



**A KNOWLEDGE AND INSPIRATION CATALOGUE**  
**MAKING SPORTS FACILITIES MORE ATTRACTIVE TO GIRLS**

*Game*

LOKALE  
ANLEGS  
FONDEN

**Published by:** The Danish Foundation for Culture and Sports Facilities and GAME

**Design:** Emilie Lenau Klint

**Text:** Laura Bendix Pedersen

**December 2020**

<b>ABOUT THIS CATALOGUE</b> .....	<b>4</b>
Core insights.....	<b>4</b>
Methodology.....	<b>5</b>
<b>INVOLVING GIRLS AS CO-CREATORS</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>CREATING A SOCIAL AND MULTIFUNCTIONAL PLACE</b> .....	<b>7</b>
A sport setting designed for social interaction.....	<b>7</b>
Different uses of the facility .....	<b>9</b>
<b>ORGANIZATION</b> .....	<b>13</b>
Support for inclusion.....	<b>14</b>
Identification and mirroring.....	<b>15</b>
<b>CREATING A FAMILIAR AND SAFE MEETING PLACE</b> .....	<b>18</b>
Inclusive language and visible role models .....	<b>19</b>
Proximity and accessibility.....	<b>20</b>

Many existing sports facilities do not appeal to young girls in the same way that they appeal to boys and young men. Simply - they meet boys' interests and needs better than those of girls. This is why we often see the same, repeated challenges when it comes to including more girls in spaces and frameworks that offer physical activities. When digging into this problem, some more general challenges regarding the lower participation of girls in sport get revealed. The gender differences are particularly evident during adolescence, as girls drop out of sports activities - in particular formal, organized sports activities - at significantly higher rates than their male counterparts (1). In Denmark, girls having ethnic backgrounds other than Danish are in particular less active than their peers (2). This distortion calls for innovative approaches in how we develop, design and organize venues for physical activity that can help more girls find their way to, and stay in, positive sports communities.

For several years The Danish Foundation for Culture and Sports Facilities (LOA) has focused on girls and sports facilities, collecting knowledge and experiences as well as rolling out various development projects and building facilities. The inclusion of girls in sport has also been a central theme of the Danish street sports organization GAME, which through a long-term design process has developed GAME's volunteer-driven street sports activities so that they are more friendly to girls' participation. The common vision and approach to this knowledge and inspiration catalogue has been to gain a greater understanding of how we develop and design physical frameworks in ways that are attractive to girls. How do we ensure that there is an equal gender balance in access and that sports facilities meet the needs and desires of girls?

### **CORE INSIGHTS**

It has become clear to us, in LOA and GAME, that when it comes to sports environments that appeal to girls, we cannot separate facilities, activities and organization from one another. One of the most important insights presented in this catalogue is that girls demand facilitation of a physically active life as much as they demand facilities for a physically active life. Another important insight is that social interaction and a sense of community must be supported through the physical framework. The facility must therefore be able to accommodate more functions: equal space for physical activity and socializing. We need to think in multifunctional and complex spaces, which can have many meanings that blur the rules and what seems simple and obvious. It allows you to - requires you to - use your own ingenuity and creativity, and that lowers the barriers for participation.

<sup>1</sup> Ibsen B., Pilgaard M., Høyer-Kruse J., Støckel JT. 2015. Pigers idrætsdeltagelse: Hvorfor er der så mange piger, der ikke går til idræt? Institut for Idræt og Biomekanik, Center for forskning i Sundhed og Samfund

<sup>2</sup> Pilgaard M, Rask S. 2016. Danskernes motions - og sportsvaner 2016. Idrættens Analyseinstitut

