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National structures for building and managing sport facilities: A comparative analysis of the the Nordic countries

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Abstract

Sport facilities are instrumental in keeping the population fit and healthy. Governments worldwide are thus engaged in devising policies, programs and projects for building such facilities, with the aim of providing citizens with opportunities for a healthy lifestyle. This feature is prominent in the Nordic countries, which have incorporated sport, leisure and physical activity into their universal welfare models. Understanding policies and politics for building sports facilities has therefore become a cornerstone in the understanding of conditions for sport and physical activity for all. In this paper, we investigate and compare the national structures for building and managing sports facilities in the Nordic countries, in order to add to the understanding of how policies and politics for building sport facilities can add to or hamper the sport-for-all ambitions salient in most of today's western societies.

Keywords: Sports facilities, sport policy and politics, sport-for all, welfare models

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Introduction

Building sport facilities is one of the main public means of encouraging sport and physical activity in many countries. Knowledge of the policies and politics for the construction of these facilities is thus a cornerstone of understanding conditions for sport and physical activity. In this paper, we analyse the national structures for building and managing *sport facilities for all* in four Nordic countries -- Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden -- based on overviews of legislation, sources of funding and owner structures in each country. Drawing on these comparisons, we discuss whether possible similarities are in line with the acclaimed Nordic model (see the introduction to this special issue)¹, or if differences are more profound.

Even though many governments invest in sport, it is difficult to establish a causal relationship between sport systems and a population's activity level. In a review of sport participation in 16 countries, Nicholson, Hoye and Houlihan (2011) did not find a systematic correlation between the delivery system for sport in a given country and its population's participation in sport. Investments in sport facilities are no exception: "It is unclear what the direct impact of the facility provision has been on participation rates, although it is clear that access to sport facilities is an important aspect of effective national government participation policy" (p. 303). So even if participation rates are higher in the Nordic countries than the EU average (Eurobarometer 2010, p 10)², we know little about whether this fact is indicative of successful facility policy. Our aim is thus to take a first step to analyse this relationship by providing insights into the characteristics of the national structures for sport facilities. We

¹ The backdrop of this special issue is the debate over the Nordic model of organising the society, a third way between socialism and capitalism, and its apparent success.

² As a non-EU member, Norway is not included in this overview. Studies from Norway indicate, however, the same high number of participants in exercise and sport (at least once a week) as the other Nordic countries (Breivik and Rafoss 2017, p. 15).

have focused on whether the structures for sport facilities have similarities with government or governance, and if this can act as an indication of how well suited the facility policy is to reach to goal of sport for all. This is relevant in light of the increased attention to governance in studies of governments' exercise of authority.³

The paper is structured as follows. We start with a presentation of the theoretical perspectives that frame our analysis and discussions. Next, we describe the structures for building sport facilities in the four countries. Then we discuss differences and similarities in light of our theoretical framework. In conclusion, we explain the relevance of a Nordic model for building sport facilities.

Theoretical perspectives

Nordic social democratic welfare regimes and a possible Nordic model for sport facilities?

A common starting-point for the comparative study of the Nordic countries is Gøsta Esping-Andersen's (1990) *Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism*, since it both summarises the important characteristics of Scandinavian welfare politics and links them to other welfare models. This perspective was an important starting point in the comparative study of sport policy in Norway, Germany, the UK and Canada (Bergsgard, Houlihan, Mangset, Nødland and Rommetvedt, 2007), and in an overview of the Scandinavian model for sport policy (Bergsgard and Norberg 2010). Esping-Andersen claims that the design of welfare politics in modern capitalist countries can be clustered into three welfare regimes: liberal, conservative and social-democratic. In this paper, we focus on *social democratic welfare regimes*.

According to Esping-Andersen (1990), these are found only in the Nordic countries.

Significant for these regimes is the State assuming the main responsibility for social security and ensuring a high standard of living for its citizens. These benefits are not means-tested but

³ See for instance *The Tools of Government: A Guide to the New Governance* (Salamon 2002).

universal and attached to citizenship. Moreover, welfare production largely takes place within the public sector.

