

Coaches' migration:

A qualitative analysis of recruitment, motivations and experiences

Abstract

This study examines sport coaches' perceptions about their experiences abroad. Coaches are part of a diverse new set of mobilities occurring in the sport labour market. However, few authors explored the individual cases of coaches' migration. Here we examine coaches' recruitment process, motivations to migrate, and their experiences abroad. Participants were five migrant coaches chosen through purposive sampling to achieve a pool of deep and rich data regarding the research topic. Data was collected using semi-structured interview questionnaires. For the exploration and analysis of the qualitative data, we used MAXQDA 11 software package. The results showed that all coaches migrated through an informal mechanism of recruitment which relied on their networks. Their discourse suggested they fit three types of migration referred in the literature: ambitionist, cosmopolitan and pioneer. Their experiences abroad were mainly related to their professional career and adaptation. All coaches reported that their experience was positive and they recommend that other coaches migrate as well. These results are important for the understanding of sport migration not least because coaches are at the core of the migration process of various stakeholders.

Keywords: Coaching; Migration; Globalization; Career; Decision-making; Network.

Sport coaches' perceptions of their experiences and competences abroad:

A qualitative analysis

Introduction

There are increasing numbers of sport migrants in the world which include athletes, referees, managers and coaching staff (Bale & Maguire, 1994; Maguire & Falcoux, 2011). Understanding the context of sport migration is important for the successful development of sport policies, the tailoring of training programs, and the implementation of strategies for successful adaptation. The past few decades have seen increasing research interest in sport migration that goes beyond the public discourse (media) and beyond demographic analyses of migration flows (Falcoux & Maguire, 2011; cf., Coelho & Tiesler, 2008). Efforts have focused on individual sport migrants, and particularly on how athletes are recruited (Elliott & Maguire, 2011; Agergaard & Botelho, 2011), what are their motivations to migrate (Maguire, 1996, 1999; Magee & Sugden, 2002) and what are their experiences as migrants (Stead & Maguire, 2000). While the role of the coach is crucial in the process of athletes' migration, few studies have focused their attention on coaches' individual perspectives on their own migration, (with the notable exception of Carter, 2011 which also provides an extensive conceptualisation on the topic). However this is an important aspect of sport migration as more highly qualified coaches migrate. The main focus of the present research is therefore to investigate the individual perceptions of highly-skilled coaches on their recruitment process, motivations to migrate and migration experience.

The recruitment process

In this study we define the recruitment process as a combination of activities that take place before migration and enable the migration to take place. It involves mechanisms used by the stakeholders, bureaucratic procedures and also family decision-making. The mechanisms used by the stakeholders may be informal or formal (Elliott & Maguire, 2011). Informal recruitment mechanisms are those which rely on individual contacts to gain information about possible recruits or possible recruitment places. For instance, coaches reported that it is more comfortable to recruit a player who has been indicated by a colleague coach or by a former player (Elliott & Maguire, 2011). The study involved Canadian players migrating to British professional ice hockey but the same was found in the migration of student-athletes to American Universities (Bale, 1991). The primary benefits of informal recruitment are that stakeholders believe that recommended recruits are more likely to succeed while avoiding agent costs (Elliott & Maguire, 2011; Agergaard & Botelho, 2011). In contrast, formal recruitment mechanisms are those which rely on agents and on the progression from sport academies. For instance, football agents have been licenced by the International Federation of Association Football (FIFA) since 1991. Besides player transfers, agents often work with football managers as well (Poli & Rossi, 2012). Their report states that most agents working with the five big leagues in Europe focus their efforts on marketing and endorsement deals and in providing legal counselling. Outside Europe however, the situation is different. In African football, young players often develop in sport academies which are owned or sponsored by (ex-colonial) European clubs before agents select them and organise their international transfer (Darby, 2007; cf., Domingos, 2008).