A physical sports facility that requires organization and support for user inclusion also adds the need for people who can welcome, invite, and talk about social interaction, and some instructors or activity promoters who can organize and facilitate different kinds of trainings and activities. If we are to meet the needs of girls, there must be far more visible female role models in sports facilities. This reinforces the sense of belonging in a sporting environment that might otherwise feel new, unknown, and made for someone.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This knowledge and inspiration catalogue contains a collection of insights and learnings derived through an exploratory and curiosity-based approach to capture girls' needs, behavior and context in order to understand the problem and to develop new solutions. In practice, it has been about delving into girls' everyday lives with an open mind to learn about their concerns, what makes sense to them and what interests and values they have. We have used an anthropological approach and combined participant observations with interviews to explore connections and relationships. We have read existing literature on this topic, spoken to actors who work hands-on with girls and sport, and held a series of workshops concerning girls' use of the GAME Houses (four indoor street sport facilities in Denmark), and about inclusive communities for females in the skateboard environment in Denmark. Along the way, we have in various ways involved more than 150 young girls and women in addition to the many female street sports instructors who are part of GAME's activities. We have also involved local partners in the areas where GAME has activities, such as both national and international organizations working with girls' sports participation.

Many studies on girls and sport focus on those who are already part of a sports program. Therefore, when mapping out the problem we focused our interest on those girls who were not already active in order to explore what characterizes their leisure and everyday practices, and what barriers contribute to these girls opting out of sport. In this context, it is important to emphasize that teenage girls cannot be considered as a single group. There can be great differences in girls' sports motives, social and cultural background as well as local context, which must be considered when working with sports facilities for teenage girls.

A large part of the knowledge has been collected in vulnerable residential areas around Denmark, where a majority of girls have a minority background. However, it is our opinion that the insights and learnings presented also can be used in the more general work of girls and sport and serve as a basis for developing and designing sports and leisure facilities to ensure that these also attract girls.

## **GAME**

GAME is a non-profit street sports organization founded in 2002 with the mission to create lasting social change through youth-led street sports and culture. GAME lowers the threshold for sports participation and creates positive communities for children and young people in underserved communities both in Denmark and internationally. GAME educates youth-leaders as instructors and role models in street sports and civil society for bridging divides and overcome conflicts.

GAME's four Houses, located in Copenhagen, Esbjerg, Viborg and Aalborg, in Denmark, are indoor facilities dedicated to street sports and street culture. The houses vary in design and décor and offer different activities. The facilities are based on a multifunctional and inclusive concept that serves as a hub for positive communities across users' different interests and backgrounds.

## **THE DANISH FOUNDATION FOR CULTURE AND SPORTS FACILITIES**

The Danish Foundation for Culture and Sports Facilities ('LOA' by its Danish acronym) is an independent institution, knowledge intermediary and development fund under the auspices of the Ministry of Culture. Specifically, the foundation develops and advises on construction projects and physical facilities within leisure life. That is, within the sports, outdoor and cultural life and the vision is to be the development fund for the future of sustainable leisure life.

Since 2005, LOA has had a special focus on "outdoor facilities and other facilities that particularly appeal to girls". You can stay up to date and find more knowledge on the theme page "Girls, youth and leisure facilities" which you can find on their website: <https://en.loa-fonden.dk>.

## INVOLVE GIRLS AS CO-CREATORS

Recent research from The Women's Sports Foundation shows that girls' lower participation in sport is not about the fact that they do not like the basic components of sport: being physically active, achieving goals, developing their abilities. In a similar vein, GAME's experience is that girls are not harder to motivate than boys, but that increased participation in sport seems to be linked to physical settings and activities that are attractive and relevant, taking into account cultural conditions and girls' priorities, desires and needs.

An important step towards the development of new solutions that are more appealing to girls is to adopt a user-centric approach that is curious and exploratory. Involve girls in the processes of organizing, the choice of activities and in the development and design of the physical framework. There is a great potential in working strategically and systematically with user involvement so that girls become co-creators of meeting places for physical activity – from the first phase of open questioning of what needs and desires new facilities should meet, to the development and testing of ideas that open up dialogue and involvement before the physical framework is set in stone – literally and figurately. For example, it may be a good idea to do smaller workshops during the more detailed design phase (after the architects have made the overall sketches, but before the design and construction phase), where the target group of girls is involved in developing and designing parts of the facility through idea processes.

This will increase the chances that the sports facility will reflect the wishes and needs of girls, so that it is experienced as relevant and meaningful, and as something the girls can influence. It will also increase girls' sense of ownership and responsibility for and commitment to the established facility, which is important in terms of motivation for their future participation and retention.