Bergsgard et al (2007) highlight two intertwined assumptions for studying sport policy in light of Esping-Andersen's perspective: that sport is seen as an important welfare policy task and that state policy towards sport is shaped by welfare regimes. While studies have found evidence of the former (Nicholson, Hoye and Houlihan 2011), there is less support for the latter. Bergsgard et al (2007) conclude that: "The overall impression with regard to welfare state regimes and variations in sport policies is that our assumptions need to be modified" (p. 244). Similarly, Nicholson, Hoye and Houlihan (2011: 296) claim that "the degree to which government policy towards sport for all and the extent of participation can be seen as product of a particular orientation to broader welfare policy is not always clear." Thus, even though the governments in all Nordic countries are strongly involved in sport, their sport policies deviate from the ideals in the traditional social democratic welfare regime, giving non-public sport organisations a decisive role (Bergsgard and Norberg, 2010).

Government vs. governance – the dispersion of power in structures for sport facilities?

The government's dependency on a private actor (in our case sport organisations as *non-public* actors) is, according to Salamon (2002), the cornerstone of what he calls "the new governance". This feature seems to be particularly well developed on local political level (Pierre, 1998). Thus, involving local sport associations in producing sport activities is essential in many western countries (Nicholson, Hoye and Houlihan, 2011), and in the Nordic countries (Bergsgard and Norberg, 2010). This implies a mutual understanding of policy goals between public and non-public actors, for instance in the implementation of sport policy in Norway and Denmark (see Opedal and Bergsgard 2010; Ibsen, 2017), and a distribution of power where non-public actors' (the sport organisation) interests also gain influence (Pierre,

1998). The degree of involvement of sport organisations is thus an indication of governance. Another is the dispersion of power between different actors, where we, in addition to the public–non-public relation, also will highlight the relation between the national–regional–local level. To summarise, viewing policy for sport facilities as governance thus require signs of a high involvement from sport organisations and a dispersion of power.

The characteristics of national structure for sport facilities in the Nordic countries

The similarities among Denmark, Finland, Sweden and Norway, make them well suited for comparisons (Lijphart, 1971): They are similar in history, culture, socioeconomic development and political system (as social democratic welfare regimes). Further, there are common features in the structure of their sport systems and in the design of their sport policies (see Bergsgard et al., 2007; Bergsgard & Norberg, 2010; and Mäkinen, 2011). At the same time, there are differences among these systems, both regarding which level of government that dominates, and the balance between the public and the non-public (sports organisations) side.⁴ Thus, a similar system design is well suited for regional studies where major similarities enable an analysis of distinctive factors accounting for perceived variations in response to a common problem (Bergsgard et al, 2007) – in our case the characteristics of the different national structures for building sport facilities. This is done by presenting short descriptions of each country's *structure* for building and managing sport facilities, with a focus on identifying the level of government playing the most decisive role, and the extent to which sport organisations are involved.

The Danish national structure for sport facilities

The role of the national government has historically been to create a legal framework for subsidising sport-for-all-facilities. However, the vast majority of important decisions

⁴ On the elite level, that we do not discuss here, the differences are even more pronounced (Andersen & Rongland 2011).

regarding establishing and managing sport facilities is made at the municipal level (Ibsen, 2017; Bergsgard & Norberg, 2010; Ibsen & Ottesen, 2000). In 1937, the State passed a school law that demanded that every new school had to have an indoor and an outdoor space suited for sport and these spaces should be available for use by sport clubs (Ibsen & Ottesen, 2000). In the first half of the 20th century, major facilities such as football stadiums and indoor arenas were constructed in the largest cities (Wøllekær, 2007). However, it was not until the 1960s that the building of sport facilities gained momentum; between the 1960s and the mid-1980s approximately 1000 sport halls were built (Hansen, 1996; Svendsen, 2003). In rural areas of Denmark, such sport facilities were often constructed in the wake of citizens' initiatives with subsidies from the municipality (Hansen, 1996). In the cities, sport facilities were more often built as part of the city's development of new housing and schools (Ibsen & Ottesen, 2000). A cornerstone of the legal framework (*Folkeoplysningsloven*) in the Danish sport facility policy context, is that sport clubs since 1968 have had (almost) free access to sport facilities owned by a municipality, and/or have received subsidies to their own facilities or for renting facilities. The aim of public subsidies given on the basis of *Folkeoplysningsloven* has been enable citizens to form organisations based on democratic structures.