We focus on the bureaucratic procedures involved in the recruitment process which have mainly to do with gaining visa permits and the living conditions that can be offered. Carter (2004) describes how migration can lead to issues with citizenship and sovereignty. He gives the

example of Northern Ireland where migrant workers are in a complicated situation. For instance relevant governing bodies belong to either the UK or the Republic of Ireland and migrants need to gain permits from several organisations. The support offered by clubs to deal with the travel and work permits of migrant players or coaches is often an important condition for successful recruitment. In addition the living conditions facilitated by the club such as housing and transport are also an important factor. For instance, Carter (2011) reports on a coach migrating to Ireland from South Africa who mentioned that the familiarity with the environment and shared Celtic origins was an appealing factor. These bureaucratic aspects are relevant for the migrant worker but also for their families. For instance the possibility of employment for the partner and schooling for children are likely factors to play a role.

We also focus on the family decision-making process which is often the crucial element in the recruitment process. The decisions are about who should travel, for how long and to which country (eg., Stead & Maguire, 2000). Carter (2011) discusses the risks and costs of mobility for the close-kin and extended family. For instance, the decision to travel with the family depends on whether the countries of origin and destination offer safety. For instance, South African coaches moving alone tend to get emotionally instable with the decision of leaving a family in South Africa, a country with political and economic tumult. Carter also notes that migrants often come from humble origins and the decision to migrate is linked with an improvement of their social status. He found that South African coaches' decision to accept recruitment to Ireland, depend of the economic stability that Ireland could provide. Finally, language is also an important factor in the recruitment process. It is often part of the family decision-making but is also a condition that can be imposed by the recruiting party. Agergaard and Botelho (2011) found that Danish coaches were concerned with the adaptation of female athletes and therefore were keen to recruit those

who showed language skills. Klein (2011) found that language barriers could hamper players' communication with their coaches and their consequent sporting and cultural exclusion. Carter (2004) also found a prevalence of English-speaking sport professionals to Ireland with Irish clubs showing a preference to recruit from Canada in ice hockey, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa in rugby, South Africa and South Asia in cricket and American in basketball.

Motivations to migrate

Several authors have attempted to understand the motivations of players to migrate. In this effort, attempts have been made at defining a typology of migrant. In 1996, Maguire presented a preliminary typology for migrants based on several previous studies as well as his own on Canadian ice hockey migrants. He identified five non-exclusive types of migrants: pioneers; settlers; mercenaries; cosmopolitans and returnees, which we will briefly summarise. *Pioneers* promote and develop their sport abroad; *Settlers* remain on the host country; *Mercenaries* seek fast profits and lucrative deals; *Cosmopolitans* seek foreign multicultural experiences; *Returnees* return to their sports culture of origin (e.g., European sports). In 2002, Magee and Sugden developed a typology of the foreign professional football players in England, adding three new categories: ambitionists, exiles and expelled. *Ambitionists* are motivated to fulfil their dreams of a professional career or be recruited by a club with the highest possible sporting level; *Exiles* migrate voluntarily but cannot easily return due to sport-related, personal or political reasons in their country of origin; *Expelled* are forced to migrate through a combination of behavioural problems and media exposure. The typology of Maguire (1996) is based on studies of English-speaking athletes of various sports and the typology of Magee and Sugden (2002) is based on their study of athlete football migration into England. The typology has caused debate (cf, Magee

& Sugden, 2002; Maguire, 2004) and has even been rejected (Carter, 2011, chapter 4). Based on his interviews with coaches who migrated to Ireland, Carter argues that their mobility is motivated by the sport labour market more than by individual motivations. He mentions the need for coaches to have visibility in the sport global market by the production of international success through results. As it stands, any typology of individual motivations will need to be understood as a flexible and overlapping labelling with the purpose of understanding the primary motives for migration which might influence the experiences abroad.

