

LOCAL SPORTS PUBLIC POLICIES PUT TO THE TEST BY THE COVID 19 PANDEMIC

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Abstract:

COVID-19 has had a negative impact on different sectors of social life in Senegal, not sparing the public sports policies. This naturally prompted players in the field to adapt to the new context of the pandemic. It was, therefore, necessary to reflect on the readjustments of public sports policies in local communities using a mixed, quantitative and qualitative methodological approach. It was noted, on the one hand, a lethargy of public sports policies, following the advent of COVID-19, and, on the other hand, a redeployment of local sports policies towards the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic. These strategies for readjusting public sports policies at regional level have been based on adaptation strategies focused on available resources, on resources to be acquired and on capacities to be transformed.

Keywords : *COVID-19 ; Public policies ; Territories ; Sport ; Adaptation strategies.*

JEL Classification: *M48 Z18 Z28*

INTRODUCTION

Globally, researchers have examined sports policies in several ways. Callède (2002) sought to fix the elements of identification of sports policies. Bayeux (2013), in the content of local authorities, reviewed their political, strategic, tactical and finally operational levels. Viollet (2018) appreciated policies in the context of synergistic relations and tensions between public authorities and the sports movement.

In the African context, the analysis of public policies, especially sports policies, has been assessed more in terms of obstacles to their application. Gouda (2010) deplored the implementation of public policies difficulties related to the relationship between the State and sports organizations, funding, infrastructure and equipment, training of executives and the definitions of a coherent sports policy in African countries. For Komi (2010), the revitalization of sports, promotion and widespread practice throughout the national territory of Togo, required policies to install modern sports equipment for increased safety and effective practice of physical, sports and recreation activities. Samassekou (2002), having studied sports policies in the context of decentralization in Mali, reviewed the involvement of local authorities in sports promotion and the impact of on the management of sport at the local level.

In the Senegalese context, to varying degrees, the literature has addressed the same obstacles to the application of public sports policies (Ndiouck, 2003; Sagna, 2012; Guéye, 2020). Each identified difficulties in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic that could be accentuated (Awode and al. 2021). Indeed, researchers like Carassus and Leblong-Masclat (2021) show the strategic, organizational, informational and decision-making impacts to the point that it is necessary to find solutions at the behavioral, instrumental and human level for local communities and other stakeholders in local public action. In the Senegalese context, however, it is rare to find writings evoking the influence of COVID-19 on the application of local public policies, especially sports. This prompts us to ask ourselves the following question: What adaptation strategies for players in public sports policies have arisen from the advent of COVID-19 at the regional level? Likewise, the question is to know, beyond the negative influences, if COVID -19 has been an element of readjustment of sports public policies in the local communities?

The general objective of this study was to analyze the adaptation strategies in terms of public sports policies for players in the territories with the advent of COVID-19. Through interviews and a questionnaire administered to a sample of 284 subjects, the stakeholders of public sports policies in a municipality of Dakar, the Medina, were called upon to contribute.

The provisional results indicate two patterns. First, responses show a slackening of public sports policies following the advent of COVID-19; second, there appears to be a redeployment of local sports policy actors towards the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic.

Based on the work of a number of scholars (Moati, 2001; Penrose, 1959; Leibenstein, 1966; Pisano, 2001), concerning coping strategies, it has been shown that public sports policies at regional level are adaptation strategies focused on available resources, resources to be acquired and capacities to be transformed. The first part of this report describes our framework focused on adaptive strategies. The second part of this report presents the methodological elements of the research. Finally, the last part presents the results reflections on the readjustments resulting from the application of public sports policies in the territories and the ways they are assimilated to the adaptation strategies of the actors.