Today, sport facilities are managed by municipalities (50%), sports clubs (7%) or trusts (37%); the remaining 6% are managed in other ways (Høyer-Kruse, Forsberg and Iversen 2017). Most of the trusts are non-profit with a board with representatives from local sport clubs. Neither the central level of government nor the regional political bodies have played any major role in the establishment of sport facilities. To illustrate the importance of the municipalities it can be noted that they contribute more than 80% of the support that sport organisations receive from the public sector (Eichberg & Ibsen, 2012; Ibsen & Seippel, 2010).

The subsidies from municipalities for managing and operating sport facilities accounted for 92% of their total support to sport in 2012 (Ministry of Culture, 2014).

However, via the national lottery funds, the state do support organisations with a possible influence on constructing and managing sports facilities. Among the main recipients of the yearly lottery funds are the Danish Sports Confederation (Danmarks Idrætsforbund, DIF) and the Danish Gymnastics and Sports Association (Danske Gymnastik- og Idrætsforeninger, DGI) each receiving approximately € 36 million in 2015. Besides the support to these National Sports Organisations (NSOs), almost € 8 million of the national lottery funds was used to subsidise the Danish Foundation for Culture and Sports Facilities (Lokale- og Anlægsfonden, LOA). LOA is a nonprofit independent foundation created by the NSOs in 1994. LOA supports the development and building of facilities for sport, culture and leisure. To receive a subsidy from LOA, sport facilities must meet architectural and functional criteria that can inspire development and create more, better and new opportunities for activity (LOA, 2017). Even though the foundation offers only minor subsidies, compared to the total cost of building sport facilities, the foundation has influenced what considerations are relevant for architects and municipalities when building new sport facilities and renovating old ones.

As with the national and regional political bodies, the NSOs' role in the development and provision of sport facilities in the municipalities has been limited, even though NSOs' attention to the importance of sport facilities has increased over the last decade. In 2006, DGI established its own consultancy function with the aim of selling and providing advice on sport facility management and construction to municipalities, sport facilities and sport clubs. DGI also owns or manages seven multifunctional sport facilities, but these are subsidised to the same extent as other municipally funded sport facilities. In its strategy for 2016-2020, DIF has included a section on sport facilities and its political aims within that area. In 2017, seven

municipalities have accepted an offer from DIF to help local municipalities to work strategically with their sport facilities. However, in sum, DIF and DGI have no direct influence on local sport policies and decisions on which types of facilities to build. Hence, the main actors in building and managing the Danish sport facilities are the municipalities and the local sport clubs.

The Finnish national structure for sport facilities

Sport policy in Finland is directed through several laws and regulations. The most important of these is the Sports Act (passed in 1978, with the latest update in 2015). The law promotes physical activity, competitive and top-level sport, and civic activities. Further, the law targets the health and wellbeing of the population and supports the growth and development of children. The law also directs municipalities to organize and offer sport facilities for their citizens. In addition to the Sports Act, there are laws that direct the funding of sport organizations, municipalities and sport facilities and other investments, and laws pertaining to land use.

The State finances the sport sector mostly with profits from the national gaming company, established in the 1940s. In 2015, the State's sports sector had a total budget of € 189 million (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2017). This covered many areas, such as grants to sport organisations (24%), building and maintenance of facilities (14%), top sport (6%), research (2%), education (10%), as well as direct funding to municipalities (10%). In addition, special topics, such as the renovation of the national Olympic Stadium (21%) were funded. This funding is administered by the Ministry of Culture and Education, the main actor at the national sport policy level. Other ministries are also involved, particularly on topics related to health-enhancing physical activity.

As directed by the Sports Act, municipalities are responsible for organising physical activity services and facilities. The promotion should target the entire population, including people with special needs. The municipalities should also support the activities of NGOs. This includes sport clubs and other actors in the field. Municipalities spend approximately € 800 million yearly for the physical activity branch and employ around 5000 people (Hakamäki, 2015). Municipalities receive funding from the State, based on population size. The municipalities use approximately 145 Euros per capita annually to promote physical activity. The vast majority of the sporting activities are organized by sport clubs in facilities that are managed by the municipalities. Much of the actual work for sport and exercise is done voluntarily by the civic society through sport clubs. More than one million people participate in sport activities organised by sport clubs every year (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2017). Sport clubs receive national and regional funding to cover direct costs to organize activities. In 2015, the Ministry of Culture and Education funded sport NGOs with € 45 million (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2017).