Migration experience

In this study we define the migration experience as the overall evaluation of migration which is linked both with the recruitment process and the motivations to migrate. In the context of sport migration, most experiences relate with the sporting, cultural or personal aspects. For instance, reports of sporting experiences were found by Stead and Maguire (2000) in Scandinavian football athletes playing in England. They refer to their migration experiences as a rite de passage in their sport, or as a challenge that players have to go through in order to become more experienced in their sport. The same sporting experiences were found by Agergaard and Botelho (2011). The athletes who move to Denmark referred their passion for football and for gaining sport experience. They played down the importance of experiencing another country and its cultural context. In contrast, Maguire (1996) found that French Canadian ice hockey players valued their cultural experiences during migration. Even if those players were interested on their sporting careers they were mainly focussed in the cultural aspects that migration offered them and chose French-speaking destination countries in order to enhance this experience.

The coach and migration

As is visible from the above, the vast majority of research on sport migration has focussed on athletes and much less research attention has been given to coaches (again, Carter, 2011 stands as a notable exception). Examining coaches is relevant for two related reasons. First, coaches are largely responsible for the recruitment of athletes and other coaching staff (see Carter, 2011; Elliott & Maguire, 2011; Maguire & Falcoux, 2011), which means they influence directly the migration of other sport stakeholders. One study revealed that coaches were particularly attentive to the adjustment of potential migrant athletes to their new environment (Agergaard & Botelho, 2011). They preferred recruiting athletes who spoke the language because they thought it was advantageous for their cultural and sporting adaptation. Coaches are often the link between the athletes and the club managers who deal with their contracts and other bureaucracy. This shows that they are very aware of the challenges posed by migrating athletes. Second, coaches are often migrants themselves. As with other stakeholders coaches are recruited, have their motivations to migrate and their migration experiences. Carter (2011) shows that, in some respects, these processes are similar to other stakeholders. However he also points out that more research needs to focus on coaches, especially those outside the gaze of media. The best way to access this, is through interviews which, according to Carter (2011), 'capture the worlds in which people live and the ways in which they cope with challenges they face in transnational contexts' (p. 191). Therefore the purpose of this study is to examine the perceptions of migrant coaches along the three aspects of sport migration mentioned earlier: recruitment process, motivations to migrate and migration experience. In this exploratory study, we seek to capture the positive and negative aspects of their individual migration context. In sum, what their individual perceptions are of the

social, economic, cultural and personal factors affecting their professional careers in the context of migration.

Method

Participants

Participants were purposively selected (Lucas, 2012) for their migration experience and professional expertise. This purposive sampling process is intended to select a productive sample to fulfil the research question (Marshall, 1996) while avoiding redundant information. The criteria for selection was that participants were highly qualified, and had experience of migration. It was also important to have diversity in the participants selected so as to gain non-redundant information (see Falcous & Maguire, 2011). Therefore we used a network of contacts to gain access to coaches with varied characteristics and experiences. Specifically, we were interested in coaches who had migrated to consecutive countries or migrated again to the same country. We were interested in coaches serving different roles in the club. We were interested in migrations within or outside the continent of origin, and to countries with shared or different languages. We were also interested in coaches, who were younger and older, and with or without family. Finally we focussed on football and handball because of their different levels of popularity (see Falcous & Maguire, 2011). We invited 8 coaches and 5 were able to participate.

The 5 participants were male coaches with recent migration experience in 1 to 4 foreign countries where they coached either first league or national teams. On average they were 41 years old ($SD = 8$) and had 16 years ($SD = 9$) of coaching experience in Football ($n = 3$) or Handball ($n = 2$). All coaches were highly qualified. Four coaches had a Sport Science

qualification and all had coaching qualifications ranging from levels 1 to 4. On average they had 6 years ($SD = 3$) of migration experience in the following countries: Angola, Brazil, Burkina-Faso, United Kingdom, Italy, Israel, German, Guatemala, Mexico, Poland, Romania, and Slovenia. At the time of the interview, 2 coaches were in host countries that shared their native language (Portugal-Angola), 1 coach was in a host country with a similar language (Spain-Brazil), and 2 coaches were in host countries with different languages (Slovenia-Israel, and Denmark-Poland).

