regards "sport adapté". It launched an "sport adapté" tennis section after a community center doctor had requested it. It grew very quickly because the club craved for greatness and envisaged the organization of French championships *"over the next decade"**. We were in 2003 and the first meetings organized by the club – with players from several institutions – took place the following year. To pursue their effort, the club officials went "on tour", visiting neighboring clubs to introduce their actions and show that things were possible. The club's social educator – who was at the origin of the project – later became the federation's tennis sporting director in the FFSA. The FFT was then requested to act on two occasions. First, this educator created a welcome booklet to make "sport adapté" in clubs a reality. Then he asked the French federation to write it and a working group was set up. He also reactivated formerly neglected relationships with the FFSA, despite a convention signed in the 1990s. On the other hand, Ymare's club officials called on both federations to organize the French championships, the first being held in 2009 in Rouen under the supervision of both the tennis and "sport adapté" federations. The FFT acknowledged Rouen's local influence and indicated that the club's president attended the first assemblies of the social, educational and solidarity division's working group. According to the federation's delegate in charge of the division, it seemed obvious that a volunteer – present in the "social" commission of the Haute Normandie's league and involved in a club requesting French championships – should be part of this commission. Even if the French championships take place in different locations each year, the relationship between this club and the federation is still active today with the federation supporting an international open and the "tennis adapté" week being organized by Ymare's tennis club

[29] Interview with a technician of a Paralympic single-sport federation, Jan. 2013.

every November in several clubs in Rouen since 2012.

* this case was presented thanks to two interviews realized with two volunteer officials from Ymare's tennis club.

Despite the boost, restructuring can hardly be described on the structural level because they are deeply linked to personal initiatives on the part of actors trying to develop many actions in order to make for easier access to sports clubs for people with disabilities (Marcellini, Pantaléon, 2006). The analysis of these professionals' attitudes and practices show they look for the highest number of solutions to allow collaboration between sporting and adaptive environments without relying on any predefined model (Bouttet, 2012). These actors can be defined as "passers" or "connectors" allowing social contagion (Downs, 2012) or even "inserters" (Stiker, 2009). Through the establishment of arrangements giving access to clubs and through their work, these actors underline the lack of initiatives on the part of the sporting world as their projects find their origin almost entirely within medical and social care structures (Bui Xuan, Mikulovic, 2006). So, in spite of the networks they manage to develop, these actors are relatively isolated in their efforts – from institution to sporting clubs – and they create phenomena questioning long-term inclusion as much as the development of systems and they highlight human, economic and material needs.

Federations' actors questioned about needs for comprehensive actions.

The needs and difficulties of these committed actors were passed on to the national level. Case studies presented in boxes 2 and 3 aimed at giving examples of the creation and perpetuation of local and national relationships. They allow us to see beyond the federation's centralized vision and beyond local problematics to understand how inter-personal relationships can appear and how some local space characteristics can concern federation actors. When these questions are tackled at the national level – in particular when they are linked to ideas of comprehensive change – a focus on problems not objectified before becomes possible (Bezes and Le Lidec, 2011).

Some federation actors actually have become aware of several special needs to offer better access conditions for people with disabilities locally, but also to address some national structure transformations. Federation assemblies indicate this interest and record local problematics, the first of which is training. Some researchers have pointed to the sporting stakeholders' poor disability training with an increasing deficit as the impairment becomes more important (Bui Xuan & Mikulovic, 2006). This issue is raised by many federation representatives, in particular during gatherings. A technician explained for example that in his federation *"the elected officials' approach on this matter consists in trying to accept everyone of course, but we realize clubs are not ready because we have not received any training*[30]*".* Another technician explained in a survey conducted by his federation among teachers that *"actually, what instructors are asking is give us some stuff, help us welcome people with disabilities into our clubs*[31]*".* These reactions reveal the need to take disability into account during sports instructors' training and the limits of the training schemes proposed by the two disability sports organizations (the training sessions are rare, geographically remote and based on volunteering).

[30] Intervention by a technician of a single-sport federation (non-paralympic sport), federations assembly, Feb. 2012.

[31] Interview with a technician of a single-sport federation (Paralympic sport), Jan. 2013.