Other actors in the field of sport policy are the Regional State Administrative Agencies (AVIs). They are responsible for the regional tasks in the field of sport and for promoting well-being, health, a physically active lifestyle, and a functional capacity across the life span in the population. The AVIs advocate physical activity as a central service and improve conditions for daily physical activity among municipalities. They also direct and support the construction of sport facilities.

The responsibility for building, maintaining and renovating sport facilities rests at the local level. However, both national and regional funding is made available for this purpose, where the Ministry of Culture and Education and the AVI centers are the primary actors. State funding is always provided through an evaluation process off an earmarked project, such as the renovation of a swimming hall or the building of a new sport facility (Ministry of

Education and Culture, 2014). For sport facility management, municipalities are obliged to contribute their own funding. The State has financially supported sport facility development since the 1930s (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2014). In 2014, the Ministry of Culture and Education spent € 26 million on the development of sport facilities, making 18% of the entire funding for the physical activity division (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2014). This consists mainly of building and renovation work. It is estimated that the State-directed funding covers 10-20% of the resources spent on sport facilities at the municipal level (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2014). The state provides its funding to direct and support the municipalities towards systematic facility maintenance and well-timed renovations of the buildings. The State also emphasises, among other aims, local and regional collaboration and energy efficiency. The regional authorities, the AVI Centers, supported the municipalities by providing € 7.6 million in 2013 to cover costs related to sport facilities (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2014).

Out of the estimated 33,000 sport facilities in Finland, 71% are owned by municipalities (Finnish Sport Facilities, 2017). The rest are owned by private companies (8%), sport clubs (7%) or trusts (1%). A minority of the facilities is owned by private actors. Most commonly, private ownership is represented in sports such as golf, horseback riding, tennis, floor ball, squash and bowling. Privatisation has affected the sporting community in Finland and there is more variation in how facilities are being built and maintained, compared to the nearly 100% publicly owned system in the 1980s. The policy for sport facilities has over time reflected changes in the society, where the emphasis has varied from track and field facilities through to swimming halls to the broader sport-for-all approach since 2000.

The Norwegian national structure for sport facilities

The two last white papers from the Norwegian government underscore that the goal of building sport facilities is to contribute to sport for all (St. meld. nr. 14, 1999-2000; Meld. St. nr. 26, 2011-2012). This understanding has its roots in the beginning of the 20th century. The first national government funding to sport facilities came as early as 1917 (Rafoss & Breivik, 2012). However, it was not until after World War II that the resources and the means for a substantial growth in sport facilities were at hand (Bergsgard & Rommetvedt, 2006). This coincided with the adoption of the Money Game Act followed by the establishment of the National Gaming Corporation (Norsk Tipping AS) in 1946. The government emphasised that standardised facilities ought to be spread all over the country – a centralized policy for regional development (Goksøyr et. al., 1996). Norwegian Confederation of Sports (NIF) has traditionally had, and still has, a near-monopoly as a receiver of gaming funds to sport activities. Still, the gaming funds for sport facilities are *not* distributed through NIF but via the regional governments to the actual applicant/developer, be it one of the 426 municipalities or one of the 7953 local sport clubs (NIF 2016).

The policy for sport facilities can be described as a three-party Dutch treat between sport clubs, municipalities and the national government, and as such it is conceived of as important that all of these three parties contributes to increase the funding for facilities (Seippel, 2008). As a rule, the national government (via gaming funds) contributes up to one third of the development costs (although there are many exceptions in the upwards direction). In reality, the funding from the national government is on average not more than around one-fifth of the development and construction costs, more for the costlier facilities and less for the cheaper (Bergsgard, Nødland & Seippel, 2009; Ministry of Culture 2016). The national gaming funds are, however, important as a catalyst for funds from municipalities and for involving sport clubs' resources such as voluntary work, fundraising and loans. Applying for

the national gaming fund is thus decisive for the local actors. On average, € 92 million (in 2014-currency) of the gaming money were distributed to local sport facilities for 2009-2014. In this system, regional governments are less involved as facility developers and facility owners. However, in the role as coordinator of applicants upwards and distributor of fund downwards regional governments can play an important part.