— Insert Table 1 about here —

Procedure

Written contact was made with the participants to explain the purpose of study. Confidentiality and privacy was guaranteed. Informed consent was obtained according to the code of ethics of the University of Lisbon.

Data Collection

This study involved the analyses of a semi-directed interview questionnaire responded. Three steps were taken to develop the questionnaire, to fulfil the requirements for construct and content validity. Firstly, a test version was developed based on a deductive analysis of literature and on several conceptual frameworks (Carter, 2011; Maguire & Falcous, 2011) to guarantee the construct validity. The instrument included questions which allowed examining migration factors present on previews studies (Carter, 2011; Maguire & Falcous, 2011) referring to relations and networks; family context; sporting and cultural adaptation; migrants characterization; sporting, country and cultural contexts. Second, a panel of three experts was consulted. The experts were academically qualified in Sport Science and Sociology and had

professional experience in coaching education. They evaluated if the initial questionnaire represented the principal aspects of coach migration (recruitment, motivations and experiences). Following their contribution some questions were reviewed. Third, the revised version of the questionnaire was then subjected to a pilot study. The pilot study was done with three coaches who had different foreign coaching experience, to test the clarity, intelligibility, accuracy and feasibility of the questionnaire. Based on the pilot study small amendments were added to the questionnaire.

The first part of the final questionnaire asked about coaches' perceptions of their experience abroad and the second part requested demographic information (e.g. age, level of education and coach qualification, gender, coaching experience, sport coached, and leagues). The final version resulted in twelve open-ended questions that allowed coaches to express their views freely about their experiences abroad. The data was collected between September and December 2013 using the *Google Docs* platform. A more capable online survey service was not required because the questionnaire encompassed mainly open-ended questions with long free text entries.

Data Analysis

The aim of this analytical approach is to explore the coaches' views and to understand and integrate their insider perspective of the migration phenomena. The answers to the open-ended questionnaires were gathered in a database and imported to *MAXQDA* for systematic analysis. The data was categorized using the coding facilities and variables available in this software which then allowed building subgroups of analyses and also querying the database. The dimensions were related to the main aspects referred by coaches.

— Insert Table 2 about here —

— Insert Table 3 about here —

Results

The recruitment process

Mechanisms

All coaches were recruited by informal mechanisms. They were either recommended by the head coaches who wanted to work with them, or they were contacted directly by the clubs or (con)federations (see table 3). For example, Coach 5, a Spanish head coach, in his intercontinental recruitment was contracted directly by the International Handball Federation to carry out a project which included his migration to Guatemala and Mexico for a period of two months. The same coach mentioned that in his last recruitment to Brazil he already knew the country and the people with whom he worked. Coach 2, a Slovene Handball fitness coach, and Coach 4, a Portuguese Football assistant coach also referred previous connections with the head coach who recruited them on their international and intercontinental posts (see table 2). Coach 1, a Portuguese Football fitness coach, was the only one who referred both formal and informal mechanisms of recruitment in his two migrations to Angola. In the first recruitment he had the mediation of a sports agent and in the second recruitment he was recruited directly by a Portuguese head coach to make part of his staff team. As the coach reported:

‘It happened in 2010 by a group of Portuguese agents. This work lasted three months in Angola. (...) in May 2012 I was invited by a Portuguese coach who was working in Angola to serve as a fitness coach (...).’ (Coach1)

Bureaucracy

Coaches stated that getting a visa permit to work in a foreign country was a concern. This was the case for the Portuguese Football assistant in Angola (Coach 4). The Spanish Handball coach in Brazil also needed club support dealing with his visa:

'It was very complicated and lengthy to get the visa. But fortunately everything is ok now with the help of the right people (...).' (Coach 5)

The Danish handball head coach said that all the clubs where he worked had helped him with bureaucracy and also provided him with material goods. He said that the clubs which hosted him in Italy, Germany and Poland always helped in 'all matters', and added that his wife and he 'always had very nice houses in all the countries' where he had worked.

