

## New forms of governance of the sporting elite: between deterritorialization and systemic integration

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### The question

The French model of sport organization is now facing an institutional crisis because of the emergence of new actors. Originally highly centralized, relying on the public service delegation given to sports federations and the provision of State executives within those federations, there is now a trend towards decentralization of public policy in high-level sport.

Local authorities (regions, departments, cities) have not only become the largest institutional funders of sports (31% against 9.7% by the state), but they also see their roles expand. Prerogatives relating to elite sport, traditionally reserved to the State are now an integral part of their duties. Thus, their activities are diverse and multifaceted as they fund the athletes and the high level structures, and extensively support the creation of sports facilities and sporting events. The development of territorial marketing strategies which use sport as a collective representation and identity factors, but also as electioneering factor, highlights these new forms of engagement in the management of elite sport.

The success of the elite sport athletes who do not pass through the central structures of the state can question the centralized and vertical model of French high level sport, which is achieved by clarifying the new role of local authorities. This analysis, conducted by the National Institute of Sport Expertise and Performance (INSEP) in partnership with the French Institute of Geopolitics (IFG), through two case studies (Brittany and Pays de Loire) can reveal the existence of sub-systems of organizations specific to each geographical region. It is therefore interesting to understand their role in the national model, understand the issues, while highlighting the rivalry for power and governance that is generated.

### The methodology, the theoretical background

This study is led at the crossover of different disciplines. It's necessary to understand the rivalry of power and the political stakes of the local level. This can be permitted by a geopolitical analysis of the territory, understanding the history, the political heritage, the geographical systems and sub-system and finally the sociological approach of the elite athlete audience. The literature review led us to sport governance theme like they can be developed by Chantelat & Bayle and to the analysis of local systems as they were described by Honta or Koebel.

The paper is the result of the research which has been made possible thanks to integration in SPLISS project. This study has been followed by a deeper investigation within the French model of elite sport governance. We have collected data from various sources (reports from political representatives, official or non official studies and reports, and public statistics) and above all we have conducted interviews with different actors to study the implication of local authorities in the centralized French model.

### The implications, the discussion

This still running study, show the existence of a real local model of elite sport with characteristics related to the geography, to the cultural and the political heritage. Some original policies are developed in the local scale, showing that these local authorities are able to supply failures resulting from the State withdrawal from sport like in the example of Regional Training Centers abandoned by the State and recovered by consortium of local actors. Existence of local networks for the subsidy of elite athlete, of local athlete collectives show that elite sport is also considered as a vector of visibility and identity by the different level of local authorities. This situation can lead to local tension between those different geographical scales to know who can earn the benefit of elite sport athlete and clubs performance.

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