## INSPIRATION

In the design and construction process around GAME's Houses in Aalborg and Viborg, girls were directly involved in the design of the changing rooms through a one-day workshop. As the first step, the participants had to create a 'mood board' focusing on the feeling and atmosphere they wanted to create in the room. The next step was to involve the girls in developing their mood boards into ideas for interior designs. There was, for example, an idea for soft and cozy furniture, which allows you to sit facing each other, an idea to set up shower niches with curtains so you can bathe with privacy, and an idea to create a good atmosphere through warm lighting and music in the room. Eventually, the architects helped transform the ideas into concrete designs and drawings. The same process was repeated for the boys' changing room.

***“In my sports facility there is a café with tables and chairs, and there is table football here in the middle (...), and there is a large mattress and cushions next to it. I also designed sofas with pillows. And here there is a climbing wall and a football field.”***

***-girl in workshop on sports facilities***

Comfort, convenience, and availability are important qualities in physical frameworks that meet the girls' needs. And here the experience of entering the facility itself is a point of attention: being welcomed to a place that is open and friendly, and where there is room to be physically active in different ways. Girls must experience that they can relate to the environment and opportunities of the facility.

Desk research, as well as GAME and LOA's own mapping, show that different groups – and especially girls – use sports facilities to a large extent as a social meeting place, and that the social aspects around an activity are often more important than the actual activity itself. For many girls, the sports facility is a social arena as much as it is a sports arena. Thus, the way the facility is designed must support the possibility of social play and dialogue. With this in mind, it can be an advantage to integrate the features of an organized sport activity, together with the ability to 'just be' and hang out, side by side and next to each other.

## **A SPORT SETTING DESIGNED FOR SOCIAL INTERACTION**

***“My favorite place in the GAME House is the stairs. Here there is a good view. It's kind of like a TV, because you can look all over the place and just watch (...) and we can talk and be social together.”***

***- a girl in GAME House Aalborg***

In order to meet the need for socializing, there is a great potential in exploring ways of linking the sports facility with other functions of a more social nature, such as a café, creative activities and other more informal activities. In the GAME House Aalborg, for example, there is a room dedicated to creative street art sessions and workshops, which attracts many girls. The room has large windows facing the main hall, where many of the sports activities take place. This creates a kind of 'open enclosure', where the overview of the house's other activities is maintained, while at the same time the girls get an experience of being in some kind of private sphere. This contributes to lowering the barriers as it creates the feeling of comfort. "A place like a cave" as one girl describes it when she is asked what she thinks is missing from other sports facilities.

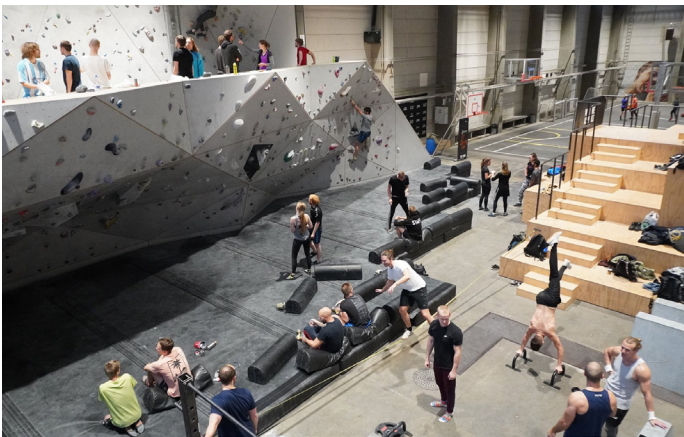
This kind of open enclosure can also be created through some



smaller space divisions. For example, larger areas can be divided into several sub-areas, which allows participants to retreat for a little bit, while still being able to see and watch what the others are doing. In the GAME House Viborg, there are skate facilities which are very popular among the users of the house, especially among the boys. Manager of the house Thomas Gissel says that the girls who skate can be nervous and uncomfortable skating where the boys skate. *"There is a need for some skate zones which for limited periods of time are only for girls. They can be shielded so that the girls can feel safe and free from spectators. It can strengthen the girls' community around skating"*.