It is the municipalities, the local sport councils and the sport clubs that are central for developing local sport facilities, especially the municipalities that build and manage the largest and most costly facilities. On average, for 2009-2014, the municipalities spent more than € 280 million in gross investment yearly for sport facilities (€ 28 per inhabitant in 2014), however with a decline over the period (Håkonsen, 2015: Table 3)⁵. Just above € 225 million yearly were on average used to net running costs for sport facilities from 2009-2014, with a substantial increase. In addition, € 100 million were on average spent on supporting sport clubs, a large part going to the clubs' own facilities (Håkonsen, 2015: table 2). In 2014, the municipalities spent € 365 million on financing sport facilities and € 290 million on running costs for facilities and for supporting sport activities (Kulturdepartementet, 2016: figure 3). The municipalities spent around € 97 per inhabitant on sport facilities in 2014 (gross investment and net running costs, se Håkonsen 2015: table 2 & 3)

As shown in the above, the municipalities play an important role in developing sport facilities locally, both as a developer and owner, as financial contributor to the facilities owned by local sport clubs, and as a planning authority (Bergsgard, Nødland & Seippel, 2009). Still, the sport clubs (and local sport councils) also play an important role, especially regarding setting the premises when it comes to the type of facility needed. When the local actors (the sport clubs and the municipalities) were asked about the influence on the process of developing local sport facilities, the following pattern appears: sport clubs influence the

⁵ Prior to 2009 there were an increase in municipal investments (Håkonsen & Løyland, 2012: Table 6-3).

process most, then the municipalities and third the national sport organisations (Bergsgard, Nødland & Seippel, 2009). NIF plays a rather minor role providing general policy recommendations for sport facilities. In the strategic plan for 2015-2019 important goals were to increase the public financing of sport facilities and to secure sports clubs' access to publicly owned facilities (NIF, 2015). Seemingly missing in this overview of dominant actors, is the role of the Ministry of Culture. The Ministry designs central guidelines for supporting sport facilities with gaming funds, and thus prioritises specific types of facilities such as artificial turf for football and large indoor sport halls (Rafoss, 2015; Nenset, 2009). One reason for this oversight is that the different national priorities are seen as automatic responses to local needs.

Sport clubs are also important owners of facilities. Around three of ten facilities are owned by sport clubs, 54% are owned by the public, mainly municipalities (52 %), and the rest are owned by other voluntary organisations and companies (Groven & Kleppe, 2017: table 3). The general picture is that sport clubs' facilities are smaller and to a larger degree located in rural areas, predominantly facilities for football, skiing and shooting, while the municipalities own the costlier facilities (e.g., multisport facilities, swimming facilities). The investments in publicly owned facilities are around 80% of the total investments in sport facilities – and have a higher ownership in urban areas.

The Swedish policy and politics for sport facilities

Public policy for sport has a long tradition in Sweden, dating back to the first annual national government grant in 1913 (Lindroth, 1974). Today, the support amounts to some € 200 million (Prop. 2016/17:1) and is distributed by the Swedish Sports Confederation (Riksidrottsförbundet, RF) to 3,147,000 members in 20,164 sport clubs (Centrum för idrottsforskning, 2015). However, in terms of policy and politics for building sport facilities, none of these funds have been earmarked for that purpose. Arguably, some of them are

certainly used for building, managing or renting sport facilities, but given the ‘implicit contract’ (Norberg, 2002) governing the state-sport relationship – regulating organised sport’s right to state support under responsibility to contribute to societal benefits and restrain excesses (Norberg, 2004) – sport organisations are free make their own decisions about spending. Thus, there are no statistics on the use of national government funds to sport facilities. Nor is there a direct connection between the national government’s support to sport and the building of sport facilities.