In relation to the training issue, another problem is linked to the poor knowledge of official texts, rights and responsibilities as the following official made clear: *"We really want to do things but my instructors, my state-certified instructors won't try because they don't know what they really can do, what they're entitled to do or not.* [32]*"* The lack of knowledge is exemplified in some confusion about certain legislative texts. The French sport's code for example indicates that holders of a "physical activity for all" Professional Certificate (*Brevet Professionnel*) are not allowed to supervise *"groups with people disabilities (...)".*[33] A twofold interpretation is therefore possible between groups exclusively made up of people with disabilities and able-bodied groups integrating one or several people with disabilities. A swimming test is also required for the practice of water sports, which represents a problem for many people with disabilities, as underlined by a federation representative voicing in the Ministry his desire to see regulations change: *"today, 50% of the practice is outside the law in our club because the required swimming test can't be carried out by a large majority of people with disabilities who use boats with us*[34]*."*

These legislative problems add to the 2005 law on equal rights, opportunities, on participation and citizenship of people with disabilities which made accessibility to places open to the public compulsory by 1 January 2015. The law did not reach its objectives[35] but it challenges clubs and federations because, even if the local sports organizations' built environment often belongs to local authorities, the law regards accessibility globally and in a non-discriminatory manner. Accessibility therefore becomes technological – but also human. Failing to accept a person with disabilities can lead to legal prosecution and these measures refer to the first point mentioned about training and information and they move the debate from the instructors' level to the whole associative world (volunteers, officials and practitioners).

Box 4: Getting acquainted with the local situation to build a national project: the case of the Sports and Gymnastics Works Federation (FSGT).

The project of shared practices *(pratiques partagées)* was born out of a general assembly in 2010, shortly before the arrival of the departmental executive. The disability advisor explained that it was created *"when we realized the reality of our clubs with more and more welcoming people with disabilities. So we thought that if our clubs include people with disabilities, then it's a reality that needs to be taken into account nationally".* The local space was consequently studied and it prompted officials to build a project on the disability issue. The reference to the local level was not limited to the origin of the project. Therefore, in consistence with the "FSGT spirit" and in collaboration with all federation actors, the disability advisor decided to organize a first day of discussion with the presence of local actors – clubs and local committees – concerned by the question of disability. After noting the very low attendance – and with a majority coming from the Paris region – she talked about how she visited committees and clubs interested in the question with a view to creating new relationships: *"visiting*

[32] Intervention by a technician of a multisport federation , federations assembly, Jan. 2013.
[33] Article Annex II-1 (article 212-1), Sport's Code.
[34] Intervention by a technician of a single-sport federation (Paralympic federation), federations assembly, June 2013.
[35] Report on the enforcement of accessibility rules of the built environment for people with disabilities, general inspectorate of social affairs, March 2013.

clubs, meeting people and be there to say that the federation – meaning me because I *represent the federation when I am on the move – each time it means the federation recognizes our existence as club, going to meet and talk to the people, meeting their needs, what they expect from the federation, what it can bring to you, so after all this, things have to be sorted out in general, but it gives an idea of what you're supposed to do".*

After this local tour, a second day was organized in November 2012 with twenty-five people from the federation or from local institutions (committees or involved clubs). Their goal was to build an action plan over the following two years. Several workshops were conducted in parallel leading to the pooling of every workshop's conclusions at the end of the day. From this exchange between the different federation actors, the disability advisor committed herself to building a federal action plan.

Accessibility also refers to material but also economic difficulties which local organizations struggle to deal with. The access of people with disabilities to sporting facilities requires additional time slots and material adaptations to allow practice, aimed at wheelchairs for example. A technician explained that he receives *"an increasing number of requests for wheelchairs*[36]*."* To illustrate this point, federation actors taking part in the assemblies talk about material that can *"be very expensive and remain unexploited because it only suit one person's project*[37]*"*. They therefore speak of the material's difficult cost-effectiveness and the need to plan and pool associative policies.

This need for improved planning and rationalization of people with disabilities' sports practices to respond to local pressures at the federation level once again questioned national governance and relationships between disability sports organizations and mainstream sports organizations. Some federations mentioned their local anchoring and the emphasis laid on the complete organizational control of adaptive practices – in particular to improve reception conditions. That is why some senior members and delegates not only stress their federations' means and resources to welcome people with disabilities but also their refusal to put disability sports organizations under pressure. One of them expressed this refusal to use pressure when he said with some dismay that he *"understood that the FFH does not want to break up (…) but there is a need and the need is felt by the interested parties because they suffer financially"*[38]. This extract confirms how the management of local issues to promote accessibility of people with disabilities is influenced by the national context and by the numerous tensions resulting from the pressures between the various "sports and disabilities" protagonists.