There must also be room for girls to bring their groups of friends so that they can use the physical space as a place where they can strengthen their friendships. This also applies to specific sports activities, where the organization of the training should focus on and support friendships and social relations.

According to one of GAME's volunteer Playmakers it is important to have time for informal talks: *"We always have a flexibility in the training program, so there is time for the girls to talk and share what's going on in their everyday lives. We can see that it is important to devote time to the more informal talks. It also does something for the feeling of community in an activity, and the relationships between the girls."*



There are different approaches to creating social spaces in the sports facilities. In GAME House Aalborg, the climbing wall and the surrounding area are designed in a way where activity and hang out is integrated side by side. In this way, users can easily switch between activity, dialogue and socializing.

## FIELDNOTES

One of the girls says she used to play volleyball at a local club. When asked why she stopped, she replies that she would like to prioritize more time with her friends.

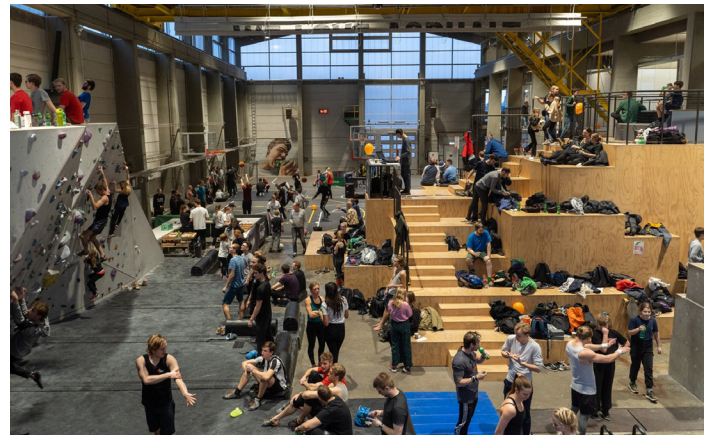


In the dance hall in GAME House Viborg, the wooden bench helps to strengthen the social aspects of the activity. Here, users can take a rest, talk and hang out in an alternation between dance and togetherness.





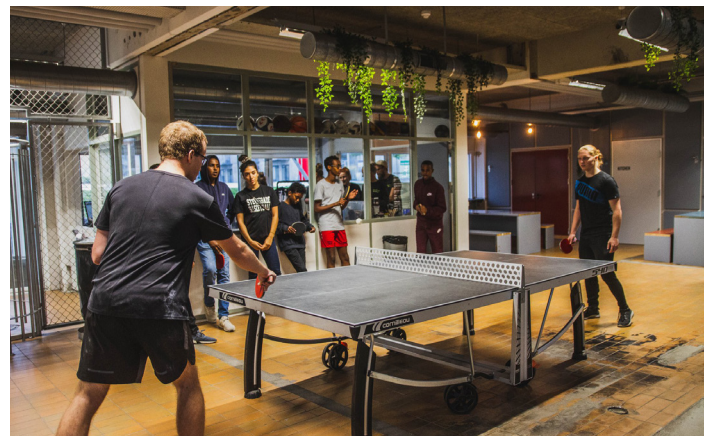
The stairs in GAME House Viborg enable users to retreat a bit and take a break while maintaining an overview of the ongoing activities.



The large staircase centrally located in the large hall in GAME House Aalborg can be used for stays, breaks and gatherings in smaller or larger groups. From here you can see the house's other activities.



In GAME House Aalborg, the creative street art room is located some distance away from zones where the high-intensity activities take place. The room is partially enclosed with a view to the entrance of the facility and the lounge area adjacent to the room.



When users arrive at GAME House Aalborg, they enter the lounge area, where there is table tennis, the possibility of communal dining and sofas for relaxation. The area is dedicated to socializing.

## THE MULTIFUNCTIONAL ROOM

In public facilities for physical activity, it is often the case that what is being built is governed by the framework of different sports. Ball games are based on rules and standards that set the framework for the game and often define the structure and layout of the room. However, several studies point to more open, easily accessible and non-specialized facilities being more attractive to the least physically active citizens, whereas specialized facilities primarily attract the already most physically active (3). For girls, it is not always the number of fields and courts that matters because girls are primarily active outside of officially designated sports courts (4).