Family decision-making

Four coaches decided to go abroad alone, and leave their families in their home countries (see table 2). Coach 3 travelled with his wife and stated that the support of the family was very important in coaches' decision-making. He added that both the coach and the family need to adapt to the host country which requires attention:

'(...) my wife has always been travelling with me. She is very supportive. This is very important if you want success. (...) To be a coach on a very high level means a lot of work. So your family has to be very supportive at all times. So sometimes you have to give your family a little extra time so they don't feel alone. Don't forget that they are also in a foreign country. So finding the balance can be difficult.' (Coach 3)

The coaches who traveled alone also showed that this decision, to migrate without the family, had an emotional impact on their adaptation abroad. Coach1 showed concern with the separation from his family members and possible consequences to work performance:

'My family remained in Portugal and this is my greatest difficulty (...) I left when she [his daughter] was 10 months old (...) it is difficult to be away from our family and try that this will not affect your work.' (Coach 1)

Motivations to migrate

The motivation that coaches referred most often was to make a professional career for themselves (Coaches 1, 3, 4), as well as to seek cultural challenges in foreign countries (Coach 2), and develop the sport in a country abroad (Coach 5). These three main motivations were linked with some of the migrant typology of Maguire (1996) and Magee and Sugden (2002).

Ambitionists

The Danish Handball coach said his primary motivation was to achieve the highest possible level in his professional career. He was also interested in the challenge of living in different countries:

'The challenge to work at the highest possible level, but also to see how things work in another country. But mostly the ambitions.' (Coach 3)

The Portuguese football coaches who migrated to Angola were primarily motivated to launch their professional career because they were previously unemployed. They wanted to have a full-time career in sport, with financial conditions that their native country could not offer them. However, they also pointed out cultural motives:

'First, I wanted to work; Second, I want to experience new challenges and new ways of thinking; Third, the financial aspect.' (Coach 4)

Cosmopolitan

Cultural motivations to migrate were expressed by the Slovenian Handball fitness coach. He used his professional activity to travel and get acquainted with other countries and also understand more facets of his sport. As the coach explained, he wanted to gain knowledge from both cultural and sport differences in foreign countries:

'The biggest motivation was curiosity. Learning new things and see how others do it. Along the way I started to understand the differences between people and countries, and in regards to handball I see a much bigger picture now'. (Coach 2)

Pioneer

The motivation to expand the sporting was referred by the Spanish Handball coach in their experiences in Central and South America. In particularly on his last experience in Brazil, a sense of self-determination appeared on coaches discourse suggesting that is the love for Handball and the specific economics conditions of the country motivate him to challenge a migration:

'The motivation to make the sporting [Handball] grow globally (...) the potential of this country [Brazil] witch I know I can contribute a lot (...) the project for the Olympics 2016'. (Coach 5)

Migration experience

When asked about their experiences of migration coaches focussed primarily on their sporting experiences. These have to do with the way they experienced their professional life abroad but also differences in the sporting culture between their native and host countries. Only one coach referred to experiences that were strictly to do with the cultural aspect of being abroad such as language and food.

Sporting experience

The Spanish handball coach showed that he was mainly focused on his work project during his migration experience. His commitment to handball and its development was the great challenge of his professional and personal life. Furthermore when asked about how he valued his migration experience, the coach reported the improvements that he had achieved in Brazilian handball:

‘Magnificent [experience] (...) I have travelled in one year to 19 states delivering sessions to classroom teachers and players, and I observed trainings and competitions. We held national training camps which allowed us to establish patterns of play for both players and coaches. Right now we have countries that are trying to copy our methodology, even European countries. I think we're on the right track.’ (Coach 5)

The Danish handball coach, on the other hand, experienced a considerable difference in the importance of results between his native and host countries. He said he needed to focus on adapting quickly to their host country to produce successful results early.

