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Project Title: Culture in talent development environments in handball

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Research Unit: Movement, Sport and Society

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Abstract:

Environmental and cultural aspects of talent development are growing areas of interest especially within the field of sport psychology. A shift from having the individual athlete as the main focus to having the environment in which the athlete acts in focus while exploring talent development characterises a new trend. Currently three sport psychological research groups has taken an environmental approach to talent development – 1) Côte et al. (Côté et al., 2009; Côté et al., 2007; Côté, Baker, & Abernethy, 2003) who explore athletes' specialization pathways and the content, quality and organization of the optimal training environment. 2) Martindale and colleagues (Martindale & Mortimer 2010; Martindale et al. 2007), who explore the environment primary as politics and philosophies among coaches, and 3) Henriksen and colleagues (Henriksen et al. 2010a; 2010b; Henriksen 2010, 2011) who also explore successful talent development environments, but by doing in-depth case studies of actual successful environments. And more research alike is coming up.

Contextualized talent development research is, at present, in lack of knowledge regarding team sports such as handball. And the significance and role of culture in talent development environments are not explored in depth. That will be the focus of the present study.

The objectives of the PhD project are:

To describe and explore Scandinavian handball environments, focusing on the culture of the environment from a sociological point of view. The project will answer the following questions:

- What characterizes the culture of a Danish successful talent development environment? And what characterizes the culture of a Norwegian successful talent development environment? How are they different and how are they alike?
- What is the significance of culture of the environment to the athletes' socialization and learning processes? And what is 'good talent development culture'?

The study will be based on case studies. Participant observation, exploratory interviews and fieldwork in Scandinavian handball clubs will be the central methods in data generation.

The project runs in three steps:

- 1) Pilot study and creation of a theoretical framework
- 2) Field work and case descriptions
- 3) Cultural analysis of the case descriptions