A football field is exactly what it is - a field to play football on. The space is created with the intention of, and designed for, simply, football. So, for a girl – or boy – that is not interested in playing football, they will not be attracted to this area and most likely feel disinvited from it.

Many girls prefer ambiguous spaces with fluid transitions where they can improvise, interact socially and alternately be spectators and participants.

In order for a sports facility to meet the needs of girls, it must be able to accommodate several functions: equal space for physical activity and socializing, but also different forms of sport and movement, together in one place. It can be an advantage to design more complex spaces that can be used in different ways, and where structures and functions blend and overlap (5). When boundaries are blurred, the threshold for participation is lowered. There will be a shorter road between a social zone and an activity zone. In addition, this blurs the rules and it encourages the use of ingenuity and creativity.

If we look at the activity level, it can be a good idea to work with multisport concepts that are not defined by a particular sport, but which are based on different types of activities. A ball game that requires very specific and multiple skills at once can be difficult for girls and boys who do not identify as 'athletic'. More, many girls in particular associate participation in sport with being able to perform it well. With concepts based on a variety of sports and movement, there are more opportunities to involve girls in developing and defining activities – something that can help strengthen girls' commitment and retention.

## FIELDNOTES

*It's late afternoon and GAME House Viborg's many users fill the place. There's a group of girls who come here often. I notice that there are many shifts in the girls' activities. In the hour I observe, the girls use the scooters, play table football, basketball, dodgeball and dancing on the cushions by the climbing wall.*

## INSPIRATION

**GAME Girl Zone** is an activity for girls between the ages of 8-12 and is run by female street sports instructors and role models in GAME House Copenhagen. The content of the training varies from time to time with continuous inputs from the girls themselves. The multifunctionality of the facility makes it possible to accommodate the girls' different wishes and ideas for the training. They do skateboard, basketball, parkour, dancing, dodgeball and much more.

<sup>3</sup> Hermansen B. 2013. Er der plads til piger i det aktive byrum?. Arkitektur N nr. 7.

<sup>4</sup> Mogensen, M., Munch, L. & Roessler, K.K. 2010. Kvinder og idræt – matcher de offentlige idrætsfaciliteter egentlig kvinders behov?

<sup>5</sup> Rishaug V. 2015. Et aktivt utemiljø for unge jenter. Arkitektur N nr. 3.

## KEY POINTS

- Create more compact space dimensions, where larger areas are, for example, divided into sub-areas with an “open-enclosure” that protects the private sphere while maintaining an overview of the facility’s other activities.
- Integrate the activities and social zones side by side and think about how the sports facility can be coupled with other functions of a more social nature that support the need for dialogue and social interaction.
- Create multifunctional spaces that allow for wider use of space. Instead of formally lined and built spaces, functions must blend and overlap to blur the boundaries. It lowers the threshold for participation.





## ORGANIZATION

Well-designed facilities are not the only solution. The physical framework must be facilitated and activated through a suitable organization if they are to meet the needs of girls. This is clear when you ask the girls what there should be more of in the GAME Houses: "it could be fun with some more events or some competitions for girls", "there is a need for many more female coaches doing activities", "there should be more employees to help set activities in motion".

The GAME houses enable organization on different levels: 1) it is possible to hang out without participating in the activities; 2) it is possible to take part in self-organized activities initiated by users; 3) it is possible to take part in semi-organized, open activities facilitated by instructors; and 4) it is possible to take part in organized trainings, which are run by external partner institutions. For example, the large, open hall in GAME House Copenhagen is often used for self-organized basketball and football, among other things. However, girls rarely use it for spontaneous sports and activities. Girls are more attracted to spaces where activities and events are organized and facilitated, as stated in the quote above. Thus, there is a high participation among girls when self-organized activities in the open hall are paused in order to make room for more semi-organized activities, such as when the large hall is used for roller-skating workshops or dance battles. This highlights the need to consider spaces and facilities as processes rather than finished products (6).