‘(...) you have to change your way of thinking and find a formula that fits everybody involved. (...) In my country Handball is not the most important thing in the world (...) but in many other countries where I have worked, it's a way of life and you have to deliver every time. Otherwise your time in the club will be very short. So you can say that it requires instant results.’ (Coach 3)

All coaches communicated that their migration experience depended on the sport culture in the destination country. The significance and conditions offered for different sports differed between countries because of the relative popularity of the sports and the social-economic conditions of the country. These were implicit in the statements of one of the Portuguese coaches in Angola who mentioned he feels ‘more appreciated in Angola than in Portugal’ (Coach 4). This may be because the Portuguese championship has a higher status than the Angolan championship, and therefore Portuguese coaches may be perceived as offering good quality by the Angolan football fans. The Slovenian handball coach also highlighted the popularity of the sport as determining his experiences. He said that in all his host countries ‘didn't have a tradition

in Handball' and the game was of 'poorer quality'. This is in spite of those countries being internationally recognized for having a 'stronger sporting culture' and social-economic context than his native country. The lack of popularity of the sport led to infrastructure difficulties:

'From a logistics point of view there is a problem of training in different halls and gyms. There is no real consistency of training (...) but a positive aspect is that there is lots of sport science and knowledge related to getting players faster, and stronger for longer.' (Coach 2)

Two coaches referred the difficulties experienced due to the poor social-economic conditions of the host country. The Spanish Handball coach and the Portuguese Football coach migrated to emergent economies, respectively Brazil and Angola, and spoke of the difficulties they experienced when dealing with unskilled sports administrators. For instance, they said that the sport management showed poor competences in 'communicating with the [coaching staff] professionals to set priorities' (Coach 5) and in 'developing organisational and administrative tasks' (Coach 1).

Cultural experience

The remaining four coaches spoke about the cultural experience more than the sporting experience. For instance, the Slovenian Handball coach declared that the migration experience 'is more about life than coaching'; to him, the sport 'comes in second place'. The Portuguese football coach in Angola also highlighted his cultural experience saying that 'Luanda is a stressful city' he felt 'sadness about the people's difficulties to feed themselves' and his 'difficulty with [Angolan] food' (Coach 1).

None of the coaches mentioned language as a concern. One of the Portuguese football migrants to Angola mentioned that communication was 'the simplest point' (Coach 1), because in Angola people speak 'the same language'. The remaining four coaches did not mention language at all. However, we can infer that the Spanish and Portuguese coaches used their

common native language (Coaches 4, 5) and that the others either used the language of the host country or a common language like English (Coaches 2, 3).

Overall evaluation

In spite of all the difficulties mentioned above, all coaches explicitly valued their overall experiences and some said they would repeat the experience. When asked, all coaches would advise others to work abroad for a period of time but some do include provisos in their recommendation (see table 4).

— Table 4 about here —

Discussion

All the coaches in this study had been recruited through their informal networks. This is an interesting result because it has parallels with the informal recruitment of other stakeholders such as athletes (Elliot & Maguire, 2011; Agergaard & Botelho, 2011) but stands in contrast with media reports about to use of agents with high-visibility coaches. In fact, the only coach who used an agent for recruitment did this on his first migration. We can speculate he used this opportunity to prepare his second informal recruitment. Coaches can build on their visibility through an initial investment in an agent, as well as through successful performances (Carter, 2011). Also noteworthy is the recruitment flow of our participants. Coaches followed established flows of sport migration (Poli & Besson, 2011) but travelled in the opposite direction: Europe to Africa and South America. Other coaches migrated only within Europe which offers facilitated mobility. This is an important aspect of recruitment because coaches indicated their visa permit as a major source or concern. Clubs often offered to help with this and other bureaucracies and logistics as is the case with athletes' recruitment (Agergaard & Botelho, 2011). In spite of this, most coaches migrated without their families. The family decision-making was an important

process which affected coaches' experience abroad. In accordance with Carter (2011) family was an active part of coaches' migration, both in the decision-making and in the emotional support given for the migration.