1. COVID-19 AT THE CENTER OF ADAPTATION STRATEGIES FOR TERRITORIAL PUBLIC SPORTS POLICIES

Covid-19 refers to “Coronavirus Disease 2019”, the disease caused by a virus of the Coronaviridae family, SARS-CoV-2. This infectious disease is a zoonosis, the origin of which is still debated, which emerged in December 2019 in the city of Wuhan, in the province of Hubei in China. It quickly spread throughout China and abroad causing an epidemic which turned into a pandemic which Larousse (2020) defines as one that constitutes an epidemic which affects a large number of people in an area, very extensive geographic area.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO)

Most people infected with the virus that causes COVID-19 will develop mild to moderate respiratory illness and recover without needing special treatment. The elderly and those with other health problems, such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, chronic respiratory disease, or cancer, are at greater risk of developing a severe form. The virus that causes COVID-19 is spread primarily through droplets of saliva or nasal secretions when an infected person coughs or sneezes. It is therefore important to also apply the rules of respiratory hygiene (for example, covering the mouth and nose with the bend of the elbow when coughing).

COVID-19 affects public policy just like other social activities (Eklund, 2021; Mokline, B. & Ben Abdallah, 2022; Radermecker, 2021). And practical suggestions are made on how coping with Covid-19 crisis, especially for developing countries (Gamkrelidze and Japaridze, 2020).

According to Mény and Thoenig (1989), a public policy is the product of the activity of an authority invested with public power and governmental legitimacy. According to Callede (2002), following Mény and Thoenig (1989), a public policy presupposes five levels of assessment, namely a general framework of action (1), goals and objectives to be achieved (2), concrete measures (3), the audiences to be reached (4), and finally, the allocation of resources and / or regulatory requirements including coercive modalities (5). As these public policies embrace sport, it remains probable that their implementation may be faced with pitfalls, due to the very characteristics of the latter. Indeed, Pierre Parlebas (1981, p.237) notes that sport is a “set of motor situations codified in the form of competitions and institutionalized.”

Three criteria seem to be able to be identified:

« ...motor situation. Sport is a motor situation, a trait that opposes it to verbal or cognitive situations for example. So neither bridge nor chess are sports ... You can play chess, scrabble or crossword puzzles by correspondence: the motor dimension is irrelevant.

A regulated competition. Sport is competition. A physical practice, however intense it may be, cannot be considered as a sport outside a competitive framework ... Thus, a movement jogged in an undergrowth or a swim along a beach cannot be called ‘sport. » (Parlebas, p.243)

The institution of

« ... decisive criterion... Sport is fundamentally a social and institutional fact... it responds to the massive phenomenon which imposes an official mechanism and extremely powerful apparatuses: federations, state controls, regulations, authorities, calendars, ceremonies, referees and officials, sanctions, rewards and condemnations. » (Parlebas, p. 244).

Jacques Defrance (1997) noted two ethical concerns: an ethics of competitive sport oriented towards results and an ethics of recreational sport oriented towards pleasure, which can be associated with concerns about health and social representation. This highlights the difficulties that the territories face in adopting adaptation strategies in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic.

These territories traditionally proceed, according to Sy (2014), from decentralization, which constitutes a means of achieving local autonomy. It allows municipalities or territories to be granted autonomy by granting them legal authority in their own context, allowing them to manage their own affairs, while still under the control of central government authorities. Generally, faced with these responsibilities and not always having all the means to act, these territories must necessarily take measures to adapt to the pandemic within their own context. The characteristics of sport, thus described, hardly facilitate the implementation by the territories of public sports policies in the face of COVID-19. This is why adaptation strategies remain possible.

Understanding adaptation strategies at the theoretical level goes back to the work of Penrose (1959). For Penrose, firms are made up of a sets of productive resources. These are broken down into physical assets

(productive equipment, raw materials, etc.) and human resources. It is the administrative organization of the company that makes it possible to combine these resources and determine the nature of the productive services rendered by said resources. Thus, the inputs of the production process are the productive services, and not the resources per se; they are at the origin of the capacities of the firm, that is to say all the tasks and activities that it is able to carry out.