For girls, there is a big difference between a facility and a physical space – for example the difference between a basketball court and a basketball event with activities and tournaments that are facilitated. Moreover, it is not the basketball activity itself that attracts the girls, but the entire package: the fact that it is a social event in which you may have received an invitation, that you are able to buy something to drink and eat, that you can sit and watch and that you might get a t-shirt. There might be some music and last but not least, someone who facilitate the activities and support the girls' participation. It is the entire process that attracts the girls and it stresses the fact that girls demand facilitation of a physically active life as much as they demand facilities for a physically active life (7).

## INSPIRATION

**In GAME House Copenhagen, a so-called Friday Jam Girls Edition is held on the occasion of International Women's Day on 8 March. This event puts extra focus on girls in street sports and street culture. There are workshops, DJs, live acts and more. This is the day of the girls - together with the boys - and it is an event that attracts a lot of girls - both those who are used to coming to the House, but also girls who have never visited the facility before.**

<sup>6</sup> Rishaug V. 2015. Et aktivt utemiljø for unge jenter. Arkitektur N nr. 3.

<sup>7</sup> Hermansen B. 2013. Er der plads til piger i det aktive byrum?. Arkitektur N nr. 7.

## SUPPORT FOR INCLUSION

***“Hosting is one of the most important things. Safety is paramount and it comes with the role of being a good host. I have decided that there should always be a female front desk staff who welcomes users during opening hours. Female role models are also very important. For example, one young woman sometimes comes in the House and leads freestyle football. The girls look up to her and think she’s cool”***

***-Anja Lyngsø, Manager of GAME House Aalborg***

In GAME’s Houses, it has been observed that some girls (and boys) find it difficult to engage in the community around an activity, and so they end up on the sideline not really being included. Having sports facilities as a physical framework requires organization and support for user inclusion. Thus, hosts play an important role in “spotting” the kids and youth who need extra support to be included. In GAME, hosts are young students that keep the reception and house open, welcome users, create a comfortable environment and promote social interaction. Hosts devote time and resources to offer tours around the house, talk to parents as well as introduce classes, instructors and activities to those the sports facility is new and unknown and help arrange trial classes.

In addition to hosts, there is a need for instructors or activity promoters who can organize and facilitate different kinds of trainings and activities. One of the most important things an organization can do to strengthen girls’ use of sports facilities and participation in physical activity is to invest in the people who need to be part of the girls’ sport experience.

## INSPIRATION

**The female skate crew Girls Don’t Give a Fox has a mission to engage more girls in skateboarding. They say: “The very core of Girls Don’t Give a Fox is not only to get more girls to skate and compete in tournaments - of course that’s also very cool and a great achievement - but the thing for us is to encourage and support young girls to take the first step! Basically, it doesn’t matter if they’re on roller skates, scooters, do parkour or anything else. What matters is the fact that we can be part of supporting young girls to take the first step into the unknown and encourage them to really believe in themselves and not be afraid and think that a sport is only for boys.”**

---

<sup>7</sup> Hermansen B. 2013. Er der plads til piger i det aktive byrum?. Arkitektur N nr. 7.



## IDENTIFICATION AND MIRRORING

For many girls, the relational bonds remain the key influence on how they experience sport. This applies to both the relationship with the other participants in the activity and / or users of the facility, but it also applies to a large extent to the relationship with the coach: *"I think it is important to have a coach who creates joy and good energy ... it has to be someone that I can relate to and look up to"* as a girl from GAME Girl Zone tells.

One of GAME's female volunteers, who has been a dance instructor for kids and youth for many years in an underserved neighborhood in Aalborg, says, concerning her role: *"I would not say that I am a coach, I am more like a mentor. It's not just a sports session where you show up and learn some steps and go home afterwards. I'm trying to create a safe space where the girls can come and feel confident and just let go of all the negativity. The girls get to know me and each other, and they evolve. I want to spread joy and happiness and create a place that the girls want to come back to."* It's GAME's experience that when girls - especially those with limited experience in sports - can identify with and see the female instructor as a mentor, it contributes to increased motivation and retention.

