Global Refugee Studies

Master Thesis

UNDERSTANDING THE WORK OF PLAYMAKERS IN GAME:

A Discourse Analysis of the Playmakers Discursive Construction of GAME.

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ABSTRACT

Taking into account the important role of "sport for all" ideals in order to enhance social change in the Danish society, this thesis explores the power struggle over the fixation of the meaning of sport by GAME, a Danish NGO, and formal club associations. In addition, this research unfolds the meaning of the discourse articulated by GAME thought its playmakers words. In doing so, it employs a discourse theory and analysis by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe. Therefore, this thesis takes on a post-structuralist assumption that we construct the world through the language by communicating with each other and it is for this reason that the reality is something that we self-experience. This study highlights how the playmakers construct a social reality through their understanding of their job. Specifically, this study succeeds in exploring and pointing out the discrepancies and similarities between the playmakers.

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1. Chapter: Introduction

The ancient Greek Olympic ideals are slowly challenged by the new principle of "sport for all". In the last years, the ideals of "sport for all" have been a central aspect which has characterized most of the works of non-governmental organizations (NGO) around the world. Therefore, sport has been used as a catalyst for social change such as (Appleby & Foster, 2013), gender equality and inclusion amongst other. In fact, "The United Nations General Assembly's (UNGA) adoption of Resolution 70/1 'Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development' in November 2015" (Lindsey & Darby, 2019, p. 794) marked a significant cornerstone for sport:

> "Sport is also an important enabler of sustainable development. We recognize the growing contribution of sport to the realization of development and peace in its promotion of tolerance and respect and the contributions it makes to the empowerment of women and of young people, individuals and communities as well as to health, education and social inclusion objectives." (UNGA, 2015, p. 10 in Lindsey & Darby, 2019 p. 794)

Within this framework, GAME positions itself as being an NGO which strives for social change. Through its activities GAME aims at empowering youths, in order to make social changes both in youths' lives and in their society, at including more girls into the sport environment and at offering opportunities to youth who live in underserved communities. GAME uses street sports as tool to achieve its goals and aims. Street sports have a special characteristic because they remove the barriers faced by many kids and young people. They are organized informally, are free, do not require any facilities or utilities (GAME, What We Do. Street Sport, f).

Over the years, a lot of studies have been carried out in order to unfold the meaning of sport in regard to the field of social science. However, more recent studies about sport and empowerment have shown a lack in the literature research focussing on the roles of coaches in NGOs dealing with sport and empowerment. Moreover, less attention has been paid to the initiatives that take place in Global North countries. This thesis addresses the lack in the literature by examining GAME as an NGO that deals with sport and placed in the Global North (Denmark). Additionally, the thesis focuses on the perspective of the coaches' work using sport and empowerment. This research employs a discourse theory by Laclau and Mouffe and a discourse analysis on the data in order to shed light upon the similarities and discrepancies of the discourses articulated by the coaches working in GAME. Thus,

my intention is to understand the way they construct the reality. This has enabled me to formulate the research question of this project:

How do the playmakers carry out and understand their job in GAME?

In order to answer the research questions, I have structured my thesis on the following working questions:

A. How do the playmakers in GAME understand empowerment and how they "do" empowerment?

B. What is their history? What was their motivation to be part of GAME?

C. How do they perceive the kids they are working with?

This thesis will focus on a discourse analysis of the data collected through semi-structured interviews in order to answer the above-mentioned research question.

1.1 Structure of the Study

Chapter 1 is the introduction of this thesis and it provides the general information about this thesis' context. It also explains the research question and the working questions I worked on in order to structure this research.

Chapter 2 introduces the methodological approaches and tools that have helped build up the research question of this thesis. It will start by explaining my point of departure and my interest in the research topic. It will continue with the description of the positionality of the researcher of this thesis and the explanation of the method used to collect and to code the data. Then, it will outline the research method based on the discourse analysis which has been used to examine the data gather and the methodological tools employed in order to carry out the analysis of the data which aims at answering the research question of this thesis. Lastly, it will explain the limitation of this research project.

 Chapter 3 will outline the literature review process carried out by the author of this thesis and will explain the literature about sport and empowerment. Lastly, it will point out the lacks in the literature where this thesis is positioned within the field.

Chapter 4 will clarify the background information of this thesis. It will firstly frame the meaning of sport and its shift from one paradigm to the other in the Danish society. Then, it will look specifically at street sports as instruments used by GAME to promote different values such as gender equality, empowerment and youth leadership in order to reach and carry out its activities and goals. Lastly, it will explain GAME and its activities in details.

Chapter 5 will shed light upon the theoretical frameworks employed in this thesis. It will draw mainly on the work of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe's (in Jørgensen & Phillips, 2011) discourse theory and used their theoretical concepts of anatagonism, hegemony, nodal point, floating signifier as well as group identity, formation and their representation. In addition, it will also outline the concept of discourse of difference and categorization by Richard Jenkins in its work *Social Identity* (2014)

Chapter 6 will show the core section of this research, the analysis. It will be carried out by using a discourse analysis on the data and the methodological tools above mentioned. The aim of this chapter is to answer the research question of this thesis.

Chapter 7 is the conclusion chapter of this thesis. It will explain a summary of the findings and the answer to the research questions. In addition, it will give suggestions and recommendations for further research.

2. Chapter: Methodology

In this chapter, I am going to elaborate on the methodological processes and approaches which have helped me in building up my research question: *How do the playmakers carry out and understand their job in GAME?*

Firstly, I will present my point of departure and my positionality within the thesis. Secondly, I will describe how I collected the data and how I coded it. Then, I will present the method I employed in order to answer the above-mentioned research question and examine the data gathered. I will also explain the methodological tools, namely nodal point and floating signifier, which I draw from Laclau and Mouffe's (in Jørgensen & Phillips, 2011) discourse theory. Lastly, the limitations of this thesis will be outlined as well.

2.1 Point of Departure

Since the very beginning of the process, I was confident about my research area: sport and migrants. This choice came as a result of my passion to combine with my studies. Therefore, I have chosen GAME because it best represents my interest by merging the two topics of my interest. In addition, I was supposed to carry out an internship with GAME. However, due to COVID-19 got cancelled. From the beginning, I had a first draft of my research question in mind. Therefore, I started to carry out a research of some scholarly articles about empowerment. The choice of using empowerment as a starting point stems from GAME's website in which the words sport and empowerment are intertwined and interconnected (GAME, What We Do. Empowerment Method, b). This has increased my curiosity around the topics of empowerment and sport. Therefore, while I was reading the literature about empowerment and sport, I discovered some gaps within the literature which had enabled me to ask the above-mentioned research question.

2.2 Positionality

In this section, I am going to elaborate on my positionality as a researcher. Since this thesis' theoretical and methodological framework are embedded within the post-structuralist assumption that we construct the reality and it is understood as being subjective, this section will help the reader understand that the meaning we attribute to a "material fact" (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2011) depends on the discourse we are embedded in.

This thesis is based on the post-structuralist assumptions that we construct the world through language and by communicating with each other. Therefore, reality is something that we self-experience as individuals. According to Jørgensen and Phillips (2011), and other post structuralist scholars, we

understand the reality through the language and physical objects acquire and gain their meaning through discourse. This is well described by Jørgensen and Phillips, in their book *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method* (2011), with the example of a flood. They claim that a flood, understood as a material fact, is a consequence of the rise of the water level. However, when people try to attribute meanings to it, it can be understood as natural phenomenon caused by the green-house effect or as an act of God (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2011). This example is to show that the different interpretations take part of different discourses and that the assumptions embeeded with it are created based on different perspectives. In fact, discourses change over the time and, as a consequence they change the way we understand, look and perceive the world and what it signifies to us.

Within the post-structuralist point of departure, I, as a researcher, will be capable of presenting the social reality through my analysis which I consider to be subjective as the interpretations of physical objects, as well as the reality, gain meaning based on my own perspective. In addition, according to Laclau and Mouffe (in Jørgensen & Phillips, 2011), reality is not fixed rather it changes and therefore, my different interpretations and perspectives are important aspects for this thesis.

Last but not least, I worked myself as a coach in a formal club association. Therefore, my expierence and my personal story have affected the entire process of the thesis, from very beginning until the very end.

2.3 Data Collection

The approach I used in this thesis has been abductive. According to Dubois and Gadde (2002), it is an approach that merges both inductive and deductive approaches and it implicates "an interplay between theory and empirical observation" (p. 559). In fact, I made some observations through GAME's website and I found surprising the way GAME claims of using sport to empower youths and the function of sport as being "social". This has challenged my understanding of sport as being competitive and thus, I was interested in investigating it. In the following sections, I will explain the choice of using semi-structured interview to collect data and the data I collected through GAME's website. In addition, I will explain how the interviews have been coded.

At the beginning of the process, it was difficult to reach out people in GAME, as they declined my many attempts to set up interviews saying that they were busy. Therefore, I decided to go to the places where GAME carries out its activities. I went to some of the events it held in parks and I managed to arrange three interviews with three different playmakers: one of them is working with Girl Game Zones, one is a dance teacher and the last one teaches basketball. The names of the participants are never mentioned as I agreed with them upon their anonymity. However, in order to ensure that, I will

give them fictional names. All the interviews were audio recorded with the permission of the participants and then transcribed verbatim. The decision of audio-recording was made accordingly to the fact that, in this way, I could focus more on what the participants stated, rather than focussing on taking notes. In addition, while I was transcribing the interviews, it was necessary to correct both the syntactic structure and the grammar of the sentences. This was due to the fact that all the participants' mother tongue is not English. Therefore, the mistakes have been corrected in the quote presented in the Analysis Chapter. Lastly, the transcripts of the interviews are attached in the Appendix.

2.3.1 Primary Data Collection: Semi- Structured Interview

The method used in order to gather primary data, which will be analysed and examined in the last chapter of this thesis, is through semi-structured interview held between the 5th and 11th of April 2021. Due to safety reasons because of the spread of COVID-19, the interviews were held on Zoom, a videoconferencing service used to meet people online. Secondly, the decision, of using Zoom rather than conducting face-to-face interviews, was made as a consequence of the fact that I was told that the playmakers in GAME were too busy for other types of meeting. Therefore, as Fleitas (1998 in Lo Iacono, Symonds, & Brown, 2016) stated, the internet eliminates barriers and distances. In addition, using Skype, or other types of VoIP (Voice Over Internet Protocol) technologies, interviews can be held from the comfort of one's home, eliminating the need to travel and the feeling of uncomfortableness of the participants (Lo Iacono, Symonds, & Brown, 2016). Lastly, despite the use of Zoom, I maintained face-to-face interviews by using the camera of my computer.

There are several reasons for the choice of semi-structured interviews as a method to collect data. Generally, interviews provide depth information that might be useful for the research. Specifically, semi-structured interviews are the best methods to resolve conflicting information because the researcher has the opportunity to directly ask about the conflict without being bound to specific questions. (Harrell & Bradley, 2009).

Secondly, interviews can be used as a primary data collection to gather information from individuals about their own experience, opinions and beliefs (Harrell & Bradley, 2009). For the purpose of this thesis, this aspect is very important because it has allowed me to gather information about GAME playmakers' experiences and investigate upon how they understand their jobs within GAME. In addition, semi- structured interviews can provide background information (Harrell & Bradley, 2009). In fact, during the interviews, I tried to understand how GAME works using specific questions about GAME. However, the focus of the interviews was more about the playmakers' experiences.