Based on the above Moati (2001) specified that the capacities of the firm depend on the mobilization and the combination of resources in order to achieve the set goals. These resources are generic or specific and can be broken down into three major subsets: the technical system, human resources and the company's commercial image.

Capabilities are broken down into organizational capabilities and strategic capabilities. "Organizational capacities refer both to the structures of the firm and to its capacities to define processes" (Moati, p. 8). The strategic capacities, superior, refer to the definition of the main strategic axes. These capacities can also be static or dynamic; when they are static, they are declined in routines which are organizational procedures dictating the choices and providing the methods in coherence with the goals of the organization (Winter, 1984). From routines are born the productive services resulting from the resources. Dynamic Capacities target the rules of the company which aim at the renewal of routines, therefore, of organizational capacities. Also, productive services are the basis of skills, which the organization can effectively do. Skills are innovation skills, production skills and market management skills, according to Rangone (1999). Thus, the competitive advantage will derive from strategic skills and market adaptation because it is difficult for competitors to identify the underlying factors. With regard to the redeployment of skills, this concerns, on the one hand, adaptation strategies to a constant stock of resources, and on the other hand, strategies for changing the scale of production with an increase in the stock of resources without qualitative modification (Moati, 2001).

Adaptation strategies with a constant stock of resources are twofold. First, there are control strategies that rely on engaging in strategic maneuvers with the goal of stabilizing the competitive environment. They manifest themselves in pricing policies aimed at putting in place barriers to entry or dominating competitors (limit price strategy, predatory pricing strategy, engagement strategy, product proliferation strategies). Second, the company can reorganize its portfolio through superficial changes in product characteristics, a shift in the focus of communication policy or even a change in the pricing system. The skills, creating products and markets, must be deployed in other horizons to allow the company to diversify its portfolio. However, adaptation strategies by redeploying resources, according to Henderson and Cockburn (1994), presuppose architectural skills, that is to say the ability to renew the offer by a new way of associating, or combining the skills of the organization.

Changing the scale of production is an adaptation strategy that relies on changing the size of the company. This change in the scale of production may result from a need to adapt production capacity to the activity for reasons of competitiveness. It can also target a competitive advantage through increasing returns through innovation or the non-outsourcing of value chains deemed strategic. Finally, it can go through a strategy of market control by taking control of a competitor or expanding its commercial potential (customer base, diversification, etc.) when its growth is not driven by its outlets. The change in production scale is also a reduction in the size of the company to free it from unprofitable sectors.

Strategies for acquiring new resources are based, on the one hand, on the acquisition of generic resources, and on the other hand, on the acquisition of specific resources. Generic resources are attached to the acquisition of new generic knowledge, information related to the implementation of adaptation strategies in particular mastery of the business environment and that of technology in the domain. Then, there is the acquisition of new productive equipment which aims to improve the productivity of the company. Finally, the acquisition of additional assets located downstream of the production process, such as a distribution network, after-sales service or trademarks, may be necessary to pursue strategic objectives. Changes in specific resources relate to know-how, individual skills, brands, reputation and the relational network take place through innovation and training.

Actualized innovation is discovered and described by the company at the end of a process of experimentation with new knowledge or new know-how leading to new products or processes. According to Pisano (2001), innovation consists of identifying the problems at the origin of the gap between the current state and the desired state of performance of a manufacturing process or of the characteristics of a product, and of find the means to resolve them. Continuous training, in addition to initial training and on-the-job learning, is a lever for the acquisition of new individual knowledge. Externally, imitation through benchmarking practices is a lever for acquiring new knowledge. The acquisition of skills is based on the recruitment of personnel with specific skills and the purchase of a business. Inter-company cooperation is also a source of strengthening specific resources.

Adaptation through transformation of capacities aims to change the routines of the firm with a view to better use of resources in relation to strategic goals. It is the result of the accumulation of experience which tends to improve routines through learning, organizational changes with a constant stock of resources or even a major

adaptation through a reconfiguration of technical systems and management tools. Figure 1, below illustrates the adaptive strategies.

