



Migration,
Diasporas and
Citizenship

UNDERSTANDING LIFESTYLE MIGRATION

Theoretical Approaches to Migration
and the Quest for a Better Way of Life

Edited by Michaela Benson
and Nick Osbaldiston



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Understanding Lifestyle Migration

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and the Quest for a Better Way of Life**

Edited by

Michaela Benson

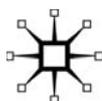
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*Michaela Benson,
Goldsmiths College*

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1

New Horizons in Lifestyle Migration Research: Theorising Movement, Settlement and the Search for a Better Way of Life

Michaela Benson and Nick Osbaldiston

In 2009, Benson and O'Reilly (2009a and b) noted a burgeoning field of research investigating what they labelled lifestyle migration, the migration of 'relatively affluent individuals, moving either part-time or full-time, permanently or temporarily, to places which, for various reasons, signify for the migrants something loosely defined as quality of life' (2009a: 621). This is a migration phenomenon distinct from other more-documented and researched forms of migration (such as labour migration and refugee movements) that has some similarities with elite travel and migration (see, e.g., Amit 2007; Birtchnell and Caletrio 2013), and has developed into a healthy field of scholarly enquiry, generating its own corpus of literature. As Knowles and Harper succinctly define it, '[These] are migrations where aesthetic qualities including quality of life are prioritized over economic factors like job advancement and income' (2009: 11). The centrality of such aesthetic qualities both to the decision to migrate and experiences of post-migration life results in explanations privileging the socio-cultural dimensions of the decision to migrate. As we demonstrate in this introduction, these explanations, developing out of the research traditions of sociology and social anthropology, are often underpinned by a strong commitment to social theory.

Understanding Lifestyle Migration builds on this commitment, to develop further conceptual and theoretical models for understanding the phenomenon. The intentions of the volume are twofold: contributions reflect on and question the theoretical underpinnings of current research in this area, while also developing further our understandings

of these social phenomena through the application of social theory. Through a discussion of both, we hope to produce opportunities for reflection not only on the movement itself, but how lifestyle migration inputs into contemporary debates in social theories not only of migration, but also consumption, identity and culture. Following this agenda, the volume follows the agenda for migration research laid out by van Hear, 'the potential of re-embedding conceptual approaches to migration in wider social science theory' (2010: 1536). In this respect, the contributions to the volume recognise the value of social science debates to understanding lifestyle migration, in particular, the dialectic between structure and agency.

The introduction sets up the volume by reviewing some of the key theoretical trends and conceptual underpinnings of lifestyle migration research. Through this review, it forecasts the development of this field thematically, theoretically and conceptually by building on the strengths of existing research and introduces the contributions to the volume. It also highlights the importance of this field of research and its possible contributions to understanding migration more generally. In particular, we stress the methodological and epistemological lessons to be learned (and shared) from lifestyle migration research, lessons that teach us to rethink who migrants are and how they live as well as questioning the fundamental notions of social life.

Lifestyle migration

On a kind of personal quest, life-style migrants seek places of refuge that they can call home and that they believe will resonate with idealized visions of self... the 'potential self.' Life-style migration concerns individuals and families who choose relocation as a way of redefining themselves in the reordering of work, family, and personal priorities as they seek a kind of personal moral reorientation to questions of the good. (Hoey 2005: 593)

Lifestyle migration is a complex and nuanced phenomenon, varying from one migrant to another, from one location to the next. It holds at its core social transformation and wider processes; it is at once an individualized pursuit and structurally reliant and it is a response to practical, moral and emotional imperatives. (O'Reilly and Benson 2009: 11)

The definition of lifestyle migration as a social phenomenon is intended to capture the movement and (re)settlement of relatively affluent and

privileged populations in search of a better way of life. Rather than a focus on production and the involuntary nature of many migrations, lifestyle migration appears to be driven by consumption and is optional and voluntary, privileging cultural motifs of destinations and mobilities. In part, this drive to migrate to particular places is framed by social and mediated constructions of particular destinations as offering an improved way of life (Jackiewicz and Craine 2010; Åkerlund 2012). Such constructions often replicate known cultural tropes that include the rural idyll and authenticity (Buller and Hoggart 1994; Osbaldiston 2011, 2012; Benson 2013a). Beyond this, however, and as the quotations that head up this introduction indicate, the better way of life sought often embeds existential and moral concerns, with the expectation that through migration these will be, in some way, resolved (Hoey 2005, 2006).