Lastly, semi-structured interviews gather detailed information in a style that is conversational (Harrell & Bradley, 2009). In fact, even though a list of predetermined questions was prepared, I decided that the conversation would guide itself in order to not create the distance between the informants and me. Therefore, this helped creating the conversational style throughout all the interviews.

As mentioned before, semi-structured interviews require a list of predetermined questions, hence an interview guide was developed to collect similar data from all the informants (David and Sutton 2004, Bridges et al 2008, Holloway and Wheeler 2010 in Doody & Noonan, 2013).

According to Berg (2009) and Ryan et al. (2009 in Doody & Noonan, 2013), the interviews can be flexible, and the questions can be open-ended in order to have the chance to explore issues that arise in a spontaneous way. Therefore, Hand (2003) and Dearney (2005 in Doody & Noonan, 2013) claim that the open-ended character of the questions encouraged depth and vitality. Additionally, it "allows the researcher to ask probing questions as a means of follow-up" (Turner, 2010, p. 756). As a matter of fact, apart from following the questions that I had prepared, other important aspects for the purpose of this dissertation, arose. Thus, using semi-structured interviews allowed me to explore new paths that have emerged during the interview that may not have been considered initially (Gray 2004 in Doody & Noonan, 2013). Unexpected topics such as self-identification, marginalization, individuality and responsibility arose from the conversations.

Before holding the interviews, I prepared a guideline interview which covered the participants' work in GAME. In fact, the questions were prepared with the purpose of understanding how the participants carry out their work in GAME, hence it reflects the research question. Therefore, I asked broad questions in order for the participants to talk freely about their job without being influenced by my interests. Hence, the questions were formulated in an open-ended way to get a comprehensive narrative from the participants and for me to ask follow-up questions.

The first set of questions revolved around their role in GAME and their motivation to be part of it. These two initial questions were thought to make the participants feel comfortable with me. In addition, I was also interested in how they carry out their job with the youths.

The second set of questions was centred around what they normally do during a training session and how the process of becoming a coach in GAME is. Since I had read GAME's website before, I thought that these two questions would uncover the theoretical concepts such as empowerment, I was looking for. In this case, my interest was to understand how they "do" empowerment with the youth.

The last set of questions was centred around their experience in GAME, if it has changed their life somehow. These questions were prepared for the purpose to see if the participants were reproducing some of the key concepts of GAME.

Before presenting the secondary data collection, in the next section I am going to elaborate on the process of coding the interviews, a necessary operation in the analysis of qualitative data.

2.3.1 Coding of the Interviews

The process of both transcribing and coding the interviews was done straight after they ended. This has helped me transcribe the data without misunderstanding. Once I finished transcribing, I proceeded with a superficial reading and taking few notes on what I found the most surprising. During the more in-depth examination of the transcripts, I realized that in all the interviews there were some recurring words such as life skills, empowerment, safe space for the community, friends, positive energy, leadership, social change. These words are also used in GAME's website. For example, in GAME's website homepage (GAME, Home Page, a) one can read: "Leaders of tomorrow. We educate street sport instructors and social change makers." At this point, I conceptualized them and considered some generic theoretical concepts, accordingly to the data. For example, I grouped all words such as when they were talking about "ghetto kids" under the topic "marginalization." Once I had in mind an idea of the theoretical and methodological takes on the data, the recurring words either become nodal points or discourses where the nodal points were extracted. In doing so, I linked the concepts with some methodological tools drawn by Laclau and Mouffe's (in Jørgensen & Phillips, 2011) discourse theory. This has helped me identify the key words I wanted to examine and the discourses I wanted to focus on. Before explaining the method employed in this thesis, in the next section, I am going to show my secondary data collection, namely website data.

2.3.2 Secondary Data Collection: Website Data

In this research, the website data are understood to be the data that have been collected through GAME' website: https://game.ngo/. I decided to denominate "website data" to differentiate them from the data gathered from the semi-structured interviews. Most of the data collected from the website is used in the Context Chapter with the purpose of understanding what GAME states, what they are doing, how it works, who it is working with. In addition, the website data helped me build up the interview guide. However, some of the website data are also investigated and examined in the Analysis Chapter. In the analysis, I decided to use GAME's Annual Report from 2019 found on its website. After having delineated how the data have been collected and coded, the next section will explain the methods I applied to analyse them.

2.4 Method

Discourse theory was chosen as a method of this thesis because I wanted to examine the discourses that have been articulated by the participants of the interviews. Additionally, by applying Laclau and Mouffe's methodological tools, I will be able to unfold the meaning behind the discourse and to show similarities and discrepancies between the participants of the interviews.

Once I coded the data I gathered, I realized, from the data of the interviews, that GAME is an alternative reality in contrast with the understanding of sport by formal club associations. In addition, I was able to see a "fight" in the society over the fixation of the meaning of sport. GAME is an alternative to the mainstream idea of sport hence it is not based on values such as competition, winners and losers, for example. As I will present in the Context Chapter, on one side there are the Olympic ideals of sport, on the other the principle of "sport for all". Therefore, it resembled that GAME is trying to redefine the meaning of sport. This has led me to choose to employ a discourse analysis based on Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory in order to look at how GAME challenges the idea of sport. Secondly, I was interested in discovering the meaning behind the discourse articulated by the participants of the interviews. It is important to clarify that Laclau and Mouffe aim at developing theory and therefore, they do not include and provide practical tools (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2011). Moreover, I will draw on Jørgensen and Phillips' work, *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method* (2011), which describes how nodal point and floating signifier can be used as methodological tools. These methodological tools will be used in order to investigate and examine the data gathered. This means that my intent is to use the selected concepts from the theory and then make them function within the framework of the analysis.

The method chosen fits in all the part of this thesis because discourse analysis cannot be disconnected from its theoretical framework as, "in discourse analysis, theory and method are intertwined and researchers must accept the basic philosophical premises in order to use discourse analysis as their method of empirical study" (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2011 p. 4). These two concepts will also help me to identify the discourses and to analyse how they are constructing through the playmakers' words. In the following part, I am going to further elaborate and explain the concepts of "nodal point" and "floating signifier" which will allow me to unfold the meaning behind the discourses.

2.4.1 Nodal Point

The choice of using Laclau and Mouffe's (in (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2011) concept of nodal point is dictated by the fact that the nodal points mark some of the themes that I discovered by looking at the data. For the purpose of this thesis, I have chosen to use nodal points as methodological tools because

I found it relevant to look at how the meaning are assigned to it and therefore, it will allow me to investigate upon differences and similarities between the participants of the interviews. Additionally, I consider also relevant to understand how the other signs acquire their meaning with their relationship with the nodal point. According to Laclau and Mouffe (1985 in Jørgensen & Phillips, 2011) a discourse is shaped by "the partial fixation of meaning around certain nodal points" (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2011, p. 26). By nodal point Laclau and Mouffe mean a privileged sign which other signs are positioned and ordered (Jørgensen & Phillips 2011). These nodal points are empty, without any meaning themselves; therefore, they start acquiring meaning when they are embedded in a particular discourse (Jørgensen & Phillips 2011). I chose as nodal point words such as playmaker, empowerment, safe space, culture, motivation because they were both recurring words in the interviews and on GAME's website and some of the emerged spontaneously during the interviews. This will also be reflected in the titles of each sections of the Analysis Chapter. In addition, I chose identity, inclusion, gender equality and marginalization as discourse embedded in GAME. As a result, I extracted the nodal point from the discourse the participants articulated and then I shaped the chain of equivalence with the signs that best describe the nodal point. For example, I chose as nodal point 'ghetto kids' in the discourse of marginalization. Firstly, I will ask myself what the nodal points of the discourse are and secondly, I will start looking at how the meaning is assigned: is the nodal point defined by different discourses in different ways? (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2011). I will do so by searching in the text where the nodal point is found in connection to other ideas and concepts. Through these connections, I will understand how GAME and the people working there attribute meanings to the nodal point.

2.4.1 Floating Signifier

Laclau and Mouffe's concept of floating signifier is relevant for the purpose of this thesis because it will allow me to investigate the struggle around which GAME and formal association try to give meaning to sport according to their values.

As mentioned in the paragraph above, nodal point is a privileged sign around which a discourse is organised. Whereas floating signifiers are signs that "different discourses struggle to invest with meaning in their own particular way" (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2011 p. 28). Given the fact that the nodal point is opened to other meanings and that the floating signifier is an empty sign, then this will be the object of struggle between different discourses, which try to fill it with meaning according to their specific values. An example of what I understand as a floating signifier is sport. Since sport is open to different ascriptions of meaning, the different discourses will struggle to invest the floating signifiers with their own interpretation. Therefore, as I will show in the analysis, the floating signifier

sport will be used to describe the social antagonism and struggle between GAME and the formal club associations. Once, the floating signifier is identified one can identify the struggles that take place over the meaning (Jørgensen & Phillips 2011).

2.5 Limitations

Before presenting the limitations of this research, this thesis addresses the gaps about sport and empowerment that have been found in the literature that will be explained in the following chapter. The goal of this section is to elaborate on the limitations of this project.

Firstly, and most important, as stated before, the reality is understood by different people in different way, since it is subjective. Therefore, if this thesis had been written by another researcher, the results might have been different.

Secondly, due to the spread of COVID-19, all the facilities in Copenhagen, where GAME is carrying out its job, were closed. Hence, I could not carry out a fieldwork to understand and examine how the playmakers in GAME actually carry out their job. This could have added more values to my research because it would have been easier to understand the discrepancies and similarities between what they say and what they do. Additionally, it is also important to remember that according to Laclau and Mouffe (in Jørgensen & Phillips 2011), non-linguistic objects are part of the discourse. Since I conducted the interviews online, this has limited it.

Thirdly, I could only reach three out of more than 100 playmakers who work in GAME Denmark. Therefore, this research cannot be taken as a for grounded study about sport, empowerment and GAME and how the playmakers understand their job.

3. Chapter: Literature Review

This chapter will present a literature review about the meaning of sport and empowerment. This literature review has help me identify the gaps within the literature of sport and empowerment and position my research in the field. This chapter's purpose is to shed light on the topic of this research project and to clarify its contribution to the field where this study is positioned. Firstly, I will start this section by describing the method I used to carry out the literature review and lastly, I will present the literature review on empowerment and sport. The literature has enabled me to identify the gaps and has contributed to build up my research question.

3.1 Literature Search Process

At the beginning of the process, I was able to develop a search strategy which consisted of identifying keywords and search strings. The goal was to discover literature which could shed light on the relationship between empowerment and sport. In order to select the relevant literature that could help me to illuminate the above-mentioned purpose, I chose to limit the research according to scientific articles, books and reports written in English. The keywords for searching were 'sport', 'empowerment', 'Sport for Development and Peace', 'NGO and sport', 'refugees and empowerment and sport'. Then, I have selected the literature I found as being the most relevant based on titles, reading texts and abstracts. Furthermore, having selected the articles based on the above-mentioned characteristics, a snowball effect arose. This means that I have looked for relevant literature in the bibliography section of the selected articles. The databased used in this research were SCOPUS, Google Scholar, ProQuest and Primo. Lastly, the criteria for including the articles in the literature review were whether their content were relevant to the main topics of this thesis.

The literature review presented below is divided into two main topics: empowerment and sport. As mentioned before, this literature review has been carried out with the purpose of identifying gaps within the literature and to position this thesis within the field of empowerment and sport.

