

## Public steering of privately owned sports facilities

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Analysis of how the public sector in the most efficient manner can steer different public institutions has been comprehensive. However this has not been the case regarding sports facilities, which are surprising in a Danish context when you look at the scope and scale of the public funds, paid to sports facilities. The public sector in Denmark uses more than 400.000.000 EURO on supporting sports facilities and more than 80 % of the funds used by Danish Municipalities on the field of sport is used to sports facilities. Furthermore the number of registered sports facilities is more than 3600 - more than the number of public school and day-care institutions in total.

The aim is to analyse how different ways of steering can support sports facilities in general and especially sports facilities in sparsely populated areas. Due to the financial crisis and a rise on the public budgets due to demographic changes the possibilities of municipalities to support sports facilities in sparsely populated areas declining. The ambition is to develop knowledge and models that can be used to develop better public steering of privately owned sports facilities.

The project will contribute to new knowledge to general research in public administration but will especially contribute to expand the knowledge about how municipalities can steer sports facilities in an efficient manner.

Little attention has so far been paid to how municipalities can heighten the efficiency of how they use their funds when it comes to sports facilities. The research question is on that background: *"Which advantages and drawback does different methods of steering privately owned sports facilities result in when the aim is to achieve high percentage of usage and efficiency"*

High percentage of usage is defined as number of users and the percentage of sports court in use. Efficiency is defined as percentage of usage seen in relation to the amount of public funds invested. Furthermore, efficiency is also the ability of the sports facility to attract funding from other sources than the public sector.

Theoretically the project draws on: a) Marketization (Ejersbo and Greve, 2008), b) Communitarianism (Ståhlberg, 1998) and c) Budget theory (Christiansen et al, 2008). However it is necessary to adapt these theories to

the logics which is present in the field of privately owned sports facilities. Many of these are based on voluntary efforts when they are built, when they are managed, when a voluntary board controls them and when they are maintained (Ibsen and Habermann, 2006).

Methodologically the project will be based on case studies of 6 privately owned sports facilities in the Municipality of Faaborg-Midtfyn after a new steering model based on marketization and communitarianism has been applied. Since the new steering model has been implemented on January 1st 2012 it is possible to measure the effect of this change. This development is compared with 3 privately owned municipalities in the Municipality of Aalborg where the steering model hasn't changed.

The theoretical expectations are that marketization will have an effect on the percentage of usage and efficiency. However the effects of the changes in steering model will be even stronger when marketization is paired with the communitarian approach. Finally no change is expected in the municipality of Aalborg. Furthermore it is expected that sports facilities in sparsely populated areas will have more difficulties in attracting revenue from other sources than the public sector due to the limited market in those areas.

In weeks 9 and 13 in both 2012 and 2014 the percentage of usage is measured. This is done by self-report and is validated through the use of Thermal Cameras to check whether the self-report corresponds with the activity measured with the Thermal Cameras.

In the quest for validating and developing causal theories facility managers, board members and local sports organizations will be interviewed in two rounds: a first time in the autumn of 2012 and then again in 2014.

The paper to be presented at the EASM conference in Aalborg will consist of a further elaboration of the theoretical and methodological foundation for the project. Finally the results of the first round of self-report from weeks 9 and 13 2012 and validation of these self-report through the use of Thermal Cameras will be presented.

### References:

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