It is essential to engage more female role models as part of the facilities hosting crew: front desk, instructors who organize and operate the activities etc. This is a really good way to strengthen girls' sense of belonging and feeling included in a sporting environment that otherwise feel new and unknown. Furthermore, there should be a focus on how hosts and instructors are given the right tools to include girls in sports communities. This means, among other things, being equipped to create a framework that accepts failure and imperfection, as girls, particularly in the transition from child to adolescent, often associate sports participation with being able to perform accurately from the get go (and are less likely to engage publicly in something that they are not perfect, or at least very good at) (8).

## INSPIRATION

**GAME's street sports activities are based on a peer-to-peer approach. It is voluntary Playmakers who conduct trainings in vulnerable areas, and the majority of the Playmakers have themselves grown up in those areas. This creates a high degree of identification between the participating kids and volunteers. Moreover, it especially motivates children in the transition to adolescence to participate in the trainings as they can identify with their older peers and the community that they are part of in GAME.**

<sup>8</sup> Ibsen B, Pilgaard M, Høyer-Kruse J, Støckel JT. 2015. Pigers idrætsdeltagelse: Hvorfor er der så mange piger, der ikke går til idræt? Institut for Idræt og Biomekanik, Center for forskning i Sundhed og Samfund



## KEY POINTS

- The physical framework must be activated and facilitated through a relevant organization if they are to meet the needs of girls.
- Invest in the people who will be part of the girls' sports experience, for example in the form of hosting and instructors or activity promoters who can organize and operate different kinds of trainings and activities.
- Female role models can facilitate access and strengthen girls' feeling of inclusion and belonging.



***“Many girls in this area do not want to participate in a leisure activity that is associated with something unknown and unsafe”***

***-Social housing officer***

The environment created around sport is an important factor in the participation and retention of girls. This applies both to the environment created in and around the facilities, but also to the environment that characterizes and frames the activities offered in the facilities.

Both desk research and GAME’s own insights suggest that participating in sport and physical activity require a sense of security and confidence and the feeling of belonging in the social context in which the sports activity takes place (9). This includes places and people that the girls trust, and it is about social connections where girls experience a common background and a mutual understanding of each other. Specifically, this means that many girls prefer to be physically active with other girls rather than with boys. *“I feel more confident when there are just girls on the team,”* says a girl from the female sports community She Zone.

It is therefore good to consider the possibility of offering girls-only sports activities and organizing special events in the sports facilities that are targeted girls. Also, it is important to support diversity by understanding cultural barriers that, among other things, require the ability to use an enclosed setting if needed. In addition, you can arrange activities where the girls do not have to change clothes and give the opportunity, for example, to play sports with a headscarf.

## INSPIRATION

In GAME House Viborg, the dance studio is often used by both GAME volunteers and other community associations and clubs who are responsible for different dance training sessions. The dance studio is located in the middle of the facility, and with large glass panels there is plenty of light and view. In terms of the usability of the studio it has been important to be able to close off with curtains to offer privacy to the dancers. A large proportion of the girls who use the GAME House find their way to the dance studio just to play or dance in smaller groups and with the curtains drawn. Here they create their own safe space

---

<sup>9</sup>Ibsen, Bjarne et. Al. 2012. Idræt i udsatte boligområder. Center for forskning i Idræt, Sundhed og Civilsamfund, Syddansk Universitet



## **INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE AND VISIBLE ROLE MODELS**

As written above, female coaches and facility hosts, as well as women in other prominent roles in the association or organization can help facilitate access for girls. Visible female role models, in whom girls can mirror themselves and look up to, are essential for their motivation and retention and for the feeling of being included in the sports community. In addition, female role models help to challenge the negative cultural messages that can be associated with girls' participation in sport. Female role models are a necessary counterbalance to the culture of masculinity in sport, which is still evident in many places and which poses a major barrier to girls' sense of inclusion and belonging in sport.

Staff, coaches and other relevant actors in the sports facilities should therefore strive to create an environment that celebrates diversity and involve everyone in understanding and advocating for equal access and participation. Some young women find, for example, that the self-organized sport that unfolds in some facilities is always dictated by boys and young men. A female basketball player explains why it can be difficult to step onto a basketball court which is often used exclusively by guys:

*"You have to show that you're really good; to show you're worth something out there on the court. And sometimes it can feel like there is a closed environment that you are trying to invade and therefore it can feel difficult. Let's say you come alone and do not know anyone. Then you can feel unwelcome. Maybe some people have the idea that women should be playing another sport"*

It is important that organizations, associations, clubs and others set the framework for how to engage in the community and also involve boys in reflecting on the way they use the facilities: what can their role be in contributing to include more girls in the community? It is also important that organizations, associations, the hosts of the sports facilities and others take the lead in using a gender-inclusive language that breaks the physical and social stereotypes about girls that still exist.