3.2 Understanding Empowerment

Over the last years the word "*empowerment*" has emerged as a new buzzword in development policy, research and practices and used my many development practitioners and policymakers (Jupp, Ibn Ali, & Barahona, 2010). According to Page and Czuba (1999 in Jupp, Ibn Ali, & Barahona, 2010) empowerment is a word that has been adopted by different range of institutions, from the World Bank to Oxfam to many more NGOs; however, few of these share common definitions. The term was initially understood in relation to gender in the Global South and as a consequence, it has been started

to be used by many development agencies (Luttrell, Quiroz, Scrutton, & Bird, 2009). In fact, empowerment has developed from a "new, paradigm-challenging concept (Kuhn 1970 in Perkins & Zimmerman, 1995, p. 571) to become itself highly popular and mainstream" in many fields (Perkins & Zimmerman, 1995, p. 571).

Among the scholars, there is a differentiation when it comes to defining what empowerment actually means as it there seems to be a lack of a universal definition of the concept within the scholarly community. As prove of this, Ibrahim and Alkire (2007) identify 33 common definitions of empowerment which are presented both in the academic literature and in the grey literature. The confusion arises because the concept of power, embedded within empowerment, is accepted, comprehended, and experienced in different ways by different people (Rowlands, 1995). Indeed, the meaning of empowerment can be related to people's interpretation of power (Rowlands, 1995). Also Mosedale (2005), in explaining what empowerment means, states that different people employ empowerment to mean different things. Another example comes from feminists, a strand of academia, who have led to a broader interpretation of empowerment as they incorporated the idea the of personal as embedded within the political (Rowlands, 1995).

However, it seems that there is an agreement in perceiving empowerment as "an ongoing process rather than a product" (Mosedale, 2005, p. 244). Also, Rowlands (1995), using McWrither's (1991) definition of empowerment, stresses its characteristic as a process:

> "[Empowerment is – Ed.] the process by which people, organisations or groups who are powerless (a) become aware of the power dynamics at work in their life context, (b) develop the skills and capacity for gaining some reasonable control over their lives, (c) exercise this control without infringing upon the rights of others and (d) support the empowerment of others in the community" (McWhirter 1991 in Rowlands 1995, p. 103).

Additionally, the Oxford English Dictionary (Stevenson, 2010) defines empowerment as the "authority or power given to someone to do something [..] [or – Ed.] process of becoming stronger and more confident especially in controlling one's life and claiming one's rights" (Stevenson, 2010). That is the process used by individuals, which are in a disadvantaged social group, to develop skills and abilities to obtain control over their lives and to take actions in order to improve their life situations (Gutierrez, 1990; McWhirter, 1991; Rappaport, 1983-1984 in Blinde, Taub & Han, 1993).

Despite some authors, such as Mosedale (2005), believe that empowerment has not an ultimate goal because one does not succeed in arriving at a stage of being fully empowered, in an absolute sense; others suggest that empowerment can contribute to achieve particular outcomes such as political participation and economic welfare (Rowlands, 1995). Thus, empowerment as the achievement of particular outcomes started gaining support especially amongst NGOs (Jupp, Ibn Ali, & Barahona, 2010).

Inevitably, most of the literature about empowerment implicate that someone, and/or a group, is "disempowered" and in order to become "empowered", someone must give to the "disempowered" something (to do). Thus, empowerment tends "to involve interaction between individuals and their environment in processes of change" (Mwaanda & Banda, 2014, p. 177).

To conclude, for many scholars, empowerment is seen as a characteristic that forms a shift in power relations, which are already established, and as a result has affinities with emancipatory projects (Mwaanda & Banda, 2014). It is within this broad definition of empowerment that GAME positions itself for being the "empowered" who gives the "disempowered" something to do for changing their situations. Thus, the definition of empowerment used in relation to GAME is that empowerment is seen as a process, which brings to some outcomes which for GAME are social changes and the enhancement for youth of life skills. Specifically, in its website, GAME states: "The GAME Empowerment Model empowers youth by enhancing their life skills through street sports. This model is the foundation of the social change that GAME works for (GAME, What We Do. Empowerment Method, b).

3.3 Understanding Sport in relation to Empowerment

Nowadays, sport is both a critical element of our society and a catalyst for social change (Appleby & Foster, 2013). In fact, in many sport contexts, there has been an increase of racial barriers broken, a decrease of gender gaps and issues of inequity related to socioeconomic status (Appleby & Foster, 2013). This aspect of sport will be in-depth explained in the Context Chapter.

As mentioned earlier, the word empowerment has gained support amongst many NGOs, especially the ones dealing with sport. In fact, in recent years, the international community has started to perceived sport as a potential tool for achieving development goals (Beutler 2008 in Mwaanda & Banda, 2014) and more broadly for achieving empowerment. In addition, sport has emerged as a "human right" goal since 1970s with specific body of international declarations as The European Sport for All Charter (1976), The International Charter of Physical Education and Sport, adopted by

UNESCO in 1978 (Donnelly, 2008). The United Nation Inter Agency Task Force on Sport for Development and Peace (2003) states:

> "[…] By its very nature sport is about participation. It is about inclusion and citizenship. Sport brings individuals and communities together, highlighting commonalities and bridging cultural or ethnic divides. Sport provides a forum to learn skills such as discipline, confidence, and leadership and teaches core principles such as tolerance, cooperation, and respect. […] When these positive aspects of sport are emphasized, sport becomes a powerful vehicle through which the United Nations can work towards achieving its goals" (United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on Sport for Development and Peace, 2003, p. I in Hartmann & Kwauk 2011, p. 285).

Indeed, sport is thought to address all eight of the UN's Millennium Development Goals (Hartmann & Kwauk, 2011). For the purpose of this dissertation, the above-mentioned is a central aspect in order to understand the role that sport has in modern society. It is with this meaning of sport in mind that GAME carries out its activities in Denmark.

Hartmann and Kwauk (2011) distinguish between two different ideal types, which appear in the Sport for Development and Peace field: a dominant vision, where sport maintains and reproduces already established social relations, and "a more radical interventionist approach" (p. 287), where sport contributes "to fundamental changes and transformations in social life" (p. 287). Thus, the involvement in sport "is understood to confer life skills (such as self-esteem, self-confidence, and self-discipline), [what GAME claims to be empowerment – Ed.], social knowledge and values, and leadership qualities that individuals need to participate successfully in modern social life" (Hartmann & Kwauk, 2011, p. 287). For this reason, many of the programs for Sport and Development target marginalized groups, communities at risk (Hartmann & Kwauk, 2011). As a consequence, there has been created what could be termed as a new industry called by Pitter and Andrews (1997 in Hartmann & Kwauk, 2011) "social problems industry" (p. 288) which is organized by the state and performed by philanthropic, nongovernmental agencies, organizations, and other initiatives (Hartmann & Kwauk, 2011). Indeed, by targeting disempowered and marginalized groups both at domestic and international level, sport-based intervention programs seem to be experimental social policies which aim at governing the 'conduct of conduct' of 'unskilled' and 'disempowered' youth by equipping them with the tools for self-improvement and self-management (Hartmann & Kwauk, 2011). The concept of youth and women empowerment is a Western vision of health, education, and social

development (Hartmann & Kwauk, 2011). The targeted groups are youth and women who need to learn life skills which are taught by a group of elite, "often Western-trained athletes and coaches, and there is little indication that the relations of power and privilege mediating their encounter are critically examined" (Hartmann & Kwauk, 2011, p. 292).

To conclude, according to Hartmann & Kwauk (2011), sport-based interventions could be able to help marginalized communities and people do better in their society, but they do little to change the institutions, policies, practices, and conditions that have helped to produce and maintain the marginality of the disempowered. Therefore, according to Hartmann & Kwauk (2011), "while existing structures and relations of power are (often unintentionally) reproduced, the majority of marginalized youth and young people continue to be subordinated and disempowered" (p. 298).

As pointed out by Hartmann and Kwauk in their article (2011), what is missing in the literature about sport and in the one about empowerment is how coaches and trainers, or employees working in an NGO dealing with sport, perceive empowerment through their lives' experiences and as a consequence, how they recognize the process of empowerment on their athletes. This gap identified in the literature is the cornerstone of the formulation of my research question. Lastly, most of the research on the intervention of sport which target 'marginalized people', has focused their programmes in the so called 'Third World', "rather than illuminating the domestic terrain of similar initiatives currently taking place in Global North countries" (Hayhurst, Giles, Radforth, & The Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre Society, 2015). Therefore, this thesis focuses on GAME's work taking place in the Global North, in Denmark. This was the reasons why I have decided to focus on GAME Denmark rather than GAME from other part of the world.

In this chapter, I tried to shed light upon the meaning of sport and empowerment in the literature. What comes out from the literature review is that GAME can be positioned in what, according to Hartmann and Kwauk, is called 'radical interventionist approach' where sport is a vehicle of social change. In addition, the literature lacks research focussing on the roles of coaches in NGOs dealing with empowerment and sport. I consider this to be a relevant aspect in order to understand GAME's agenda and as a mirror to understand how the coaches in GAME carry out their job. Furthermore, there has been paid less attention to the initiatives that take place in Global North countries, rather than in the Global South.

4. Chapter: Context

This chapter will provide the necessary background information that inform this thesis. In the first section, I am going to give a brief historical overview on how the discourse of sport has changed over the years, focussing on the Danish society. The necessity of taking an historical perspective of sport will inform this thesis to understand how the paradigm of sport shifts from being competitive to being understood as a tool to promote integration, sociality, empowerment and gender equality. Then, I am going to elaborate on the meaning of street sports as a core activity of GAME.

Lastly, I am going to explain what GAME is, what it is doing and where it is working. This is important to set the field in order to understand the nature of GAME. As mentioned in the methodology section, this sub-chapter will draw upon the data gathered from GAME's website.

4.1 Framing the Discourse of Sport within the Society

In ancient times, sport was perceived to fulfil different social functions from religious and spiritual practice to entertainment purpose (Appleby & Foster, 2013). Additionally, according to Golden (1997), in ancient Greece, sport was about the creation of differences which marked the establishment of winners and losers. As a consequence of this ideal of sport, sport clubs in Denmark were shaped by the English model which put emphasis on performance and competition (Ibsen, Østerlund, Laub, 2015). Elling, De Knop and Knoppers (2001) claim that since 1970:

> "sports in the Netherlands, as in most other western European countries, were organized as competitive, physically challenging activities, that were practiced within specific clubs and were primarily accessible and restricted to young, white, able-bodied, middle class, heterosexual men (Hargreaves, 1986; Hargreaves, 1994; Stokvis, 1989; Van Bottenburg, 1994). The exclusion of other social groups from organized sport resulted from and further contributed to social stratification." (p. 415)

Nowadays, the meaning of sport has shifted, and it has become "a very prominent social institutions in almost every society" (Frey & Eitzen, 1991 p.503). In fact, the way sport is recognized reflects other institutions of a particular society (Levinson & Christensen, 1999). For example, in 1849 when the Danish Constitution Act was prepared, the citizens were free to join any organizations or associations (Ibsen, Østerlund, Laub, 2015). The freedom of choosing whether joining an organisation or not has become a central characteristic of the modern Danish society (Ibsen, Østerlund, Laub, 2015). Secondly, sport may be seen as an expression of some of the most important

values of a society such as teamwork, cooperation, fairness etc (Levinson & Christensen, 1999). However, these two understandings of sport underline the conservative character of it: an activity "that reinforces the existing social order" (Levinson & Christensen, 1999, p. XVI).

A third perspective, completely in contrast with the above-mentioned ones, views sport as an agent of social change (Levinson & Christensen, 1999). As such, "sport is an ideal institution for stimulating or enhancing the social integration of marginalized groups, such as ethnic minorities, the elderly, the physically challenged, and the unemployed" (Kearney, 1992; Ministerie van VWS, 1996; Van Bottenburg & Schuyt, 1996 in Elling, de Knop & Knoppers 2001 p. 415). It is within this perspective that GAME positions itself as it strives for positive social change.