The study of lifestyle migration – as opposed to the related studies of counterurbanisation and amenity migration (cf. Moss 2006; Halfacree 2012) – has taken an interest in these latter dimensions of the decision to migrate, questioning how we can understand the quest for a better way of life, approaching the existential and moral concerns embedded in the decision to migrate through a notably sociological lens. The predominant conceptual and theoretical approaches to this field of study focus on the relationship between migrant subjectivities and the quest for a better way of life. This is a quest that does not end with the act of migration, but continues into post-migration life (Benson and O'Reilly 2009a; Knowles and Harper 2009; Benson 2011). Lifestyle migration research thus documents not only the act of migration – where, why and how – but also lived experiences of life following migration. Without a doubt, the ability to privilege lifestyle and realise it through migration is borne out of *relative* affluence and privilege, and is thus inseparable from the economic circumstances and global contexts of inequality in which it takes place.

To date, the field of lifestyle migration research may be characterised as vibrant, engaging questions about the intersections of migration, lifestyle and identity-transformation (O'Reilly 2000; Oliver 2008; Benson 2011). It reflects the relationship of social and economic transformation to these forms of migration (Benson and O'Reilly 2009a; Hoey 2014); presents migration as more than a one-off event bringing about a change of lifestyle, an ongoing process through which such migrants incrementally improve their quality of life (Benson and O'Reilly 2009a and b; Benson 2011); questions relationships and attachments to place (Osbaldiston 2011, 2012); and recognises the false dichotomy of structure

and agency, revealing how tensions between structure and agency play out in migration and post-migration lives (Oliver and O'Reilly 2010; Benson 2013b).

Conceptualising and theorising the quest for a better way of life

This field of research engages social theory at different registers, setting the context and explaining the conditions that nourish lifestyle migration as a social phenomenon, while also being put to work to explain particular articulations of the lifestyle migrant experience. We start here by questioning the theoretical underpinnings of the existing conceptual work on lifestyle migration.

Conceptualising lifestyle migration through social theory

Definitions of lifestyle migration, unsurprisingly, centre on the sociological concept of lifestyle, driven by empirical research that repeatedly stresses that migration equates to a search for a better way of life (Benson and O'Reilly 2009a). The better way of life sought by these migrants is presented as distinct and of its time, a migration trend notable precisely because it is reminiscent of Giddens's (1991) quest for ontological security, Beck's (1992) risk-avoidance strategies or Bauman's (2007, 2008) pursuit of happiness. In this rendering, migration represents a lifestyle choice that should be considered as a stage within the reflexive project of the self (Hoey 2005, 2006; Benson and O'Reilly 2009a). Embedding the phenomenon into this conceptual terrain rests upon the conditions set by late- or liquid modernity. In other words, the social and economic arrangement of everyday life has in recent times somehow shifted allowing and producing lifestyle migration – an assumption built into the design of several contemporary social theories; lifestyle migration becomes a late-/liquid modern phenomenon.

Challenges to this position can be found within social theory, but have not been fully explored within the field of lifestyle migration. We propose here to unsettle the relationship between lifestyle migration and such theories that focus on individual agency, freedom and choice, the central theme of Korpela's chapter in this volume. As Inglis (2014) so clearly articulates, theories of a late-/liquid-modern society are ahistorical, resting upon notions of presentism. This allows for a situation where the possible forebears of contemporary social phenomena are literally resigned to history.

... although personalized quests for utopia have persisted for centuries, the recent increase in this phenomenon implies it emerges partly as a result of the reflexive assessment of opportunities (whether life will be between here or there) that Giddens (1991) identified as only recently made possible, rather than a direct outcome of relative economic privilege. (O'Reilly and Benson 2009: 3)

Despite the recognition of the historical precedents for lifestyle migration – the Grand Tour and other forms of elite travel, rural escapism and colonialism – it has often been presented as an emergent migration trend made possible by recent social and economic transformation. In particular, lifestyle migration is characterised by the reflexivity unique to post-, late- or liquid modernity, an articulation of the project of the self. The analytical tools offered by Giddens, Bauman and Beck have been readily assumed and put to work within these understandings (see, e.g., Hoey 2005, 2006; Benson and O'Reilly 2009a; McIntyre 2009). The recognition of what Inglis (2014) refers to as 'presentism' within the social theory that underwrites these approaches to lifestyle migration, leads to the suggestion that the phenomenon, the motivations and intentions behind it, is distinct from migration trends of the past. This assertion of distinctiveness remains untested although presented as *fait accompli*.