All the coaches' motivations to migrate could be seen categorised into three main types: Ambitionists, Cosmopolitans, and Pioneers. We agree with Maguire (2011) that these types are not rigid and that they are dependent of the individual experiences and the impact of countries. One Ambitionist handball coach aimed for the best European leagues which is similar to the Ambitionist football players reported by Magee and Sugden (2002). However, two football coaches reported an ambition to launch their professional career and saw the lower Angolan league as their opportunity. A similar trend was reported by Agergaard and Botelho (2011) who found that female players migrated to what league afforded them a professional football career. One Cosmopolitan handball coach who migrated within Europe was primarily motivated by the experience of different cultures and interested in adapting to different contexts. Finally one Pioneer handball coach showed great enthusiasm for his professional project which involved the dissemination of the sport in Brazil. In their study of football players, Magee and Sugden (2002) identified Ambitionist and Cosmopolitan but not Pioneers. This last type of coaches, however, may be crucial in achieving the diffusion of the sport from Europe which is mentioned by the authors. Although the debate over categorising the motivations of sport migrants is still ongoing (cf, Maguire, 1996; Magee & Sugden, 2002; Carter, 2011) it has served us in understanding the primary individual motivations that are expressed by our diverse sample. For instance, we found that individual factors like employment or past experience, and sport-related factors like popularity of the sport may impact on the motivations of coaches and have subsequent consequences on their experiences.

Coaches referred to their migration experiences primarily in terms of their sporting activity. The cultural impact of Handball and Football is different in different countries producing diversity not only on the coaches' recruitment and their motivations but also in their experiences. The three coaches who migrated to a different continent experienced the most obstacles in adapting to their sporting context although the host countries used their native language. Surprisingly, language did not appear more than once. The migration flow is likely to depend on language because of historical relations (Poli & Besson, 2011) and shared networks and therefore language may be an important factor in recruitment (cf., Klein, 2011). However the geographical proximity within European countries guarantees a higher level of cultural similarity which may facilitate the adaptation process despite language differences. Also, Carter (2004) identified the prevalence of English speaking migrants which can explain why this was not mentioned by the Slovenian and Danish coaches in the present study.

Overall, the coaches in the present study were positive about their migration. They said it was a valuable experience for them and that they would recommend it to other coaches as well. They would advise others to migrate if they feel they are ready because it would be a chance to develop professionally and personally. One coach pointed out that the sport only took a fraction of a 24-hour day, highlighting the importance of cultural adaptation.

Relating the present findings to previous research is complex because, as Carter (2011) pointed out, generalisations can only be reasonably formulated by the analyses of individual life experiences in their specific context. In this sense, we need to consider the individual coach much more seriously in the analysis of sports migration. Coaches are at the core of the sport migration of other stakeholders. Given their roles, coaches serve as a link between clubs, athletes and other coaching staff and largely determine recruitment. They are also crucial in the

adaptation of migrants to the host country. Therefore it would be relevant to examine the motivations and experiences of these stakeholders. These factors are especially interesting to examine in the majority of individuals who do not receive weekly media attention (cf., Falcous & Maguire, 2011, p. 227). On the other hand, studying coaches who forgo migration might allow a more comprehensive view on the pull and push factors of sport migration.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the coaches who participated in this exploratory study concurred that migration has benefited them at a professional and personal level. However, they also point out serious difficulties encountered in the host countries which pose as negative aspects of their experience. One prominent result was the focus that coaches placed on their professional lives which diminished the emphasis they placed on other issues such as family and language. We believe that future research should investigate this further either by using quantitative methods on larger samples, or by interviewing another sample of coaches questioning these topics specifically. Another interesting result was the use of networks in the recruitment process. They appeared as an important recruitment mechanism and therefore it would be useful to understand these networks in greater detail. It would be important, for instance, analysing to what extent networks are built on first-hand relationships or through a network of second- or third-hand relationships. Finally, given the pervasiveness of coaches' migration it would be interesting to examine if and how coaching education programmes prepare coaches for migration and whether those are effective in fostering their success.