However, in Denmark, the majority of the children are part of a sport club (Ibsen, Østerlund, Laub, 2015). This widespread participation in sport clubs coincides with socio-economic backgrounds and educational levels (Ibsen, Østerlund, Laub, 2015). Additionally, according to Ibsen, Østerlund, Laub (2015), their analysis demonstrates that sport clubs "have faced competition from new organisation forms" (p.92), in the past three decades.

According to Espring and Andersen (1990 in Ibsen, Østerlund, Laub, 2015), the Danish social model is called "the institutional welfare model". This means that in this type of welfare, it is preferred to solve conflicts and problem through debates, controlled conflicts and talk (Ibsen, Østerlund, Laub, 2015). As a result, sport is the expression of the values of the society and other institutions (Levinson & Christensen, 1999). In fact, Ibsen, Østerlund and Laub (2015) claim that "nine out of ten clubs (91%) offer opportunities for members to participate in competitions" (p. 95). However, many of the sport clubs collaborate with sport organisations with the aim of including specific target groups (Ibsen, Østerlund, Laub, 2015).

To conclude, most of the members of sport clubs do not take part in competitions and a lot of the sport clubs have activities for specific target groups, such as ethnic minorities (Ibsen, Østerlund, Laub, 2015). In the beginning of the development of the Danish civil society, sport clubs formed a part of the cultural movements based on values of "self-determination and spiritual freedom" (Ibsen, Østerlund, Laub, 2015, p.106). As a consequence, "these developed a "sport for all" movement […] with ideals and targets that were different from the Olympic sport ideals" (Ibsen, Østerlund, Laub, 2015, p. 106). Nowadays, the "sport for all" principle has challenged and changed the traditional sport landscape and it is widespread (Elling, de Knop & Knoppers 2001). Even though the Olympic ideals play a minor role, they left their marks on the perception of sport (clubs) in the society (Ibsen, Østerlund, Laub, 2015).

4.1.1 Street Sport

As I mentioned above, the "sport for all" principle enables the possibilities of inclusion for disabled people, the elderly, ethnic minorities etc. By street sports I refer to all of the sports that take place in urban settings such as parkour, street basketball, street football, dance etc.

Street sports are increasingly becoming central to the cultural lifestyles of youth (Gilchrist & Belinda, 2011). In fact, some argue they are becoming so important because they are about to replace and challenge the traditional sport idea (L'Aoustet & Griffet, 2001 in Gilchrist & Belinda, 2011). These types of sport do not need a formal coach and by their nature are considered to be non-competitive (Gordon, 2015). According to Salome and van Bottenburg (2012), street sport participants are considered to be the "outsiders" and "non-conformers" of the society. However, street sports provide an environment where people feel free, express themselves without being pressured from the competitiveness of the traditional sport associations. Additionally, it has been claimed that while competition and hierarchy are the main characteristics of formal sport (Thorpe, 2007 in Gordon 2015), the engagement of street sport is seen in a holistic way (Gilchrist & Wheaton, 2011)

The street sport environment does not create winners and losers (Beal 1995 in Gordon, 2015). Hence, it is more suitable to include the principle of "sport for all" mentioned before. Another important factor that includes street sport in the "sport for all" idea is that is for free. This is because they can be practiced in parks, playgrounds and it does not require neither facilities nor utilities.

All the above-mentioned makes street sports accessible to organisations such as GAME.

4.2 GAME

GAME is a Danish non-governmental organization (NGO) founded by Martin Schultz, George M. Goldsmith and Simon Prahm in 2002 (GAME, Who We Are. About Game, c). As stated in GAME's website, it is a top 150 NGO with almost 20 years of experience "in lowering the threshold to the positive social communities of street sports and culture (GAME, Who We Are. About Game, c).

GAME works not only throughout Denmark and its headquarter is located in Copenhagen where also the first asphalted GAME House was created in 2010. In addition, GAME also works in some countries of Europe (Malta, Greece, Italy and Lithuania), of Africa (Somaliland, Ghana and Tunisia), and of Middle East (Lebanon and Jordan). For the purpose of this thesis only GAME Denmark, more specifically GAME Copenhagen will be taken into account.

Currently, GAME Denmark has four GAME Houses, which are understood as being facilities where youth go and train. GAME Denmark runs practices in particular areas spread across the country. In Copenhagen, it has different facilities and areas where it is carrying out its activities.

GAME's mission aims at creating "lasting social change through youth-led streets sports and culture" (GAME, Who We Are. About Game, c). Therefore, it strives for a world with equal opportunities for all children and youth. It trains youth-leaders as coaches and role models in street sports and civil society. Throughout this paper coaches, role models or playmakers are used intertwined, as most of the people interviewed referred to themselves as playmakers or role models.

GAME works "in underserved, marginalized and/or conflict communities" (GAME, What We Do. Youth Leadership, d). The geographical areas GAME identified, are called Game Zones. There are different GAME Zones in Copenhagen. They could be either the Houses or now, due to the lockdown, parks such as Mjølnerparken (here is also where I approached one of my informant), where the playmakers are responsible for arranging trainings in street football, street basketball and GAME Girls Zones (GAME Zoner Mjølnerparken). For example, one of the playmakers I interviewed is part of Game Zones called Mjølnerparken and explained that every playmakers "have a specific day of the week" and a specific area of Copenhagen - this depends on where the playmakers live - where they do training session (Emilie, Appendix I).

GAME works with youth leadership, empowerment method, facilities, female empowerment, entrepreneurship, "psykosocial" challenges, design principles and street sports. The next sections will explain what GAME is doing in detail. In the following section, I am going to elaborate in-depth on the work GAME is carrying out. This will enable me to better understand the job that the coaches carry out in GAME.

4.2.1 Youth Leadership

As stated in its website, youth play a central role in GAME's mission, as they are considered "the strongest imagine of change" (GAME, What We Do. Youth Leadership, d). For this reason, GAME offers to the youth an education as volunteer street sports instructors and role models (GAME, What We Do. Youth Leadership, d). The Game Playmaker Program consists in educational camps, weekly trainings in local GAME Zones and two annual events. After completing the camps and having been active in their local zone, the volunteers receive a Playmaker Certificate.

4.2.2 Empowerment Method

GAME has developed "The GAME Empowerment Model" which empowers youth by enhancing their life skills through street sports (What we do – empowerment method). According to GAME, there are three levels of life skills which are needed in order to deal with challenges, changes and opportunities in someone's everyday life (GAME, What We Do. Empowerment Method, b). The life skills identified by GAME are: Individual Life Skills Level, Group Life Skills Level and Community Level (GAME, What We Do. Empowerment Method, b). These life skills are understood for being "personal abilities to deal constructively with oneself, to deal with others and to actively engage in society" (GAME, What We Do. Empowerment Method, b). According to GAME, by enhancing these life skills, youth will be able to take leadership roles and broader societal responsibilities in addressing issues which are relevant for their community (GAME, What We Do. Empowerment Method, b).

4.2.3 Female Empowerment

The presence of gender inequalities in sport is well documented – according to the WHO 85% of teenage girls globally do not practice physical activity (GAME, What e Do. Female Empowerment, e). For this reason, gender equality has had a central and important role in GAME. In fact, gender equality is embedded in all GAME's strategies, programs, innovations, operations. Therefore, GAME aims at creating "opportunities that meet the needs and interests of girls to attract and sustain their participation in physical activity" (GAME, What e Do. Female Empowerment, e).

4.2.4 Street sports by GAME

According to what GAME stated in its website, street sports have a special potential because they take on the barriers, allow children and youth to be active, they can be organized informally, they are free, take place near home and there are less requirements in terms of facilities (GAME, What We Do. Street Sport, f). In fact, street sports can be practiced everywhere in the city, from public parks and playgrounds to schools and urban spaces (GAME, What We Do. Street Sport, f). By street sports GAME means "sports that are most often practiced at street level and it is usually practiced in self-organized, informal, social and flexible communities of practice" (GAME, What We Do. Street Sport, f). Therefore, street sports are GAME's tools for social change (GAME, What We Do. Street Sport, f).

After having highlight the background information that will inform the reader and this thesis, in the following chapter, I am going to elaborate on the theoretical perspectives used as framework for this thesis.

5. Chapter: Theory

This chapter will describe the theory I employed to examine the data and answer my research question: *How do the playmakers carry out and understand their job in GAME?*

In this section, I will present Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe's discourse theory. I will draw mainly on Marianna Jørgensen and Louis J. Phillips' book, *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method* (2011), specifically Chapter 2 where they describe the abovementioned theory. Firstly, I will describe Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory. The reasons behind the choice of using this theoretical perspective are the following. I consider GAME as being a counter discourse within sport in discourse theory. This prompts me to consider the concept of antagonism and hegemony. Secondly, it helps me shed light upon how the people working in GAME understand the meaning of the words used by GAME and how they construct reality. Thus, this section is not comprehensive of all the concepts employed by Laclau and Mouffe when describing their discourse theory. In fact, the theoretical perspectives taken from the theory are the author's concepts of discourse, antagonism and hegemony that will allow me to understand the power struggle embedded within sport in Denmark. In addition, I will draw on their concepts of identity, group formation and their representation by integrating them with Richard Jenkins' work *"Social Identity"* (2014). This choice was made as interviewees spoke more about the reality outside GAME. By stating the above, I realized the connection between the participants' and Jenkins' concept of process of differentiation which I will explain in the last section of this chapter. Lastly, I acknowledge the existence of different discourse theories, however I deemed the one presented by Laclau and Mouffe as being more fitting with my understanding of GAME's approach to sport.

5.1 Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffes' Discourse Theory

Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory was chosen as theory of this thesis because during the data gathered, I realized that 1) GAME presents itself as an alternative to the mainstream idea of sport, 2) there is a clash in the Danish society over the fixation of the meaning of sport, where GAME tries to redefine the meaning of sport with its counter-hegemonical discourse. Both of these reasons brought me to choose for employing a theory of discourse. which will assist my research to fulfil its final destinations which is to understand how the coaches working in GAME carry out their job.

Through the process of data collection and coding, I realized that GAME represents an alternative idea when it comes to sport. The mainstream idea of the meaning of sport has dominated the Danish society, as I previously explained in the Context Chapter, while GAME redefines this meaning by using a counter-hegemonical discourse.

Before starting to present the core argument of Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory, it is important to provide a brief presentation of poststructuralism. This is because their discourse theory is positioned within this theoretical perspective - as their discourse theory is one of the purest poststructuralist theories (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2001). This implies that discourses are fully constitutive of the world. Post-structuralism takes distance from the structuralist perspective as it claims that the language is not stable, totalizing and with an unchangeable structure. Rather, it is a dynamic structure where signs obtain their meaning by being different from other signs(Jørgensen & Phillips, 2001). I share the poststructuralism's understanding that discourses create and construct the world with words. This helps me position myself within the field of poststructuralism and informs my thesis, as I explained in the Methodology Chapter. In addition, I find it relevant because it allows me to understand how GAME fits within the discourse of sport and how GAME challenges the main discourse embedded with sport. Finally, it will enable me to understand and discover which are the meanings that GAME and the coaches attribute to different words such as playmaker, empowerment, identity, marginalization, gender equality, inclusion, safe space, life skills, self-realization.