Extending Inglis's (2014) critique of contemporary social theory into lifestyle migration research calls into question the extent to which such migration phenomena should be considered as unique to current social conditions and contexts. As Osbaldiston (this volume) argues, this is in part a question about the distinctiveness of reflexivity – the characteristic of lifestyle migration that links it to the conditions of alleged post-, late- or liquid modernity – to a particular sociological epoch and how the assumption of this relationship has shaped the study of lifestyle migration. It is also a question about the project of the self and whether a recounting of the critical history by which personhood has been invented (see, e.g., Rose 1998; Korpela this volume) might open up the scope to explore continuities through different articulations of the search for a better way of life. What seems to be clear however is that the significant lack of evidence to confirm lifestyle migration as a product of a contemporary sociological epoch calls assumptions made about its uniqueness into question.

Hoey's contribution to this volume presents one challenge to such renderings. As he argues, there is a need to understand current forms of lifestyle migration in the United States, not only as running counter to

previous internal migration flows, but also as a continuation of these. Tracing these historically – with trends including suburbanisation, and the shift back to urban living – reminds us that lifestyle is a longstanding motivation behind household relocation. This ‘fifth migration’ as Hoey labels it, is made further possible by conditions of flexibility – originally identified by Sennett (1998) as a characteristic of working life under new capitalism – whereby relocation results from calculations of collective and personal quality of life. This observation draws attention to the need to question the assumption that lifestyle migration is distinct from previous migration trends and instead recognise the possible continuities that may be present.

Seeking authenticity

As these continuities highlight, there is value to be gained from a more historically sensitive approach to lifestyle migration that examines how the motivations behind lifestyle migration are (historically) constructed or developed. Even if it is the case that these are located specifically within a particular shelf of the middle-class cabinet, how this has become part of the habitus of individuals within this group remains left underdeveloped. Although the considerable use of travel (as indicated earlier) and tourism literature in the past has led to a deeper appreciation of the ‘practices’ of lifestyle migration (O’Reilly 2012), we still require a potential interpretation of events that have led to the notion of escape or utopia as a social good to be obtained, not to mention also the conditions under which the realisation of these is a possibility.

The makings are already in place; much research on these phenomena, including that presented in the pages of this volume, is attentive to the historical dimensions of the quest for a better way of life. Such research traces the Thoreau-inspired wanderlust, the rural idyll with its Arcadian influences and the desire for escape from the city, recognising that these cultural tropes and imaginings have long histories that have been folded onto contemporary practices of the self. These imaginings are not only concerned with the physical characteristics of the destination; the desire for pristine environments often goes hand in hand with more cultural longings with lifestyle migrants seeking a sense of community. It therefore becomes clear that ‘escape’ or ‘utopia’ are themes that deserve further unpacking through both historical and cultural analysis. While Bauman has identified the quest for utopia as an individualised construct in today’s ‘liquid’ state, we must always be mindful of historical precedents that have served as cultural goods to be acquired today. History is replete with examples from as diverse as Thoreau’s Walden

experiment through to Georg Simmel's attempts to find solitude in the Alps (Jazbinsek 2003).

The notion of escapism or adventure is further undoubtedly related to the quest for a better life or self-authenticity as demonstrated in tourism theory (Cohen 1979; Urry 2011). Rather, like Lindholm and Zúquete (2010: 155) found in their consideration of utopian social movements, the process of finding a better way of life may well be a 'value in itself', demonstrating the potential to recognise lifestyle migration as an ongoing quest for a better way of life (Benson and O'Reilly 2009a; Benson 2011). Self-authentication, theorised by Vannini and Burgess (2009), reflects a constant interplay between internal values and individual action along with external conditions which, when in harmony, produce and affirm 'authenticity'.

What becomes clear is that when framed around the search for self-authenticity, the terms of the lifestyle migration quest do not appear to differ significantly from the project of the self.