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Table 1. Demographic characteristics of the coaches who participated in this study

	Age	Academic degree	Coaching degree	Present coaching role	Sport	Years of coaching experience	Years of foreign coaching experience	Country of birth	Country of current employment	Language of expression	Migration status
Coach 1	32	Sport	1	Fitness coach	Football	5	2	Portugal	Angola	Portuguese	Alone
Coach 2	33	Sport	4	Fitness coach	Handball	10	6	Slovenia	Israel	Slovenian	Alone
Coach 3	47	Marketing	3	Head coach	Handball	13	10	Denmark	Poland	Danish	With family
Coach 4	44	Sport	4	Assistant coach	Football	22	5	Portugal	Angola	Portuguese	Alone
Coach 5	50	Sport	4	Head coach	Handball	30	6	Spain	Brazil	Spanish	Alone

Note: Coaches 1, and 4, answered the questionnaire in Portuguese language, coach 5 answered in Spanish, coaches 2 and 3 answered in English language. Quotes in the text are free translations into English by the first and fourth authors.

Table 2. Summary of themes and examples from raw data extracts.

Themes	Selected quotes from participants
Recruitment process	
<i>Mechanisms</i>	<i>I was hired by the professional coordinator (...)(Coach 2)</i>
<i>Family</i>	<i>The greatest difficulty I experienced was related to my family (...)</i> (Coach 1)
<i>Bureaucracies</i>	<i>I have some difficulties with working visa permit</i> (Coach 4)
Motivations to migrate	
<i>Cosmopolitans</i>	<i>Biggest motivation was curiosity. Learning new things (...)</i> (Coach 2)
<i>Pioneers</i>	<i>The motivation to make Handball grow globally</i> (Coach 5)
<i>Ambitionists</i>	<i>The challenge to work on a high level (...)(Coach 3)</i> <i>First, I wanted to work (...)</i> (Coach 4)
Migration experiences	
<i>Sporting</i>	<i>I live for my work and for my project. This is my passion.</i> (Coach 5)
<i>Cultural</i>	<i>(...) This step is more about life than coaching (...)</i> (Coach 3)

Table 3. Summary of themes and sub-categories frequencies of answers (N = 5).

Themes		Number of participants frequency
Recruitment process		
<i>Mechanisms</i>	<i>Formal</i>	1
	<i>Informal</i>	4
<i>Family</i>	<i>Alone</i>	4
	<i>With family</i>	1
<i>Bureaucracy</i>		3
Motivations to migrate		
<i>Migrants categorization</i>	<i>Pioneers</i>	1
	<i>Ambitionists</i>	3
	<i>Cosmopolitans</i>	1
Migration experience		
<i>Sporting</i>		4
<i>Cultural</i>		1

Table 4. Summary of the coaches overall experiences

Coaches	Coaches overall migration experience valuation	Coaches overall migration experience suggestions
Coach 1	<i>Very positive experience that is why it is going to be repeated, at least, for 10 more months.</i>	<i>Yes, I recommend other coaches to have a sport migration experience!</i>
Coach 2	<i>Very good experience. Better and more profound understanding that human being is human being no matter the cultural differences. (...) the core values of different people in different countries it is always the truth and honest relationships.</i>	<i>Only if you get the feeling that you are ready for a step like this. (...) Tactical and technical aspects come in second place. (...) Handball sessions are 1.5 to 2 hours per day but the day has 24 hours!</i>
Coach 3	<i>If I should start all over again, then I would do the same.</i>	<i>Everybody should take the chance. You grow as a human being and you will experience things to remember for the rest of your life. Just don't forget yourself in the process.</i>
Coach 4	<i>Very Positive</i>	<i>Yes, I recommend it!</i>
Coach 5	<i>Magnificent. My first step here into Brazil was very good with the classification of Brazil for the Olympics Games of Beijing.</i>	<i>I think the life experiences as I have experienced them are very good (...) professionally and personally. Get there to see, observe and learn first where we're going. Shaping our best into the sporting and learning to live in our new country.</i>