According to discourse theory, social phenomena are never finished, fixed or total (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2001). Meaning cannot be fixed and permanent (Jørgensen & Phillips,2001). As a result, this reveals constant social struggles around the definitions of society and identity, with resulting social effects (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2001). Therefore, the goal of discourse analysis is to define and examine "the processes in which we struggle about the way in which the meaning of signs is to be fixed, and the processes by which some fixations of meaning become so conventionalised that we think of them as natural" (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2001, p. 26). By using the theory's focal point about the constant social struggles around meaning and knowledge and their result as social effects, I will analyse and investigate how GAME tries to redefine the identity of sport and, through the coaches' understanding of their job, how GAME and the coaches are the promoters of social effects on the marginalized youth it claims to help.

Discourse itself is perceived by Laclau and Mouffe as fully constitutive of the world and therefore, they do not differentiate between discursive and non-discursive practices - this is the reason for the theory to be one of the purest forms of discourse theoretical approach. Indeed, they believe that all social practices are to be understood as discursive (Laclau & Mouffe in Jørgensen & Phillips, 2011). In this thesis, I will employ Laclau and Mouffe's understanding of discourse as fully constitutive of the world, which allows me to look at GAME and the coaches' actions as part of a hegemonic discourse embedded within the broader discourse of sport.

In the following section, I am going to elaborate on the concepts of antagonism and hegemony as I consider GAME's actions as a counter hegemony.

5.1.1 Antagonism and Hegemony

The concepts of antagonism and hegemony by Laclau and Mouffe are important for the purpose of this thesis because they help me understand the struggle over the fixation of the meaning of sport between formal sport association, the hegemony, and GAME, the counter hegemony.

Before explaining the concepts of antagonism and hegemony, firstly, I find it relevant to briefly present Laclau and Mouffe's understanding of the concept of power as I believe that these three concepts are interconnected. Secondly, discourse theory is a power theory where a particular discourse tries to enforce a particular truth. For Laclau and Mouffe power is not owned by people who exercise it over others; rather it produces the social world (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2001). Thus, power creates our identities, knowledge and how we relate to one another as single person or as a group (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2001). Additionally, power is responsible for the creation of the ways in which the world is created and can be talked about. Therefore, for the purpose of this thesis, the struggle over the meanings is seen as the struggle of power to create identities and knowledge. Lastly, power relates to discourse because it constitutes and creates discourses (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2001).

As explained before, discourse theory's point of departure is that "no discourse can be fully established [because – Ed.] it is always in contrast with other discourse that define reality differently and set other guidelines for social action" (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2001, p. 43). Therefore, a constant social struggle over the creation of meanings exists. In this thesis, I regard mainly the constant social struggle as happening around the creation on the meaning of sport.

Social antagonism takes place when different entities try to exclude each other with opposing discourses. This means that antagonism is found where discourses collide (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2001). Laclau and Mouffe (2001) when talking about antagonism, claim that "the negation of a given order is, quite simply, the limit of that order, and not the moment of a broader totality in relation to which the two poles of the antagonism would constitute differential - i.e. objective - partial instances" (p. 126). For the purpose of this thesis, the concept of antagonism is used to identify the two main discourses within the broad topic of sport and will help me explain the antagonistic relations between the discourses brought by GAME and by the formal club association.

The only possibility in which antagonism may end is through hegemonic intervention which tries to suppress alternative understanding of the world by leading "to the naturalisation of one single

perspective" (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2001, p. 34). Hence, the hegemonic intervention is the process, provoked by the antagonism, that as a result creates a new discourse (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2001). The hegemony will succeed when one discourse can dominate alone, and when the antagonism is dissolved (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2001). I find the concept of hegemonic intervention relevant because it will enable my analysis to explore how the dominant discourse of sport is challenged by GAME and by the people working there. However, I acknowledge that the hegemony, formal sport associations, is trying to incorporate the counter discourse of sport as "sport for all" ideals. For example, the model of GAME that is mainly designed to include street sports is being slowly recognized by the formal club associations by trying to incorporate it in their discourse. For example, skateboarding, known as being a street sport, has been recognised as an official sport in Tokyo's Olympics Game 2020 (Knowles, 2021).

In other words, discourse theory is a theory of power. I see this power unfolding in the current hegemonical discourse of sport, which entails that, the hegemonic discourse sees sport based on competitiveness. However, the power of the hegemonical discourse is challenged by a counter hegemonical discourse. I see GAME as the bearer of the counter hegemonical discourse attempting to give to sport a different meaning, namely sport as non-competitive.

5.1.2 Identity, Group Formation, and their Representation

I have decided to use Laclau and Mouffe's understanding of identity because in the data I gathered, the identity of the participants change accordingly to the discourse they are embedded with. For example, from the data I can see that when the participants describe themselves, they are giving themselves a different identity accordingly to the discourse they are embedded with. They are teachers when it comes to sport, they are friends when it comes about their relationship with the kids.

According to Laclau and Mouffe identity is the product of discursive processes. In fact, their understanding of identity matches with their discourse theory above described, where meanings and therefore identities are discursive constructions that are never totally fixed; likewise identity is, according to Laclau and Mouffe (in Jørgensen & Phillips, 2011) contingent and changeable. Thus, identities are fragmented because a person can adopt different identities as he or she is embedded within different discourse. For example, one of the interview participants, is a 'coach' at GAME, a 'dance teacher' at a dance school and a 'father' and perhaps a 'husband'. This means that the identity of a person is never settled as it moves from one identity to other one (Jørgensen & Phillips, Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method, 2011).

Regarding group formation and collective identity, they are understood with the same principle of individual identity. Since the subjects have several identities, and they can use different identities in given situations, group formation is perceived as a reduction of possibilities. People create groups accordingly to a process where some identities are ignored or considered more important than others. (Jørgensen & Phillips, Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method, 2011). This process is called chain of equivalence (Jørgensen & Phillips, Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method, 2011).

The concept of representation is important because GAME claims to be created in contrast with formal club associations and it claims providing social effects on the youth it is working with. In fact, according to Laclau and Mouffe (in Jørgensen & Phillips, 2011) representation is a very important characteristic when it comes to the process of group formation. As mentioned earlier, groups are not predetermined because they do not exist until a discourse is created. When a group is represented, a complete understanding of the society comes with it, as the group is created in contrast to another group.

In the following section, I will integrate Laclau and Mouffe's understanding of identity, group formation and representation with Jenkins' concept of discourse of difference.

5.2 Richard Jenkins Social Identity

In this sub-chapter, I am going to integrate Laclau and Mouffe's concepts of identity with Jenkins' (2014) concept of discourse of difference. I consider this concept relevant because from an initial coding of the data, I realized that the participants were talking about themselves as different from someone else. This is shown in the data as they are using the negative form when defining who they are, as this quote shows: "you're not like a trainer, only. You're also not a friend." (Emile, Appendix I). Before starting to explain the discourse of difference by Jenkins (2014), I want to clarify that Jenkins shares the same understanding of Laclau and Mouffe of identity. In fact, according to Jenkins (2014) identity is never fixed and immutable, rather it can be negotiable and flexible. Jenkins (2014) claims that identity is one the basic human capacities of knowing who is who, what is what, who others are and so on. Therefore, it derives a process of identification which is something that we do (Jenkins 2014). Additionally, he states that there is a need to recognize that identification is the consequences of categorization of others, "rather than as self- identification" (Jenkins, 2014, p. 16). Lastly, Jenkins acknowledges that identities may appear to be emotional matter able of influencing actions.

5.2.1 Discourse of Difference

According to Jenkins (2014), knowing who is who or what is what implicates a process of classification which consequently invoke a criteria of similarities and differences. For this thesis, only the criteria of difference will be taken into account. Therefore, differences, when it comes to defining who is who or what is what, emerge as something very important. The concept of discourse of difference invokes an exclusionary process that will allow oneself to understand who one is for being who one is not because it becomes a matter of distinguishing oneself from others (Jenkins 2014). Within this process of identification, we generate groups (Jenkins 2014). In fact, GAME is a group made by real people that behave in certain ways and as a result they construct the reality.

5.2.2 Categorization

This concept is important for the purpose of this thesis because GAME as well as the playmakers are categorizing people to intervene in their lives.

According to Jenkins (2014) categorising people becomes an aspect of identification of ourselves. In fact, drawing upon the data I gathered I found that the participants identify themselves in the kids they call "less fortunate" (David, Appendix II). Additionally, Jenkins (2014) claims that one categorizes people because there is a need of a potential intervention upon this category. This is also reflected in my data as GAME and the playmakers categorise the kids, they are working with to make an intervention on them. In this case the intervention made is through the concepts of "sport for all", empowerment, leadership, gender equality etc.

In the following chapter, I am going to examine the data gathered. In doing so, I will use the theoretical perspectives that I have presented in this chapter as lenses to analyse the data.

In the following chapter, I will use the theory as lenses that I have employed to look at the data I gathered. Within these theoretical perspectives was it possible to look at the data within a discourse theory and discourse of difference.

6. Chapter: Analysis

This chapter's focus is on the analysis of the empirical data, namely the three interviews and the website data. I have decided to use Laclau and Mouffe's methodological tools: nodal point, chain of equivalence and floating signifier for different reasons. As I explained in the sub-chapter "coding of the interview", I chose the nodal points because they were recurring discourses and words both on GAME's website and in the interviews. Once I decided the nodal points, chosen by looking at the interviews where they were mentioned in relation to other ideas and concepts, I created the chain of equivalence within the different discourses to understand the meaning given by the participants to the nodal points. In addition, this will help me shed light upon the discrepancies and similarities between the three participants. Further, I will analyse each of the nodal points according to the discourse theory, presented in the previously chapter. In addition, before starting the writing of this section, I looked once again at my data in order to look for quotes that showed antagonism, the discourse of difference by Jenkins as well as his concept of categorization. Thus, I applied my theoretical framework to the data I gathered. Furthermore, I will use the floating signifier, in this case sport and culture, which will allow me to interpret the data according to the concept of hegemony and antagonism. This means that I will shed light upon the struggle over the fixation of the meaning of sport and culture. Lastly, I will also examine the data using Jenkins' (2014) concept of difference. The aim of this chapter is to answer my research question: *How do the playmakers carry out and understand their job in GAME?*

In the following section, I am going to present the nodal points that I have found, explain why they are important for answering the research question. The nodal points are playmaker, empowerment, safe space, culture, motivation, whereas the discourse I highlighted are marginalization, identity, inclusion and gender equality. In addition, the signs that shaped the chain of equivalence are highlighted in bold in the text. I will not explain how the chain of equivalence is composed, rather I will explain its importance.

6.1 Playmaker

The first nodal point that I found by looking at the data is 'playmaker'. As stated in the context section, according to GAME, the informants are referred to as 'playmaker'. The reason I have chosen 'playmaker' as being a nodal point is because I found it relevant to look at the meaning that the coaches give to it. Furthermore, I consider that by analysing the meanings that are attributed by the participants to the nodal point 'playmaker' will help me shed light upon how they understand their

job and additionally, how they navigate their role and their identities. This will also help me to identify the discrepancies, described below, and similarities between the participants.