...self-authenticity is a guiding focus in the escape from the city. Finding oneself and engaging with objective cultures and environments that match core values (constructed, of course) of an individual help to secure a sense of the self that is genuine and whole. (Osbaldiston 2012: 129)

However, what does differ and thus presents a challenge to predominant understandings of lifestyle migration is the history that introducing authenticity into the equation may bring to lifestyle migration research. In particular, the discussion of authenticity emerges from scholars presenting a critique of modernity. Osbaldiston (2010) draws on Simmel's (1903 [1997]) 'escape from the city' to explore lifestyle migration within Australia which is mostly driven to the coastline, while Benson (2011) highlights the similarities between lifestyle migration of Britons to rural France and the tourist's quest of authenticity as outlined in the seminal work of MacCannell (1976). Common to these conceptual understandings is the belief that alienation in modern life leads to the quest for authenticity, with a better way of life available elsewhere. Such a quest for the 'true self' has its origins in Romanticism and perhaps also Transcendentalism (Emerson 1836 [2009]; Thoreau 1965; see also Macnaghten and Urry 1998). In this respect, both accounts give an indication of the historical precedents for and processes at work in lifestyle migration that run counter to the predominant narratives about it being a product of (late-modern) reflexivity. It is from this position

that we can perhaps start to question further historical precedents and continuities in the quest for a better way of life.

Lifestyle (and) mobilities

Another direction of enquiry into lifestyle migration and related phenomenon proposes the mobilities paradigm as a way of understanding the relationships lifestyle, travel, leisure and migration. In these renderings, the focus shifts to exploring ongoing moves and multiple moorings that exist in an always-moving social environment, and subsequently how mobile subjects understand themselves and the processes through which mobilities are made/become meaningful (Cohen et al. 2013). As Vannini and Taggart (this volume) demonstrate, the temporal nature (at times) of lifestyle migration makes mobilities an interesting heuristic through which we can consider people's movement. Not only do migrants occasionally seek 'greener pastures' elsewhere, after their move they can also seek out other places while moored in one location, even if temporarily. However, it is important to recognise that various constraints may prevent this further mobility; as Vannini and Taggart demonstrate, with lives implanted in one location, some find it difficult to simply up and leave bound by social and economic structures that restrict their mobility.

Yet despite this, as Osbaldiston (this volume) argues, the development of the mobilities paradigm into a replacement for the social sciences, specifically sociology, ought to be treated with caution. This is particularly because of the narrowing or binding of the analytical gaze around things that move, and how this might obscure insights that can be acquired through the traditional sociological method (see Favell 2001; Osbaldiston this volume). Indeed, migration studies have repeatedly demonstrated the value of freezing places in time for the purposes of comparative analysis (Favell 2001). Within lifestyle migration research, freezing of subjective experience has also allowed for significant insight into the stubbornness of structures including borders that go beyond geographies (O'Reilly 2007; Benson 2011). Interestingly, the shifting of methodological furniture and epistemological assumptions found in the new mobilities paradigm and the application of these to lifestyle migration research may well miss some of the most important issues that impede or facilitate movement.

The conditions and contexts of lifestyle migration

The study of lifestyle migration has focused on the development of distinct lifestyle migrant subjectivities, bringing together phenomenologies

of movement and settlement. Such subjectivities are formed in and through the interplay of structure and agency; as one of us has argued elsewhere (Benson 2012), lifestyle migration represents the coming together of various contingencies – biographies, individual agency, historical and material conditions, internal and external constraints, as well as culturally significant imaginings – at a particular point in time (see also O'Reilly 2012). Such contingencies mediate the experience of lifestyle migration as we outline in this section.

The cultural significance of place

It is common to find that explanations of lifestyle migration focus on the attractions of particular destinations, the amenities, the weather, and the physical environment all playing a significant role (see, e.g., King, Warnes and Williams 2000; Casado-Díaz 2006). The social dimensions of these characterisations of place – the sense of community they offer, the possibilities for self-fulfilment – demonstrate how the idealisation of place, the construction of particular destinations as idylls, are mobilised within the quest for a better way of life. As we have both argued elsewhere (Benson 2011; Osbaldiston 2012), spaces of lifestyle migration are often presented as offering authenticity, gaining significance through subjective assessments based on the binary distinction between authenticity and inauthenticity. Destinations become repositories for culturally framed imaginings of a better way of life, their characteristics symbolic of these. This inevitably feeds into processes of 'place-construction' wherein local governance enables a particular style of authenticity to develop while inhibiting other forms (Osbaldiston 2012).