Funding to, and thereby policy for, sport facilities has instead traditionally been regarded as a local government (n=290) concern (Norberg, 1998). In 2012, the total local government support to sport and culture amounted to € 2,5 billion, of which 70% or € 1,75 billion were allocated to sport and leisure facilities. In addition, costs associated with sport facilities are covered by local government support to leisure clubs amounting to € 0,425 billion that is (among other things) used for the building, operation and maintenance and renting of sport facilities (SKL, 2013). Fifty-seven percent of sport facilities in Sweden is owned and operated by municipalities, 23% is owned and operated by sport clubs, and 13% is operated by sport clubs but owned by other actors (SKL, 2011)⁶. In the absence of explicit national government policies, municipalities have together (as the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions, or SALAR) formulated a joint position with regard to sport facilities (SKL, 2010; SKL, 2013). In this position, local authorities state “sport and exercise should not be restricted to the activities arranged by the sports movement” [author’s translation] (SKL, 2010: 2). With regard to sport facilities, this implies that parks, playgrounds, recreational areas and such are considered equally important, and that such facilities must grow in numbers at the expense of facilities specifically constructed for

organised club sport: “providing infrastructure catering to the citizens’ shifting needs is thus a significant challenge in the future” [author’s translation] (SKL, 2010: 2).

Apart from investments (cash or in-kind) by local sport clubs in the facilities they need for their activities, few resources have been allocated by organised sport at the national level to build and manage sport facilities (e.g., € 6.6 million were distributed by RF via the Regional Sport Organisations (RSO) in 2012). Instead, RF focuses its attention and efforts on building knowledge and providing its affiliated clubs with arguments to use in negotiations with their municipality. In doing so, RF has formulated a political programme for its advocacy work on sport facilities in which it highlights several positions and claims (Riksidrottsförbundet, 2015), for instance, that sport facilities are a condition for the operation, development and continued success of Swedish sport, and that the proximity to sport facilities is connected to health benefits.

The four actors – national government, organised sport at the national level (RF), municipalities, and organised sport at local level (the sport clubs) – constitute the policy coalition directing, influencing and being influenced by policy and politics for building sport facilities in Sweden (Fahlén & Stenling, 2016). The other actors – regional governments, organised sport at the national level (NSOs), organised sport at the regional level (RSOs) and private sector actors are only to a very limited extent involved. NSOs own a few stadiums in a very restricted number of large spectator-sports, but are nevertheless very active in making “arena-demands” in negotiations with municipalities. RSOs distribute (from RF) smaller funds to facilitate access to sport facilities.

Discussion

Similarities and differences

The State’s role is somewhat different in each of the four countries. In Denmark, the main task for the national government has been to create an overarching legal framework for

facility policy which benefits the sport clubs; municipalities are the main actor in securing sport facilities for all. In Finland, the legal framework such as the Sports Act is important, but the national government also provides generous funding to sport facilities. In Norway, the national government has passed some laws pertaining to sport facilities, but the Ministry of Culture's influence on policy is most apparent as distributor of gaming money to sport facilities. Approximately one-fifth of the investment in sport facilities comes from gaming money. In Sweden, the national government plays a smaller role. None of the national grants that the Swedish Sports Confederation distributes to its members is earmarked for sport facilities. The regional government in all four countries play a more restricted role. Still, in Finland the role of regional agencies, or AVIs, is to direct and support (however limited) the building of sport facilities locally, and in Norway the regional administrative level can influence the distribution of national gaming money – but does so only to a varying degree.

The national sports confederations (NSC) have limited involvement in sport facility policy and politics aside from providing general guidelines on which types of facilities to prioritize. In Norway, the NIF conveys needs from the medium to smaller national sport organisations to the Ministry of Culture. In Sweden, the RF provides arguments to local sport clubs to be used in negotiations with municipalities. In Denmark, the DGI offers and sometimes sells its services directly to municipalities – the same goes partly for the other main NSC, DIF – still DGI also manages some multi-sport facilities subsidised extensively by municipalities. While Valo, Finland's NSC, plays a small role in facility policy.