When I asked to describe what her role was in GAME, Emilie stated:

> "My role in GAME is a **volunteer** which is called the playmaker. You're sort of… you're **not like a trainer**, only. You're also **not a friend**, but almost. So, we are **educated** there [in GAME -Ed.] in how to do our work as a playmaker. They [the kids – Ed.] get to decide how and what they want to do. So, I have **to facilitate** those possibilities." (Emilie, Appendix I)

The playmaker is seen as someone who is educated by GAME and as a facilitator to allow the kids to do what they want to do. In addition, she is also a volunteer, and she is positioning herself in between a trainer and a friend as she is neither one of them. This quote also unfolds a discourse embedded within the idea of the Danish society. By stating "you're not like a trainer, only. You're also not a friend", she gives the idea of a non-hierarchical system within GAME where you should feel connected with the kids in a friendly way, but at the same time, you should also be professional. Embedded with Emilie's statement there is a strong discourse of equality and non-hierarchical society that GAME highlights. This can be deducted from GAME's website when it claims:

> "GAME […] trains youth-leaders as coaches and role models in street sports and civil society and offers them the opportunity to use entrepreneurship to make positive changes for themselves and for **peers** and children." *(GAME, Home Page, a)*

Therefore, within the above-mentioned quote, peers refer to the playmaker who are positioned by GAME on an equal level. This should be understood when linked to the values of the Danish society where values such as egalitarianism and equality between people are important and embedded within the society. Therefore, Emilie is trying to position herself in an equal level as the kids, she is trying to be at the same level of the kids she works with.

The same question was asked to David who described his role as:

> "I am playmaker in GAME, where I **coach** kids […]. I **teach** them how to play basketball and just **talk** to them and **give them a positive energy** during their day. We learn more how to coach, how to **be a role model.** [During the practices – Ed.], we are always two coaches: so, one is **making the practices** and the other one is trying to **put** some **smile** and **fun** into it." (David, Appendix II)

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In this quote, the role of the playmaker is divided between being a teacher and being a role model. In the role of the teacher, they are teaching how to play basketball and making the practices. Whereas in the role of a role model, they encourage the kids to have fun and giving "them a positive energy."

When Elias explained his position in GAME, he claimed:

> "I'm working as a dance **teacher**. So, that's the position in GAME. Most of the time we work as **volunteers**. Breakdance is more individual dance and I help them to **develop steps** that they have learnt. So, I am actually developing these [steps – Ed.] and in the meantime, you have fun, [you do not have – Ed.]to be **too hard** and they [the kids - Ed.] are just enjoying the moment, you have **not to be professional**."
> (Elias, Appendix III)

Here, the playmaker is seen as someone who develops steps, a teacher, who should be neither too hard nor too professional. In the above-mentioned quote "professional" is seen as something negative because I argue it is not associated with the idea of having fun which is align with the main idea of GAME. It is also possible to notice one similarity with David. Both of them understand that it is important that the kids are there to have fun and therefore, their role as playmakers is different from the role of a teacher or a coach as commonly understood.

In the quote below, I want to highlight other aspects of the nodal point 'playmaker' that emerged from the interview with Elias:

> "Most of the time we [playmakers - Ed.] are actually asking them how they are, and they are saying they are really good. It is most important as a **teacher** to **ask how the kids are** and **they are feeling** and **how was their day**." (Elias, Appendix III)

In the above-mentioned quote, there is a unique understanding of being playmaker. This is derived by the fact that here the teacher, the playmaker, is seen here as a person that brings emotional support to the youngsters rather than being someone who only teaches. His duty as a playmaker is to ask the kids how they are feeling or how their day was and behave more as a friend. Therefore, this diverges from Emilie's understanding of playmaker since she tries not to be seen as primarily a friend.

Highlighting the nodal point and all the signs that are attributed to it, allows me to shed light upon two main empirical findings.

Firstly, in the first quote, Emilie, while describing her role in GAME, states: "They [the kids – Ed.] get to decide how and what they want to do". By examining the nodal point playmaker, if we break

up the word, we can literally understand playmaker for being a person who makes the play/game. However, when Emilie describes her job, the process of making the play/game is attributed to the kids. Thus, they are creating a new meaning for playmaker because in the formal club association playmaker is considered to be the one conducting the practices. By allowing the kids to do what they want to do, I consider GAME as the one creating a different reality and environment where the kids can feel free from obligations imposed by schools and their families, for example. In addition, by employing Laclau and Mouffe's (in Jørgensen & Phillips, 2011) concept of hegemony, I consider GAME as being a counter hegemony which proposes a different idea of being a coach and of being a playmaker within the discourse of sport.

Another interesting empirical finding can be highlighted when the playmakers try to define themselves as not being friends or trainers, and neither being too hard nor too professional. This can be seen as a tentative of defining themselves by saying what they are not. This concept is expressed by Jenkins (2014), who states that "knowing who's who is primarily a matter of difference" (p. 22). Thus, in this case, the playmakers are defining themselves by saying what they are not and by separating themselves from the idea of coaches who work in formalized sport associations.

Additionally, when the playmakers are trying to define themselves, it is interesting to note that the identities that are giving to themselves change. For example, they sometimes define themselves as being more friends with the kids and sometimes as coaches and/or teachers. According to Laclau and Mouffe (in Jørgensen & Phillips, 2011), identities are never fixed, rather they change in accordance with the discourse. Since they are in contact with GAME's social reality, their identities shift according to the discourse they are embedded with.

To conclude, the chains of equivalence, for each of the above quotes, highlight the similarities and differences between the playmakers' understanding of their role. The main common understanding of their role as a playmaker is that they are trying to distance themselves from the idea of being as the coaches in formal club associations. On the other hand, the main differences between them is that Emilie is letting the kids do what they want to do. Whereas David and Elias are the one in charge of making the practices.

6.2 Empowerment

The second nodal point I have chosen is empowerment because it is a recurring word in the interviews. Moreover, empowerment came out in two interviews spontaneously during the conversation I had with the coaches. I consider empowerment to be relevant as a nodal point because by analysing the meaning that the coaches give to it, I will be able to comprehend how their understanding of

empowerment influence their job. In order to define their understanding of empowerment I will discover in the text the signs that are attributed to it by creating the chain of equivalence.

In asking Emilie to describe her role in GAME, she stated:

> "The theoretical frame [of GAME – Ed.] is the empowerment aspect and making **social change** through the empowerment in street sports. So, […] we use all of the **life skills** to get to the children to empower them and also create a **safe space for community**. So, the empowerment aspect is about **strengthening** children's **sense of self-esteem** and interest in sport. One thing is the physical health, but it is also the mental health. So, empowerment in sports and things we do, the hope is that it translates into other personal aspects of people's lives and that's just as much for the children as it is for us. You learn a lot from them, so it gives them self-confidence like in other aspects. If you feel like you're having success with sports, maybe you feel like you'll have **success** with I don't know cooking or something."
> (Emilie, Appendix I)

The chain of equivalence that I presented above is important to understand what empowerment is according to Emilie. According to McWhirter (1991 in Rowlands 1995), empowerment means to help someone develop the skills necessary to obtain more control over their lives. Therefore, based on this definition, I can argue that Emilie is trying to give life skills, to create safe space for the community, to strengthen the kids' self-esteem and confidence and hence, she is trying to empower them.

The second quote, presented below, is another example of what empowerment means according to David. He explained how he understands empowerment as something one is good at and that can be given to the kids. In addition, he also reflects upon his personal story.

> "So [empowerment is – Ed.] to take something to be **good** at that thing. It's to give them, the kids, who were a little bit shy, who don't have that much **confident** to give them, to build the trust with them and **give something to them that they can use**, not only when they are at the practices, but also, they **can use it in another places**: at school or with their friends. But also, the coaches, I can start thinking that at the playmakers camps where they teach us that we can use it [empowerment – Ed] in other places. When I started as a playmaker, I was 18 and came from Aarhus. I was a bit shy, and I was afraid of coming to the big city. […] **I got more confidence** and I use it (empowerment) at school. I don't think that I would have

done [moving to Copenhagen – Ed.] if I was not part of GAME. It made it easier. I

knew that I had this insecurity." (David, Appendix II)

The chain of equivalence that I found is interesting because empowerment here has an emotional meaning. According to David, empowerment consists in building confidence in the kids. This is in line with Emilie's view. Moreover, he also brings up the fact the confidence, that he is trying to build in the kids, can be used outside the context of GAME. In fact, in one of his examples, he claimed that by being part of GAME once he was a kid, he was able to build more confidence and used it at school. Hence, David is aware that he is "doing" empowerment because he is trying to replicate what has happened to him.

From the data examined, it is possible to see that both David and Emilie are claiming to empower the kids during the practice. They are doing so by trying to build self-esteem and confidence among the kids. The quotes, showed above, are interesting because both the playmakers are aware of empowering the kids. Lastly, their understanding of empowerment is similar.

6.3 Discourse of Marginalization

Within the discourse of marginalization that I have found by looking at the data, the third nodal point is "ghetto kids". The reason behind the choice made is that the nodal point shows firstly, how the playmakers understand the discourse of marginalization and secondly, how they view the kids.

When I asked Elias where he works, he said:

> "We're actually working in Denmark. We call it **ghetto kids** who are **refugee families** and some of them they are, how can I say, **Arabic kids** where they don't get to go to dance class or doing some activities. So, we are actually working for that, to put a place where people don't [run – Ed.] **out of opportunities** to give to them." (Elias, Appendix III)

The chain of equivalence I have found is important because it helps me understand that he considers the "ghetto kids" as kids coming from refugee families, Arabic kids and kids with few opportunities. In addition, he is creating the category of the 'marginalized' because he seems to take for granted that being a refugee or a kid in the ghetto is equal to giving them the opportunities that otherwise they will not be able to have. According to Jenkins (2014), categorizing people implies an intervention in their lives. In this particular case, the intervention on the kids' lives is giving opportunities to them. Whereas for GAME, in general, the intervention is "to make positive social change" (GAME -What we do). Additionally, I want to point out that he refers to Arabic kids. Embedded within Elias' words,

there is a religious discourse that can be seen as the re-emergence of religion as a major characteristic of defining who is who, as stated by Jenkins (2014).

The next quote is David's answer when I asked about his double experience, as a kid in GAME and as a worker for it. It is interesting to see how he answered by drawing upon his personal experience:

> "I lived in that kind of a **rough neighbourhood** like those **kids** […] I'm teaching basketball now, but luckily for me, I went to the gym in a young age so I escape kind of that. But when I was at the practise back then, there were kids who were there **who just arrived** to the country not long ago who had different kinds of **troubles**." (David, Appendix II)

In the above-mentioned quote, David described the "ghetto kids" as children who live in a "rough neighbourhood" where they deal with different kind of troubles. In addition, some of those kids are defined by David as foreigners who are new to the country. It is also interesting to point out that he came from a similar situation like the kids he is working with. Therefore, he sees the kids in the same way he is now looking at himself when he was one of the children participating in GAME's activities. Moreover, he also mentioned that sport helped him to escape the bad reality of the rough neighbours in which he grew up.

In conclusion, the quotes highlight the similar perspective of the playmakers on the children they are working with. While Elias focused more on the cultural and religious background of the kids, David tended to mention the areas of the city they live in. Additionally, David seems to relate closely with the children because he used to be one of them. This empirical finding is in line with what GAME states on its website:

> "The volunteers serve as role models in **underserved**, **marginalized and/or conflict communities** and they are an important part of the social change that GAME works toward." *(GAME, What We Do. Youth Leadership, d)*

This help me understand that the playmakers' role is to go to "underserved, marginalized, conflict communities, and rough neighbours" where the children live. Therefore, rather than being the children to go to GAME House, the playmakers are the one reaching out the children in that areas.

Another consideration to add consists in looking at the discourse of marginalization using as nodal point 'rough neighbourhood.' The chains of equivalence I have identified above would have been the same. Thus, marginalization would have been understood from a geographical point of view because

the meaning ascribed to "rough neighbourhood" would have referred to an area of the city. However, this would have described the children as living in a certain area rather than their background.