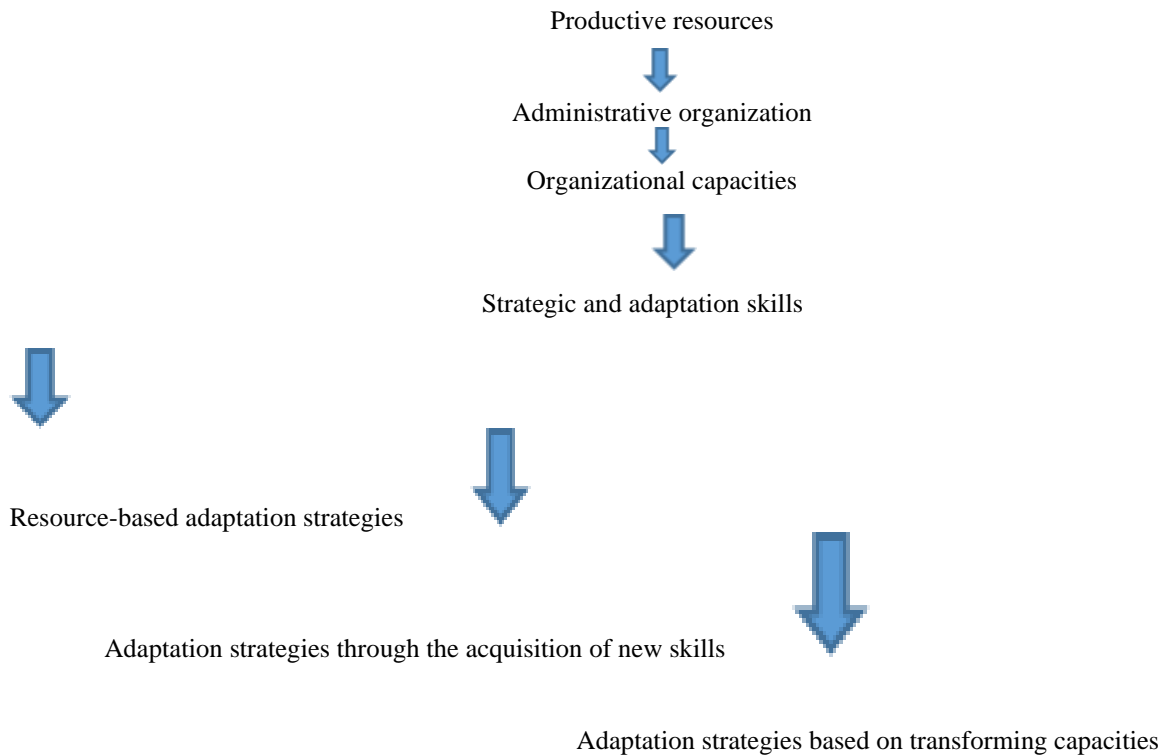


Figure 1: Adaptive Strategies

Based on the above, in terms of hypothesis, it should be noted that beyond negative influences, COVID-19 has been an element of readjustment of public sports policies in local communities. All ongoing government policies aim to mitigate the effect of the pandemic (Turkson and al., 2021 ; Suk Kim, P., 2021).

2. A METHODOLOGY BASED ON A MIXED APPROACH TO UNDERSTAND THE STRATEGIES FOR ADAPTING TERRITORIAL PUBLIC SPORTS POLICIES IN THE PERIOD OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The research is part of a mixed, quantitative and qualitative approach. Baumard and Ibert (2019, p.127) point out:

« The combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches, that is to say their complementary and dialectical use, allows the researcher to establish a differentiated dialogue between what is observed (the research object) and the two ways of symbolizing them. »

In a sequential process, the qualitative approach initially made it possible to explore the adaptation capacities of local public policy actors. These data made it possible to better refine the questionnaire, an instrument for collecting quantitative data to assess the perception of the actors questioned.