Conclusion: From macro-social rationales to differentiated effects.

The study of these transformations allowed the presentation of the links between the different geographical scales in the structure of sport for people with disabilities. For instance, it showed how the IPC's transformations could create tensions in the management of associative practices. On the basis of an analysis focused on the French sports space, this work tried to show how certain exogenous rationales weigh on institutional change and how they allow to view the federations' and their actors' actions as responses to those external pressures. At this level and in a more global

[36] Interview with a technician of a non-paralympic single-sport federation, Jan. 2014.
[37] Intervention by a technician of a multisport federation, federations assembly, Feb. 2012.
[38] Interview with a delegate of a single-sport Paralympic federation, Nov. 2012.

contextualization – compared to the national examples cited in the introduction – the study proved how relevant it is to question the relationships between exogenous and endogenous logics in a diachronic perspective. In other countries, the transformations presented – similar to French ones – did not take place at the same moment. By considering these changes in an international perspective, it becomes possible to make the assertion that in some national spaces, the international context had much less impact on the transformation processes. We also briefly pointed to the diverging views between actors from the same sport institution. The multiplication of actors in this space can only lead to this sort of observation and lead to what Demailly (2012) described as a *"twofold movement of fragmentation, specialization and un-coordination of the institutional work".* Although it makes for improved opportunities for people with disabilities, there cannot be any doubt that the heterogeneous nature of circumstances makes the governance of the "sports and disabilities" space more complex. At this level, the continuation of the work on the importance of endogenous logics (based on the institution and the actors) in the transformation of sports institutions is crucial (Bonny, 2012). It would allow a better understanding of the tensions between national organizations. It would also demonstrate the difficulty of creating common sense within the national "sports and disabilities" space. This work has tried to stress it on several occasions. While the pressures put forward are global, the specificities of sport institutions and the actors behind them always cause very diverse perceptions and responses.

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Résumé.

Depuis le début des années 1990, dans de nombreux pays, des évolutions de la gouvernance du sport pour les personnes ayant des incapacités mettent en évidence un transfert de responsabilités des organisations sportives spécialisées aux organisations sportives traditionnelles. L'analyse de ces transformations au niveau des fédérations françaises démontrent qu'elles surviennent en réponses à des logiques exogènes situées non seulement au niveau national par un volontarisme du ministère, mais également à d'autres échelles. En effet, des politiques d'inclusion menées au niveau des organisations sportives internationales et des recompositions associatives, visibles au niveau local pour favoriser l'accueil de tous les publics dans les clubs, rendent l'organisation nationale inadéquate, génèrent de nombreuses problématiques pour les acteurs et contraignent ainsi au changement. A partir d'une approche multiscalaire questionnant les liens entre différents contextes sportifs, et à travers l'analyse des débats et controverses au sein de l'espace national « sport et handicaps », l'article présente le poids des influences environnementales sur la prise de décision et met en exergue la manière avec laquelle les acteurs, individuels ou collectifs, utilisent ces influences à des fins stratégiques pour se positionner au sein d'espaces en construction.

Mots-clés : personnes ayant des incapacités, organisations sportives, inclusion approche multiscalaire

Abstract

Since the early 1990s, evolutions in the governance of sport for people with disabilities point to a transfer responsibility from national disability sports organizations towards national mainstream sports organizations in many countries. The study of those transformations at the level of the French federations shows that they are a response to exogenous logics at work not only at the national level through the Ministry's, but also at other levels. Indeed, some inclusion policies by international sports organizations and associative restructuring at the local level have been conducted in order to promote access to clubs for everyone. But they have led to inadequate national organization, created many problems for people involved and therefore require some change. This article adopts a multiscalar approach to study the links between various sporting contexts. Through the analysis of debates and arguments inside the national "sports and disabilities" space, this article presents the role played by environmental influences on the decision-making process and highlights the way individual and collective actors make a strategic use of these influences in order to position themselves inside spaces in the making.

Keywords: people with disabilities, sports organizations, inclusion, multiscalar approach.