The individual lifestyle migrant often utilises place as a toolkit to capture authenticity in their accounts of lifestyle migration; post-migration experiences are mobilised in the affirmation of such authentic places. The British in rural France, for instance, draw on long-held imaginings of the countryside as offering peace and tranquillity, a slower pace of life, and close-knit community, presenting this in their explanations of the decision to migrate (Benson 2011). Similarly, Australian lifestyle migrants who shift to the coast demonstrate a desire to be close to the beach which represents, especially in that nation's context, a slowing down of life, a relaxing aesthetic (the sights and sounds of the ocean for instance) and a soothing balm to the ills of modernity (Osbaldiston 2012). Often these 'imaginings' appear as a type of 'collective nostalgia' (Davis 1979) constructed through Australian domestic tourism to the beach in the past, lived out in full through mostly retirement and semi-retirement in the present.

Rural and coastal living has long been presented as authentic, a contrast to the alleged superficiality of city living. However it is important momentarily to break from this to mention Griffiths and Maile's contribution to this volume, which presents a challenge to such representations, focussing on the emplacement of a better way of life onto a city space. Contra London – presented in familiar terms as an urban city space that needed to be escaped – Berlin in this instance is depicted by their respondents, somewhat ambivalently, as the rural, with a clear focus on open green spaces and the possibility for freedom of expression and experience, while also valued for the cultural amenities, amenities that are more characteristic of the urban than the rural. It becomes clear that imaginings and representations of Berlin reflected a desire for self-development and authenticity. The production of Berlin as a city environment that offers opportunities for self-discovery, individuality, freedom and independence is perhaps the product of its unique historical and social development. In some ways, these accounts are reminiscent of Korpela's work on Varanasi, an Indian city on the banks of Ganges popular with Westerners seeking self-authenticity (2010a). For these 'bohemian lifestyle migrants', the perceived authenticity of Indian culture – borne out of the postcolonial context – and the efforts of these Westerners to engage within it, are a source for their own existential experiments in claiming authenticity. Nevertheless, such accounts of finding authenticity in urban locations challenge the predominant accounts of rural environments as offering authenticity, and raise questions about the role of the materiality of environments on affective responses to destinations.

However, for the most part, lifestyle migration research emphasises the rural or the regional as the focal point for escape. Of course this cultural 'imagining' of places 'afar' and their subsequent attractiveness has had a history within both tourism and rural sociology. In the latter, questions over the development of the rural image plagued the discipline from the 1950s through till the late 1970s (Pahl 1964, 1965; Williams 1973; Newby 1977, 1986; Hillyard 2007). Tied to this reasoning, as Pahl (2005) later confesses, was a particular style of thought and theory that appeared attractive to researchers, namely critical or Marxist thought (see, e.g., Williams 1973). The imagination of the rural place and rendering of it as a site to be lauded for its appeal as slow and behind the times, led to the conclusion mostly from Pahl (1964: 9), that the middle classes were there to enjoy the 'meaningful community'. Their presence led to the destruction of 'whatever community was there' in the first instance as these urban refugees sought for the privileges of rural living without 'suffering

the deprivations' that kept rural communities tightly knit and whole (Pahl 1964: 9). Such thinking Pahl (2005: 636) later revisited considering that the 'imaginings' or 'communities-in-the-mind' produced on the ground action that led to people to establish meaningful connections with their 'personal communities'.

However, within lifestyle migration the power of the cultural imagination of place that middle classes carry with them have a real on-the-ground impact in areas of high environmental amenity through the process of gentrification. Such research is largely undertaken in the utilitarian discourses of amenity migration where rural imagining has been seen to lead, especially in North America, to a non-hostile take-over of places as diverse as the Hamptons through to the plains of Wyoming (Smith and Krannich 2000; Nelson 2001; Shumway and Otterstrom 2001). Even in Australia there have been studies examining the increased class differentiation that is appearing in once fairly homogenous townships, especially along the coastline (see Curry, Koczberski and Selwood 2001). In a recent housing project conducted on some of the more pristine areas of Australia's East Coast where lifestyle migrants have flocked to, costs associated with both ownership and rentals had risen dramatically through the rise of interest from the middle and upper classes (Osbaldiston and Picken 2013). While we can acknowledge that those migrating into areas like these may well develop strong links to community, we cannot ignore the structural conditions that follow. This may well seem a natural progression of a market that has just flowered but as Ehrenreich argues in her relatively polemical prose 'if a place is truly beautiful you cannot afford to be there' (2008, para. 4). Interestingly, as reported in Osbaldiston (2012: 121), at times older lifestyle migrants complain bitterly at the mind-set of newcomers who build inappropriate houses, and develop their property without local culture or sustainable practices in mind.