Subsequently, the two approaches were also used through triangulation. According to the two complementary angles, representations and perceptions on the issue of local public policies in the face of COVID 19 have been highlighted.

This is why it was a question of seeing how the actors of local sports public policies apprehend their capacities to adapt to the new pandemic of COVID-19. The discovery of the adaptation strategies of the actors of the territorial sports public policies, therefore, finds a framework in the municipality of the Medina of the city of Dakar in Senegal. Located northwest of Dakar-Plateau, the Medina is separated by Avenue Malick Sy from Anse des Madeleines to the A1 motorway. To the south, the town is bordered by the coastline from Anse des Madeleines to Canal 4. To the west, Boulevard de Gueule Tapée-Fass-Colobane. To the north, it extends to street 34, to the wall of the Colobane barracks, then the A1 motorway separates it from Hann Bel-Air.

The collection tools are the questionnaire and the interviews that were conducted with the officials of the municipality (municipal councilors, local administration officials, coaches and officials of sports associations). The questionnaire and the interviews looked at the negative and positive effects of COVID-19 on public sports policies and to see how this has been the breeding ground for adaptive strategies on the part of the players. Regarding the questionnaire, the question of the significance and representativeness of the sample was highlighted. Thus, for the significance of the sample, the formula of Cochran (1997) was used.

$$n = z^2 \times p (1 - p) / m^2.$$

n = sample size

Z = confidence level (in this case it is 1.96)

P = proportion of the population that presents (in our case it is 0.5 since it is unknown)

M = permissible margin of error (it is 0.05)

Which gives: $n = (1.96)^2 \times (0.5) (1-0.5) / (0.05)^2 = 384.16$

On the representativeness of the sample, the people surveyed are 384 and are made up of advisers and administrators (15), athletes (100), coaches (15), supporters (200), various actors of the civil society (54).

The quantitative data obtained from the questionnaire were analyzed. To better describe and explain the data, tables and diagrams have been constructed. For this purpose, the Excel software has been favored. Specifically, the responses collected have been classified. They were analyzed and discussed based on theories of adaptive strategies. For interviews, the data were passed to a transcriber. After transcription, they were classified and linked by themes and sub-themes so that they could be presented, analyzed and discussed.

3. ADAPTATION STRATEGIES OF ACTORS TO OVERCOME THE NEGATIVE INFLUENCES OF COVID-19

3.1 Influences and Adaptation Strategies of Local Sports Public Policies Faced with COVID-19

The results show a negative influence of COVID-19 on the implementation of public sports policies at the level of the territories. However, it was at the origin of readjustments and readjustments of these.

3.1.1 The negative influences of COVID-19 on the implementation of sports policies

The data, 92.56% of those questioned, attest to the negative influences of COVID on the implementation of sports policies since the pandemic has spared no field, including that of sport. Sporting events have been suspended or even canceled. The postponement of the Youth Olympic Games (YOG) from 2022 to 2026 is symptomatic of the situation that prevailed with the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic. This is at the national level.

At the local level, 92.40% of subjects questioned attest to COVID-19 having influenced the implementation of local sports policies. The people questioned also affirmed having a good knowledge of local public policies since the majority of the people questioned in the municipality, that is to say 84.78%, know the sports policies at the local level, while the 15.22% are not aware of it. This could be explained by the proximity and involvement of the populations in sports activities by the municipality, in particular cultural and sports associations. In their opinion, sports programs have been abandoned or stopped due to COVID-19. Funds intended for sport have been redirected towards health activities. The person in charge of sports policies of the Municipality of the Medina specifies:

They were given the grants as usual even though there were no competitions, but this time so that they could participate in the fight against COVID-19 by setting up focal points in their neighborhoods, washing places and providing cleaning materials to the inhabitants of their neighborhood.