6.4 Discourse of Identity

This theme of the analysis has arisen after an in depth reading of the transcripts of the interviews. According to Jenkins (2014), identity is one of the capacities of humans of knowing who is who, what is what and who others are and so on. This theme is important for the purpose of this thesis because it helps me understand how the playmakers define GAME. As a result, when defining GAME, the playmakers always refer to what GAME is not. This is in line with the process of differentiation by Jenkins (2014) who claims that we can understand who we are for being who we are not. Therefore, it becomes a matter of distinguishing oneself from others (Jenkins 2014). Since, the playmakers always try to place GAME as something different from the formal club associations, it is possible to understand that the way they carry out their job will be different than the one carried out by coaches in formal club associations. This is the ground to identify the nodal point 'GAME' which is very visible in the following quotes.

In fact, when Emilie explained, what GAME is, she stated:

> "It is **not about competitions**; it is about **development and engage yourself** in activity that you might not be familiar with. Also, I knew GAME because I have gone there myself for some yoga because it's **really cheap** and I like the fact that it **wasn't like really formal setting** that it's **more loose**" […]. It has the character of something more **friend based** so I like that." (Emilie, Appendix I)

The chain of equivalence is important because all of its signs express what GAME is not and at the same time what GAME is. According to Emilie, GAME is not as the formal sport associations since GAME does not focus on the competitiveness aspect of sport. Rather, it is loose, friendly based and cheap compared to the quota of formal sport clubs. Moreover, by comparing this quote with her statement presented in the empowerment section, where she said "[…] the empowerment aspect is about strengthening children's sense of self-esteem and interest in sport […]", in this quote she states that GAME is also about engaging in activities one may not be familiar with. Therefore, I claim that she understands her role as the one in charge of pushing the kids outside their comfort zone to strength their self-esteem.

When I asked David about why he had decided to be part of GAME, his answer was:

> "They [GAME – Ed.] **were more engaged** with the kids. They were **talking** more
> to us, more **friendly** way. It [formal club – Ed.] was **more strictly**." (David,
> Appendix II)

In this quote, it is possible to see the same aspects that Emilie has highlighted in fact, David has the same understanding of GAME as something different from the formal club associations. In his opinion within GAME the kids are more engaged, and the practice setup is not as strict as the one in a formal sport club. This quote also follows the concept of identity creation that was formalized by Jenkins (2014) and explained above.

When it comes to identity formation, is clear that both playmakers share the same ideas. Both described GAME as friendly based, not strict, and loose and they both compared GAME with the formal clubs and try to define it by highlighting the differences between GAME and formal sport clubs.

6.5 Discourse of Inclusion

Embedded with GAME, there is a strong discourse of inclusion which is well explained on GAME's website under "TEN RECOMMENDATIONS TO INCLUDE GIRLS" (GAME, GAME News. Ten Recommendations to Include Girls, g). The discourse of inclusion helps me understand how the playmakers carry out their job because part of their tasks is to make sure that the girls are included in GAME's activities. For the same reason, I have chosen 'inclusion' as a nodal point because since inclusion is part of GAME's agenda, it will influence the way the playmakers are working. This is also visible in the following quote where Emilie described her job in "GAME Girls Zone."

> "There is a really low **participation** from **girls** in street sports, but they [GAME –
> Ed.] really do want to be part of it and that became like the part of the **agenda** to
> get better inclusion in street sports for girls. I hope that maybe some of the girls that
> we are teaching today, when they grow up, they can be playmakers, if they want to
> and **pass it on** and have this small communities in the area; and yes definitively,
> you can get this feeling of empowerment and you are also likely to have **motivation**
> to pass it on." (Emilie, Appendix I)

I consider the chain of equivalence, that I have shaped, relevant because it helps explain what inclusion means for Emilie and how this influences the way she works. Emilie said that the participation of girls in street sports is low, therefore GAME has focussed on including the girls in its activities. This means that Emilie is the one in charge to spread GAME's values of inclusion and its agenda. Additionally, it is interesting to see how the participant is replicating GAME's manifesto and

values of inclusion. According to Emilie, one of the goals of inclusion is the hope of building motivation in the girls that one day might become playmakers and will be able reach other girls. Thus, Emilie has to work in a way that creates a feeling of inclusion for girls and therefore, this reflects in the way she makes the practices.

However, in the below quote, I will show the discrepancy that arises between GAME's agenda of inclusion and David's understanding of inclusion of the girls:

> "It depends. I think it's becoming even […]. Back then it [sport - Ed.] was more dominated by guys who are at the practise and the girl wasn't there. Now, it's almost even, but if I come to the practise and there is a girl who is there then I see how she is, if she is **shy** or if **she can handle to be part of it**. Then, I would split up if I think she will have a bad experience otherwise I just let her be part of it." (David, Appendix II)

According to David, his inclusionary work consists in evaluating whether a girl is 'shy' and then if she can handle to be part of the group of the training session. Based on the evaluation he will then either split the group if the girl is to shy or including the girl in the group he works with in that moment. In this quote, David expressed his intention to include the girl and for the girl to be part of the training. On one hand, the fact that David is splitting up the group could be seen as something that goes against the principle of inclusion. On the other hand, splitting the group could be beneficial for the girls to get more comfortable and still be part of the training.

To conclude, the two quotes previously shown help me understand how the coaches through their inclusionary work understand their job: while Emilie seems to be more concerned to follow GAME's agenda and spread the manifesto about inclusion that GAME proposes, David provided a more practical approach on inclusion by splitting the group he works with when necessary.

6.6 Gender Equality

The nodal point I have identified is 'gender equality' because it is one of the most important discourse articulated by GAME. Additionally, it is a recurring topic in the interviews.

In GAME's report (2019), it is stated that:

> "[…] girls and women have **fewer rights** and **opportunities**. From chores **binding** them **to the household**, to their **pursuit of power**, to **participation** in sport, **leadership** and political and economic **decision-making**, women and girls lack of equality" (GAME, 2019 p. 7)

According to GAME, women and girls are recognized as they are in charge of the household chores and for this reason, they have fewer rights and opportunities than men. This is expressed by the lack of equality when it comes to decision making, participation in sport and leadership. GAME is trying to challenge the gender inequalities in sport by increasing the participation of the girls in sport. The inequalities in sport that GAME fights against can be seen also in Emilie statement:

> "Some of the **girls are not allowed to play with boys** in that area for different reasons and so, it is also creating a space for them where they can get to do sports because it **should be for everybody** but there are some really **complex structures** in place. I **grew up differently** I have **always played with boy** and I also played **football** for a couple of years as a child with only girls and that is the big problem you know when you talk about **equality** in sports." (Emilie, Appendix I)

Emilie recognized that some of the girls cannot play with the boys because of their cultural background. However, she stated that she grew up in an environment where the gender inequalities in sport does not exist since she was allowed with boys. One of the reasons because it exists gender inequalities among the girls is what Emilie called "complex structures" that could be related to an obstacle that does not allow the girls to participate in sport. Lastly, Emilie understands gender in her own culture by comparing it to a different culture (her own). I also argue that gender is perceived in different ways accordingly to the culture one grew up. This is also interesting because it shows how Emilie distances herself from the kids and she does not place herself on an equal level of the kids. However, from her previous statement (see playmakers sub-chapter), she positioned herself as being on an equal level of the kids she works with.

In the following quote, Elias is talking about how he experiences different culture in regard to gender. He stated:

> "For some family it's not only for money but it is also **difficult for the girls to go outside** or **to be around a place** […]" (Elias, Appendix III)

It is interesting how Elias noticed that the gender inequality is not only caused by the lack of money but is caused by the challenges faced by the girls when they want to go outside or to be around a place. This means that the culture could play a role in keeping the girls away from sport activities but also from the place where the activities are held. This is reflected upon the fact that the girls are the one that have to stay home.

To conclude, both Emilie and David view gender equality as a value that needs to be promoted. To do so, they understand that one of the reasons why there is a low participation of girls in sport is due to cultural boundaries and family values which are enforced on the girls. Emilie highlights her belief that sport should be accessible for everybody and therefore tries to put her own values to challenge some of the "complex structure." Therefore, from a discourse theory perspective, this could be seen as the playmakers' attempt to create a counterculture because they do not accept that the girls have less opportunities to participate in sport activities.

6.7 Culture

In the previous section "Gender Equality", I highlighted how GAME and the playmakers are trying to promote gender equality and to challenge the values that are different from the ones GAME and the playmakers are embedded within. From Laclau and Mouffe's (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2011) discourse theory perspective, GAME can be seen as the counter-hegemony which is trying to redefine and challenge the social reality of the kids it works with. Therefore, I have chosen 'culture' as nodal point which will help me explaining how the coaches understand a different culture. While at the same time in order to explain the struggle about the fixation of the meaning of culture, it becomes a floating signifier.

Elias in answering my question about GAME's goal, he claimed:

> "Its [GAME- Ed.] goal focusing in the youngest and give them different opportunity such as the **culture** and different things. […] GAME is there to help them to reach their goals and **bring them together**. So, it's **social** and culture which is also most important to **understand the cultures**, **make the culture grows** and **make them together** as well." (Elias, Appendix III)

According to Elias, GAME is the promoter of different social and cultural changes. The chain equivalence explains how Elias understands the nodal point 'culture': a reality where the different cultures coexist and grow together. In additional, the youngest being part of this reality can engage in social activities together and understand each other cultural differences.

This quote is taken from GAME's Academy:

> "In the GAME Girl Zone community, the goal is **to create** a culture where it is **natural** for the girls to speak up and give feedback and inputs." *(GAME, GAME Academy. GAME Girl Zone, h)*

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In this quote, GAME claims that there is the need to create a culture, in this specific example for the girls. GAME sees the culture as something natural, where the girls have more freedom to speak and more opportunities. Thus, both GAME and the playmakers are working together for creating a different social reality.

From a discourse theory perspective, I consider GAME as a counter-hegemony which tries to redefine and challenges the social reality, and culture embedded within the society, the hegemony. Therefore, culture can be also seen as a floating signifier where the two discourses collide over the fixation of the meaning of culture (Jørgensen & Phillips,2001). Therefore, GAME tries to normalize the culture different from the Danish one in order to create a social reality where girls can "speak up" and where the kids coexist together with other different culture (Elias, Appendix III).

To conclude, GAME is trying to create a counterculture and challenge the values which are not in line with the vision of the culture it is trying to create.

6.7 Safe Space

I have chosen 'safe space' as nodal point because it is a recurring word both on GAME's website and in the interviews. According to GAME (2019), "children participating in GAME Zones feel safer in their local community" (p.11). This means that the playmakers are the ones in charge of creating a safe space within the local community which the kids belong to. From the data I have collected, it can be seen that safe space is defined in two different ways: one being more physical and the other one being more emotional.

During the interviews with Emilie, she said:

> "[…] we do street sports and we use all of the life skills to get to the children to empower them and also create a **safe space** for **community**. They also know each other because they **lived in the same place**, they **go to school together.** So right now, there slightly up pretty stable level of the of **confidence** I think because it's like a safe space for them." (Emilie, Appendix I)

The chain of equivalence around the nodal point 'safe space' is important because safe space is created by the playmakers within the community also composed by the kids who all live in the same area and go to school together. This helps me shed light upon another aspect of how the playmakers carry out and understand their job because part of their job is to ensure the children a safe space. This quote also shows how Emilie understands the safe space that GAME is trying to create in "underserved, marginalized and/or conflict communities" (GAME, What We Do. Youth Leadership,

d). I claim that the way Emilie understands safe space is physical space where the kids know each other, and they feel safe and comfortable in it.