The structure for sport facilities is in large part designed and executed at the local level. The municipalities are the main actor, both as financier and owner, and as planner and implementer of facility policy. It is not easy to find comparable figures between the countries on public funding for sport facilities, but Table 1 gives a sense of the municipalities'

prominent role in all four countries.⁷ We also see that the funding at the regional and national levels is higher in Finland and especially in Norway. The national level in Norway is also important due to the detailed regulation of how to receive gaming money to build local sport facilities. Consequently, these regulations structure the funding for facilities from the municipalities.

Table 1. The main public funding for local sport facilities in the four countries (€)

	Denmark	Finland	Norway	Sweden
Municipal funding of sport facilities (investments and running costs)	561 million (yearly average 2009-2014)	450 million (2015) ⁸	605 million (yearly average 2009-2014)	1750 million (to sport and leisure facilities combined, 2012)
Municipal funding per inhabitant	100 (in yearly average 2009-2014)	82 (2015)	97 (in 2014)	183 (in 2012)
National/regional gross investment in facilities	8 million	25 million (2015)	92 million (2014)	6,6 million (2012)

In Norway, sport clubs also play a prominent role – sometimes in co-operation with their NSO – both as a developer and owner of facilities, and, not least, as setting the terms for facility policy (Bergsgard 2017). In Denmark, Finland and Sweden, where the municipalities

⁷ As mentioned, these figures should be compared with caution. The Swedish figure for municipal funding includes, for instance, leisure facilities in addition to sport facilities.

⁸ This includes the municipalities' spending on rents, salaries and materials for the sport sector.

are in the front seat, one could expect a wider understanding of the population's needs and what types of facilities to include in a sport-for-all perspective. Still, also in Denmark there are indications that sport clubs, in relation to the municipalities, possess more power to define legitimate needs, often at the expense of the needs of the wider population (Iversen, 2015; Høyer-Kruse, 2014). Following Alm's (2016) analysis of stadium requirements, there is an ambiguity in the institutional relationship between the municipalities (representing the entire population) and sport clubs in Sweden (representing the members' specific needs and wishes). Alm (2016) indicates that the commercial logic influencing sport clubs' operations has the upper hand in this relationship.

When it comes to the share of facilities operated (Sweden and Denmark) or owned (Norway and Finland) by the municipalities, the figures are not that different: Sweden with 57%, 50% in Denmark and 52% in Norway (see table). Finland is the exception with 71% owned by the municipalities. In Denmark, for historical reasons, almost 37% of the sport facilities are managed by trusts. These trusts are at the board level typically dominated by local sport clubs. However, the idea is that the management should keep an arm's length both to the individual sport club as user of the facility and to the municipality that subsidises the trust/facility. In Norway, less than 10% of the facilities are managed by such private nonprofit companies. However, the sport clubs in Norway own around 30% of the facilities. The comparable figures in Sweden are 23%, in Finland and Denmark 7%.⁹ In Finland, private companies seem to be more active in the field of sport facilities than those in the three other countries.

⁹ In Denmark, only ownership for larger sports facilities has been registered. If smaller sports facilities are added, the proportion of sports facilities owned by sports clubs, is very likely to be higher.

Table 2. The ownership structure of sport facilities in the four countries (percentage)¹⁰

Owned by	Denmark	Finland	Norway	Sweden
Municipalities (public)	50	71	54	57
Sport clubs	7	7	30	23
Trusts	37	1	6	13
Others (private companies, NGOs)	6	22	10	7

Governance or government – the dispersion of power and the involvement of a third party

Our findings show some variation regarding which actors in the four countries that finance and own sport facilities, but in all four countries, several actors are involved, also non-public actors. This reflects a political system more influenced by governance than by government. In Sweden, for instance, we identify a policy coalition consisting of the national government, the national sports confederation, municipalities and local sports clubs directing the policy and politics for sport facilities. In Norway, the same actors, the national sports confederation excluded, form a triad of dominant actors, which in some ways acts as a coalition promoting the same view. However, we can also identify some tension between municipalities on the one hand and sport clubs on the other. This tension might stem from the case that municipalities represent all their inhabitants, while sport clubs represent their members, and the latter possess both the networks and symbolic power to define legitimate needs. This phenomenon is also visible in Sweden and Denmark.

¹⁰ The figures are estimates and dependent on which type of facilities that are included in the statistics. For instance, if smaller facilities (from maps to smaller playgrounds) were to be included in the same way as the larger facilities, the share owned by sport clubs would be larger in Denmark and Norway.