This partly explains the level of dissatisfaction of those interviewed. Of all respondents 67.39% are not satisfied with sports policies at the local level, 27.17% are satisfied, or 5.44% are very satisfied. This is explained by the weakness of the means of the municipality. In the context of COVID-19, it should be noted that dissatisfaction has only grown. In the opinion of one of the mayor's staff, the difficulties arose following the ban on gatherings. He says:

If we talk about sport, we are talking about popularity and grouping, especially at the local level, so this pandemic is preventing us from practicing sport wisely. The policies that should be implemented, the tournaments, the general assemblies to renew the instances this has posed problems.

3.1.2 Strategies for adapting local public sports policies in the face of COVID-19

Of the positive effects, 83.70% said that COVID-19 did not have a positive effect on sports policies at the municipal level and 16.30% of respondents said the opposite. Explicitly, these statements are linked to stopping

sports activities. This has led to policy readjustments, according to respondents. 52.18% of these claim that COVID-19 has allowed readjustments in the implementation of local sports policies, 47.82% claim the opposite. The majority of respondents believe that readjustments have been noted in the implementation of sports policies at the local level. The explanation that could be advanced at this level is that with the arrival of the coronavirus pandemic, misunderstanding about the disease meant that everything was stopped to eradicate the virus. Over time, realizing that the pandemic was going to last, readjustments were made to sports public actions. One respondent notes, “we don't know when this disease will be eradicated.” It is in this context that adaptations have been made, including changes in the schedule, the organization of games behind closed doors, the wearing of masks by substitute players, the orientation of subsidies in the fight against COVID-19, the postponement of general meetings to later dates. Better still, the health crisis has seen readjustments in sports policies, especially with regard to the use of funds and subsidies granted to sports and cultural associations which have directed them towards awareness-raising activities on COVID-19. This explains why only 13.04% of those questioned affirmed that COVID-19 has favored the implementation of sports policies at the local level against 86.96%. On the contrary, it disrupted sports activities. However, one informant, a municipal councilor added:

The positive side of COVID-19 is that it should make us think and know that in life nothing is taken for granted. The way in which we practiced sport with its groupings, its share of violence, sometimes loss of human life has changed. With this pandemic, we have forgotten this negative side of sporting events which were difficult to manage. Another positive point of COVID-19 for us authorities, this pandemic allows us now to anticipate future activities, especially since this situation continues to exist.

Another adviser adds:

You have to think about how to get out of the rut. As it is a situation that tends to last, the solution is to adapt, to think together, not to wake up one day as the state authorities had to do and say that we must stop everything, so , it was a bit difficult, is that we were in a situation of no control, now that we have almost all the information about this pandemic, we have to see in which framework we can practice our sport; we also need to see what framework these sports policies can be implemented so as not to encourage the spread of the disease. The solution is also the discussion, trying to put in place an adequate framework, trying to adapt to this reality because it is something for which we do not know the end date, so we have to adapt like the other illnesses we have had to experience in the past. The best solution is discussion and adaptation.

3.2 Readjustments at the heart of the adaptation strategies of players in local public sports policies

By drawing on adaptation strategies based on the existing resources and capacities of the organization of Christensen (1996), the results seem to show, at the managerial level, that increased pressure has been imposed on the agents involved in local sports public policies, on the one hand; and, on the other hand, a redeployment has been carried out on the organization's portfolio. Indeed, by using the notion of X-inefficiency of Leibenstein (1966), it turns out that the agents involved in sports policies have seen their actions reoriented towards the fight against COVID-19 with a view to minimization costs. Also, by means of an anticipation system for future activities, those involved in local public sports policies adopt a logic of cost minimization.

In the same vein, there has also been a redeployment of skills through a reorganization of the portfolio. On the other hand, instead of superficial changes in the characteristics of the offer, sports programs have been abandoned or stopped. Funds intended for sport have been redirected towards health activities. This testifies to the adaptability of those responsible for local sports public policies which, according to Henderson and Cockburn (1994), require architectural skills, i.e. the ability to renew the offer by a new way of associating , to combine the skills of the organization.