The emotional side of the safe space that is created by the playmakers is expressed by Elias in the following quote:

> "The parents think that the kids are more **safe when we are there**. We can see that the parents are really **happy** to see their kids who are **doing something different**."
> (Elias, Appendix III)

The space is considered safe by the kids' parents because they are there. As a result, the parents of the kids are happy because they know that they are "doing something different" which I claim to be street sport. Therefore, Elias expressed that his role is to ensure a sense of safety for both the parents and the kids. When Elias stated: "doing something different", I consider it as something positive because the parents view the kids' participation in GAME's activities as something safe. Moreover, the quote shows that the parents "are really happy" because they know that the kids are with the playmakers, rather than being on their own. Additionally, when Elias mentioned "ghetto kids" in the marginalization sub-chapter, allows me to claim that the areas where the kids live might not be safe enough to let the kids play outside on their own.

At last, the two chains of equivalence around the nodal point 'safe space' help in highlighting the playmakers' understanding of safe space. While Emilie expressed that the safe space is a physical space for the community, David focussed more on the parents. I argue that Emilie is more in line with the general discourse of GAME about safe space. The way she explained safe space, made me understand that she is replicating GAME's rhetoric. Lastly, the effort that the playmakers are putting in creating safe spaces around the city is part of GAME's mission to reclaim and convert the streets in something secure for the kids and their parents.

6.8 Motivation

I have identified 'motivation' as nodal point because it was a central topic in the interviews. All of the playmakers talked about their motivation for being part of GAME and they related it to their personal experiences, and I claim that their personal motivation influences their job and the way they carry out their job. The claim will be shown below through the analysis of the quotes.

When I asked Emilie "why have you decided to be part of GAME?", the answer was:

> "It is a combination of a **personal story** and **experience** about feeling insecure. […]. As much as I can tell you, I had had insecurities and then I returned to the

sport. I was reminded of the benefits and how happy it made me feel. So, I figured

OK this would be **nice to pass on**. I decided I wanted to do the **volunteer work**

because I had rediscovered **my own interest** in sports and wanted to pass on this."

(Emilie, Appendix I)

This quote shows one of the reasons why she decided to be part of GAME. Firstly, it is her own personal story and experience that made her to join GAME as a playmaker. Secondly, when she stated "nice to pass on" there is a discourse of "giving and "gaining". In her statement she describes how she received happiness by returning to play sport. Therefore, after she rediscovered her own interest in sport, she is trying to give back to GAME community and to pass on the positive feelings she experienced.

In the quote below, it is presented Elias' answer to the same question:

"l mostly focus with refugee kids because **I see myself** in the refugees and **being in that situation**. So, I wanna help out in different ways: […] tell them to **keep believing and keeping hoping** that's gonna have a good answer. […] I try my best to make a difference mostly with refugee kids […]." (Elias, Appendix III)

Further he goes on to state:

"Dance is still **helping me getting through different time/situation** even when I was in camp in difficult conditions." (Elias, Appendix III)

The two quotes show his personal experience which is translating and reflecting upon the children he works with. Thus, he identifies himself in the kids because he went through the kids' same process and experience. In addition, these quotes show the same discourse of "giving" and "gaining" presented above because he explained that dance has helped and still helps him go through difficult situation. Therefore, he is trying to give to the kids hope and to keep believing through dance.

In conclusion, both the playmakers drawn upon their personal story and experience as their motivation to be part of GAME. They see themselves in the kids they work with because they understand how the kids feel since they were in the same position as them and they are also aware of what the kids receive from them. While Elias went through the same process of the kids and through dance he wants to give to the kids hope, Emilie wants to pass on her joy derived from sport.

6.9 Playmakers' Perspective on the Kids

This sub-chapter will revolve around the perception of the kids by the coaches. In most of the interviews, I have noticed that when they are talking about the kids, one specifically referred to Arab culture whereas the other refer to cultures different from theirs. As a consequence, this will reflect the nodal point 'other' as being different from the Danish culture. How do the coaches understand the different cultures? Which are the meanings attributed by the coaches to it? How does their perspective influence the way they carry out their jobs?

> "Some of the **girls are not allowed to play with boys** in that area for different reasons and so, it is also creating a space for them where they can get to do sports because it should be for everybody but there are some really **complex structures** in place. I **grew up differently** I have **always played with boy** and I also played **football** for a couple of years as a child with only girls and that is the big problem you know when you talk about **equality** in sports." (Emilie, Appendix I)

Here the chain of equivalence points out that she acknowledges that the kids she works with have different cultural background than the one she grew up in. Therefore, she is aware that while working with the kids she should relate to a different set of social norms that are different from the one she is used to. For example, in some cultures girls are not allowed to play with boys or it is considered unsuitable for girls to play football since it is seen as a masculine sport. Moreover, she is also aware that separating boys and girls in sport creates an obstacle for equality in sport.

Elias when we were talking about life skills stated:

> "[…] they [playmakers- Ed.] have to teach them mostly **respect of each other** because I think it's really important in the House because we see **different culture**, **different background**, **different races**." (Elias, Appendix III)

As Emilie, Elias acknowledged that the kids have different cultural backgrounds and ethnicities thus, he tries to teach them the respect for each other and for other different cultures. In addition, he underlines the importance to teach the respect for "others."

To sum up, while Emilie seems to distance herself culturally from the kids she works with as they have different background from hers, Elias instead teaches them to respect each other and their differences. Hence, he acknowledges that the kids, having different backgrounds, need to understand the respect for "others."

6.10 The Struggle over the Fixation of the Meaning of Sport

In the previous sub-chapters, I identified the nodal points and the signs that fill out the meaning of them. The purpose of this sub-chapter is to show how the discourses define the signs in alternative and different ways (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2011). It is only by examining the floating signifiers that I can start to identify the struggle taking place over the fixation of the meaning of sport. For this reason, I consider sport as being the floating signifier, which is invested by different meanings, and GAME and formal club association as social actors that struggle in order to make their understanding of sport the prevailing one. According to Laclau and Mouffe's (in Jørgensen & Phillips, 2011) understanding of floating signifiers, they are signs that different discourses struggle to invest with different meanings in their own ways (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2011).

Additionally, by employing Laclau and Mouffe (in Jørgensen & Phillips, 2011) concepts of hegemony and antagonism, I consider GAME, as being a counter-hegemony, which tries to define a particular truth of what sport should look like and to broaden the idea of sport. On the other hand, I consider formal sport association as the hegemony which tries to impose a truth where sport is framed in a specific way.

In GAME's annual report (2019), it states:

> "Sports can blossom both with and without competition and **have other goals**, such as **community, well-being** and **life skills**. At GAME, 'winning' is not only defined as scoring more points. The overarching goal is to **make friends** and **grow as a person and a citizen**." (p. 16)

Here, the chain of equivalence is shaped by the signs have other goals, community, well-being, life skills, make friends and grow as person and a citizen. This means that GAME is trying to define a different truth about sport. It is trying to create a space where the competition aspect is left out. Since I consider GAME as a counter-hegemony, it is clear from the above-mentioned quote that GAME's philosophy collides with the idea of sport of the formal club associations.

In the same annual report (2019) Simon Prahm, CEO and co-founder of GAME, claims:

> "Sports are **fantastic** and **terrible** at the same time. As inclusive as sport can be, it can be equally **exclusive** if **competition, hierarchy** and **discrimination** are pushing participants out." (Simon Prahm, p.16)

Here the signs that build up the chain of equivalence are fantastic and terrible, exclusive, competition, hierarchy and discrimination. It is interesting to see which meanings are attributed to sport as being

competitive. Additionally, if we look at the above-mentioned quote through the lens of social identity, according to Jenkins (2014), Prahm is describing GAME through a criterion of difference.

> "To focus on the inclusiveness of sports, our activities are structured in such a way that we use sports as a tool **to gain friends**, **life skills** and become an **active part of a community**." (Simon Prahm, p.16)

The chain of equivalence is to gain friends, life skills, and become an active part of a community. According to Laclau and Mouffe (in Jørgensen & Phillips, 2011) discourse theory, sport also becomes a floating signifier which "belongs to the ongoing struggle between different discourses to fix the meaning of important signs" (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2011, p. 27).

7. Chapter: Conclusion

In this final chapter, I am going to elaborate on the final remarks of this thesis by showing the findings and by answering to my research question. Summing up, the main goal of this study was to unfold how the playmakers carry out and understand their job in GAME. As a result of the analysis conducted upon the data gathered, this section will summarize the main empirical findings I discovered.

First of all, the playmakers understand their role as someone who is educated by GAME and also as a person who has to educate the children they work with. For this reason, the kids see them as role model from whom they learn. Their role has a double identity, when they train the kids, they recognize themselves in the role of a teacher, whereas they also look at themselves as someone close to a friend when they establish a relationship with the kids. Furthermore, they all agree on not being professional and too hard, characteristics that symbolized formal club associations. Only one of the playmakers, Emilie, underlines the importance of the kids by letting them to do what they want and how they want to carry out the practice.

Another aspect of their job that was highlighted in the interviews is empowerment. Emilie understands empowerment as life skills to give to the children in order to be empowered. David describes it as an emotional object because he is influenced by his personal story. Therefore, they are aware that teaching sport is a way of empowering. By acknowledging this, they tend to create category in order to intervene in the kids' lives. In fact, they categorize the kids as "ghetto kids" (Elias, Appendix III). They are aware that they might encounter some obstacles when it comes to dealing with the kids. Therefore, they are trying to challenge the culture which is not in line with GAME's values. Since they understand that the kids can be problematic, they are aware that the children need a safe space where to play, where to be kids again. For this reason, they work for creating a safe space. While for one of the playmakers safe space is understood as a physical space, where the kids are safe from the dangers of living in the ghetto, the other recognized it to be emotional. On the other hand, the children and parents feel peaceful and happy because they have trust in the playmakers and their work.

It is also important to underline that since the playmakers are part of GAME, they have a unique understanding of sport which they share among them. By examining this according to Laclau and Mouffe's (in Jørgensen & Phillips, 2011) concept of representation, when a group is created a complete understanding of the society comes with it as it is established in contrast to other groups, in this case being the formal club associations. Therefore, the playmakers are the ones who replicate GAME's values, agenda and manifesto about inclusion and gender equality in doing their job. They

share and talk about GAME's goals because they are in line with them, since they do not fit in the environment of formal club associations. They draw upon GAME's work and as such they will carry out their job in accordance with it.

Another recurring topic that I found is the motivation of the playmakers. This help to shed light upon the fact that their choice and their job is based on their personal story. Each of the playmaker explained their motivation to be part of GAME drawn upon their personal and past stories. They see themselves in those kids and they are the ones that can really understand them as they have been though the same situation of the kids.

Lastly, by looking at the data through the lens of the discourse theory by Laclau and Mouffe, we can see the struggle between game and formal club association over the fixation of the meaning of sport. Game is trying to promote a reality through sport that they want to support and to normalized.

7.1 Future Research

This thesis focuses on GAME Denmark since it addresses the gaps in the literature about sport and empowerment in the Global North taking into account the perspectives of coaches that work in GAME. This research can be seen as a step forward for further research about empowerment and sport in Global North. Rather than focussing merely on GAME Denmark, it would have been interesting to investigate upon the playmakers' understanding in GAME around the world. This would have shed light upon how different discourses are perceived in different part of the world. Nevertheless, this thesis has tried to show a new insight on how the playmakers in GAME carry out and understand their job in a specific local context and through a "sport for all" ideals and street sports.

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