The regional level in Finland, AVI centres, seem to play a more prominent role than in the other countries, not so much in matters of funding, but by directing the construction of local sport facilities. In addition, the Ministry's earmarked funding of specific local facility projects possesses a direct power. As such, this arrangement resembles government more than governance. Still, the municipalities dominate sport facility policy in Finland, regarding both resources and ownership. The number of important legislations on sport in Finland is also worth mentioning. In Denmark, the State's role as legislator is equally important. However, it is largely the municipalities, partly in co-operation with the sport clubs, that formulate facility policy. This is usually done through trusts operating at arm's length from both sport clubs' needs and municipalities' wishes. Still, these trusts are often so closely intertwined with local sports clubs that it is difficult to enforce such principles.

The national and regional governing bodies of sport and the confederations of sports and the NSOs, have a rather isolated role in facility policy. They exercise a form of soft power related to possessing knowledge and passing on expertise to local sport clubs. In some cases, as with the larger NSOs in Norway, this kind of human capital is effective when it comes to influencing what is built locally (Bergsgard 2017). In addition, even if the facilities are mainly publicly financed and owned, the organised and competitive sport often determines the premises for the facility structure. As pointed out earlier, and as Carlsson et al (2011) emphasise in the Swedish case, in more differentiated policy fields as sport policy, the public is often dependent on a third party – a non-public actor. This is a first indication of how facility policy in many ways resembles governance. The second is the dispersion of power between the different levels of government and between the public and the non-public sides. We cannot say anything about the actual local processes, but the *structure* for sport facilities in the Nordic countries implies public–non-public partnerships and negotiations, and thus governance. However, due to the high involvement from the public side when it comes to

planning, funding and owning sport facilities, it is still fair to say that compared to general sport policy, facility policy is slightly more characterised by *government* than by *governance*. The public authorities' involvement in funding sports facilities is greater than its general involvement in supporting sporting activity.

A Nordic model for the policy for sport facilities?

In this text, we have used Esping-Andersen's social democratic welfare regime as a starting point for discussing the relevance of a Nordic model for the policy for sport facilities.

However, as argued in the introduction, there is a rather weak link between the welfare regime and the sport delivery system. According to Bergsgard and Norberg (2010: 579) general sports policy model in Scandinavia is only in a certain sense a part of the social democratic welfare regime. The facility structure, however, appears as a universal welfare good in Nordic sport since it aims at including the entire population, regardless of organisational affiliation, as the material basis for reaching the goal of sport for all. As such, it falls well in line with the social democratic welfare regime. The same goes for the substantial public funding and ownership of sport facilities. However, when it comes to the national structure for sport facilities, there are significant national differences, both related to which level – national, regional or local – is most prominent, and whether it is the government or the sport clubs that set the agenda for sport facility policy. One rather surprising characteristic of the facility policy for sport for all in the Nordic countries, is that the non-public side, be it sport clubs, private companies or trusts, play such a major role. Compared to countries like the Netherlands, England, Germany and Canada, where local government plays a dominant role in sport for all (Bergsgard et al 2007; Nicholson et al 2011), this may stand out as a kind of Nordic speciality.

Conclusion

On the one hand, facility policy is consistent with the social democratic model as a universal good with high public support. On the other hand, based on this overview, we find that in some cases the need for sports facilities formulated by local sport clubs, supported by NSOs, seems to define which sports facilities exist. This finding indicates that the sport facility policies implemented include only part of the population. However, we also find that the municipalities have possibilities within the legal framework to pursue agendas aiming at creating more equal access to sports facilities – both existing ones and those yet to be built. We can then derive the following tentative assertion: If facility policy should appear as the major mean for reaching the welfare goal of sport and exercise for all, de facto a universal good, then the policy and structure for sport facilities ought to be more government than governance. The municipalities in the Nordic countries seem to be able to fulfil this role. Whether they have or will pursue an ambition to build and manage sport facilities that is truly for all is an empirical matter for further research. The overview of the structures for sport facilities in the Nordic countries provided in this article, could act as a stepping-stone for such a research agenda.

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