The Power of Benchmarking

Can benchmarking influence cycling policies?

Eight years of experience from Sweden
Why benchmarking?

What’s the goal?

• Comparison between peers
• To show relative position, ”Who’s best?”
• To show possibilities and potential for improvement.
• To follow up development over time
# Possible approaches to cycle-benchmarking

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How good is good enough?

Does it do the job?
- Reliable, tangible results
- Can you trust the outcome?

Cost – time/money
- Level of detail
- Precision
- Number of indicators
- Data collection
- +++
Why would a cycling NGO engage in benchmarking municipalities?

• To influence municipalities to increase efforts for cycling.
• To raise media attention to cycling policies.
• To support municipalities in their efforts.
• To strengthen the role of cycling officers.

• To use municipal pride for its cause – beat the neighbour! – be best!
• To strengthen the cycling NGO:s position, media presence, influence
Enters: Cykelfråmjandets kommunvelometer

Benchmarking municipal efforts for cycling since 2010.
What do we measure?

Indicators for six areas of cycling policy:

- Existing infrastructure
- Investments in infrastructure & maintenance
- Information and marketing
- Activity level this year – what’s being done.
- Cycle politics – policies, strategies
- Evaluation, measuring

Several indictors for each area. Normalised for comparability between cities – mainly per capita
Maximum score of 10 for each area.
How do we measure?

• About 60 questions, information by the municipality
• Web-based questionnaire
• ½ to 1 day of work for the municipality
• Quality-check
• Processing
Who participates?

2010: 17 municipalities

2017: 50 municipalities, representing >50% of Sweden's population

Since 2010: 95 municipalities participated at least once
Results – for individual municipality

Example:

Järfälla
34.5 out of 60 possible points

Investment:
40€/inh. and year

Areas of strength and weaknesses are easily identified.

That’s where we praise of suggest interventions.

Recommendations for each participating city
Results – overall

And the winner is....
Results – categories

More winners – more happy faces!

But also – more competition between municipalities.
Communication

Award ceremony!

Press releases:

• nationally (national media)
• tailored for each participating municipality (local media)

Individual visits to municipalities, presenting results and advice on improvements, involving local cycling NGO-members
Impact

- Very high take-up in media, especially locally.
- Changes in cycle strategies – priority setting
- Political goals to score higher, become ”best”
- Established cooperation between several cities and Cykelfrämjandet

- Average score is raising: +1,5 points since last year
- Repetitive participants: 78% are becoming better
Limitations and challenges

• We can’t measure the quality of infrastructure & actions

• Common misunderstanding – is the winner the best city to cycle in? No, but...

• Continuity and comparability vs. The new and exciting.
Concluding

- **It works. Simple but efficient.**
- **Has had a clear impact on cycle policies.**
- **Has strengthenend Cykelfrämjandets position**
- **The balance between cost & result needs to be right.**
- **Communication is key – the results in themselves are worthless.**
Thank you!

Michael Koucky  michael.koucky@koucky.se  www.koucky.se