With regard to strategies for acquiring new resources, it is possible to note that at the level of generic resources, informants support being aware of public sports policies, especially local ones. The level of appreciation of local public policies can be explained by the fact that local populations are involved, through their cultural and sports associations, in policies initiated at the grassroots level. In the sense of Callède (2002), these populations can be considered as the targets to be reached by public policies and, therefore, able to assess said policies. This is why they have perfect mastery of information in line with new strategies or changes in the local environment. The same is true for new equipment to be put in place or other assets that could allow stakeholders to adapt to the COVID-19 pandemic (Moati, 2001). The question that arises, however, is whether their generic knowledge of local public policies is sufficient to explain their capacities to adapt to the COVID-19 pandemic.

On specific skills, it is possible to note with Pisano (2001) that there have been attempts at innovation in that problems have arisen with COVID-19 and ways have been found to resolve them. In this context, new know-how has been developed especially with the redeployment of sports activities towards health actions. This is how the grants from the municipality of Medina intended for competitions were redirected to focal points in the neighborhoods where washhouses and disinfectant equipment were distributed.

The actors also learned, indeed, as the onset of COVID-19 enabled the acquisition of new individual knowledge. This has certainly facilitated readjustments of sports policies. At the start of the pandemic, knowledge of the disease was limited; with better knowledge, readjustments were made.

In adaptation through the transformation of capacities as described by Moati (20001), the evolution of routines focuses on the best use of resources in line with strategic objectives.

Improvements in routines, through learning, were noted. Thus, frameworks for discussion and reflection have developed since the pandemic is not under control and no definitive solution is envisaged. This has allowed routines to evolve towards consultations between the various stakeholders to better consider the future of sports activities. It is note-worthy that there were organizational changes with the same resources since these were redeployed to other activities.

Finally, a major adaptation through a reconfiguration of technical systems and management tools is also appreciable in the redeployment of subsidies intended for sports associations to focal points in the neighborhoods to better fight the pandemic through activities to raise awareness of cleanliness and of setting up wash-houses. Therefore, like postponement of Olympic Games for a year, from 2020 to 2021 due to COVID 19 demonstrate how the crisis, initially considered a negative event, can instead prove to be an opportunity to formulate a new and more inclusive business model (Nicoliello M. (2022).

CONCLUSION

To the question of whether the advent of COVID-19 in Senegal has influenced the application of public sports policies at the territorial level, to the point of eliciting adaptation strategies from actors, it is possible to note that at the level of theoretical that it was at the origin of readjustments. These readjustments can be viewed as coping strategies.

The adaptation strategies based on the existing resources and capacities of the organization of Christensen (1996), are notable at the managerial level by the increased pressure imposed on the agents involved in local sports public policies, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, a redeployment was made on the organization's portfolio by a redeployment of funds.

With regard to strategies for acquiring new resources, generic knowledge of public sports policies, especially local ones, does not necessarily seem to explain the capacity to adapt to the COVID-19 pandemic. Only specific skills, in terms of innovation and training, can be considered to be the source of the readjustments.

Regarding adaptation through capacity transformation as described by Moati (2001), an improvement in routines through learning has been noted in frameworks of discussion and reflection. Better, organizational changes with the same resources since these have been redeployed to other activities.

Finally, a major adaptation by reconfiguring technical systems and management tools is also appreciable in the redeployment of grants intended for sports associations. We have to recognize that the negative effects of COVID-19 on territorial public policies have pushed actors to adapt by developing strategies based on their current resources, finding new skills and transforming their capacities. That's why, Janine O'Flynn (2021) says that it is at the intersections, not in silos, that we are likely to move forward intellectually and practically to understand and mitigate the effects of COVID 19 pandemic.

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