There is a need for guidelines that protect against discrimination and ensure equal rights and opportunities, since *"it is a big vulnerability to enter a room where you do not know if you are welcome"* as one participant tells in a workshop on women and gender minorities in Danish skateboarding. In the workshop, several participants told us that the premise of the language limits their access to sports facilities – and activities. If we are to create an inclusive sports environment there is a great need for an open dialogue on sexist language, and pronouns and expectations.

## PROXIMITY AND ACCESSIBILITY

*“Having to cross a major road or go into an area the girls don’t normally move around in is a major decision.”*

*-Social housing officer*

The feeling of ‘belonging’ in the sports activities and facilities is also linked to the location. For example, if we look at the target group of girls in vulnerable residential areas, the leisure life for many is characterized by the fact that it unfolds at home or very close to home. The local area has a huge importance both in terms of the feeling of security and trust, but also in relation to facility accessibility. It is not uncommon for facilities to be located on the outer edge of a residential area as far away from buildings and neighbors as possible to avoid complaints about noise. The disadvantage of such a placement is that it creates another barrier for those girls who are already having difficulty finding their way into sports. Several of our interviewees addressed the need for sports facilities and activities to go to the girls and not the other way around: the sport activity should take place where the girl is already (or as close as possible).

It is therefore essential that the physical spaces and frameworks are located in the local environment at a close geographical distance from the target group of girls you wish to involve and activate. Place the sports facilities close to other local institutions or offered activities. This provides a familiar and safe setting. For many girls, the school is a central arena in their lives and a place that they and their parents trust, so there is potential to link sports activities and facilities more closely with the school. It could also be in connection with other local institutions, clubs and green spaces / parks.

Reach out to the local schools and leisure clubs as a part of outreach. *“Many girls do not come to the GAME House because they do not know how cool it is (...) there is a need to invite them along, so they can experience the environment and activities”* says a young girl in an interview. There are many girls who do not visit the sports communities themselves, partly because they are not always aware of the opportunities and offerings available in the local area, or because there may be an uncertainty associated with not knowing what the sports activity is and who is in charge of the training.

### GAME GIRL ZONE

GAME Girl Zone is a multisport community for 8- to 12-year-old girls, run by young female volunteer street sports instructors. In one residential area of the Danish city of Kolding, the activity is located on a paved outdoor area next to the local leisure club and nearby sports hall. The locale helps to increase accessibility and girls’ sense of security and trust. Staff at the leisure club help promote the activity, and the volunteers have easy access to invite the girls to the training. If there is a need for a more sheltered space as an alternative to the open outdoor area, volunteers have the opportunity to move the training into the sports hall.

### DON’T GIVE A FOX

The skate crew Girls Don’t Give a Fox has the goal of engaging more girls in skateboarding. Among other things, they work with schools with special skateboarding sessions in sports education. Here, students are introduced to skateboarding in a safe environment with classmates and with Girls Don’t Give a Fox to provide the right guidance and support. Unlike the public skate facilities where there are very few girls skating, Girls Don’t Give Fox finds that skate is popular with girls when introduced in a framework of school sports lessons.

## KEY POINTS

- Girls are more likely to use facilities that are placed in the local area where other people move. This increases accessibility and contributes to an experience where the journey from home/school to the facility is safe and well-known.
- Explore the possibility of placing the sports facility together with other local institutions and/or activities where the girls are already moving around in their everyday lives. This contributes to a familiar and safe setting.
- Support equal participation and access by getting staff, instructors and other stakeholders in sports facilities to take the lead in creating an environment that celebrates diversity, including gender-inclusive language and a framework for how to engage in inclusive community.



# WE LOVE ASPHALT

STREET BASKET





*Game*