Remembering power in global lifestyle migration

In lifestyle migration, we cannot therefore be oblivious to the potential structural difficulties that wealthier migrants may well bring into a place unintentionally. How local governments react to the potential economic boosts these 'cashed up' urban escapees can bring often leads to real political and social power tussles on the ground (see Osbaldiston 2012: 117–123). However, commonly held imaginings of places and the power/resistance issues that ensue are not simply found within developed nations. The presence and persistence of global imaginings developed through histories of trade, tourism and culture have led to

structural issues within developing nations too. These situations, starkly pronounced in places like Panama (see Benson 2013b), reflect a broad potential dark-side to lifestyle migration wherein it is apparent that the affluent hold significant power on-the-ground.

As O'Reilly (this volume) reminds us, beyond agency remains the question of the role played by structure and in particular power and privilege within lifestyle migration. Indeed, as lifestyle migration flows extend to more and more destinations, with movements between the Global North and Global South more readily recognised, imaginative geographies – the recognition that representations of place should be understood as triangulations of power, knowledge and geography (Said 1977; see also Gregory 1994) – play out through the appropriation of spaces and landscapes for lifestyle migration. Without a doubt, this is a call to build on the discussion of migrant subjectivities that has been the focus of much of the research to date, to develop recognition of how these are made possible by the power relations that shape destinations near and far as imagined and experienced (by both migrants and local populations).

One way of examining this might be to adopt a postcolonial approach, exploring the postcolonial dimensions and dynamics of this privileged migration trend. While the global history of colonialism, and resulting power asymmetries are at times evoked in explaining the contemporary patterns of privilege that facilitate lifestyle migration, there is a need to extend these discussions into the recognition of the 'postcolonial continuities in relation to people, practices and imaginations' (Fechter and Walsh 2010: 1197) made manifest through lifestyle migration.

While in other forms of elite migration, particularly those with a known expatriate precedent, (post)colonial (dis)continuities are readily assumed (see, e.g., Fechter 2007 on Indonesia; Coles and Walsh 2010 on Dubai; Leonard 2010 on Hong Kong), this has rarely been the case in lifestyle migration research (for notable exceptions, see Knowles and Harper 2009; Korpela 2009a and b; Benson 2013b). Adopting a postcolonial lens to understand contemporary lifestyle migration trends allows for the recognition of what the continuities and discontinuities may be with the colonial past (Farrer 2010) in ways that have not yet been tested fully.

Two of the contributions to this volume, Benson and Korpela, present contexts that are explicitly postcolonial. As Benson highlights, postcoloniality is central to understanding the persistence of privilege among North Americans in Panama (see also Benson 2013b), while for Korpela,

the postcolonial setting lays the foundations for Westerners imaginings of India as offering a better way of life (see also Korpela 2009, 2010a and b). Such understandings of lifestyle migration demonstrates the continuities with the colonial within imaginings of the destination and the act of migration, while also revealing the traces of the colonial made manifest in life following migration. Recognising the postcolonial dimensions of lifestyle migration is just one way of recognising the role of power within this migration phenomenon. This is an important reminder of the need to remain wary of the power dynamics that shape privileged migrations and are wrought through them on different scales.

The critical re-examination of the conceptual framework for lifestyle migration thus opens up new possibilities. In particular, it allows us to question the conditions and contexts under which lifestyle migration takes place, examining the historical precedents and processes that have contributed to the construction of this social phenomenon. It also reveals that there is a need to locate migrant subjectivities within wider histories, particularly the structural inequalities that are implicit to the quest for a better way of life, and its appropriation in different destinations.

Intersections of power and privilege

This lack of emphasis on privilege and the power dynamics central to lifestyle migration, influences interpretations of migrant imaginings – in particular, as we have argued earlier, the neglect of the postcolonial from the analysis of the appropriation and construction of destinations as offering a better way of life – and also the analysis of everyday lives within the destination. What is now necessary is the recognition of privilege as a structural and systemic condition for lifestyle migration (see also Benson 2013b).

The relative privilege of lifestyle migrants is fractured along a range of possible axes, including class, ethnicity and race and manifests differently across the contexts of lifestyle migration. This is not only privilege as derived from a position of economic advantage, but also from the membership of particular nation-states and imbalances within the global power structure (Croucher 2009; Benson 2013b). In other words, the migrants carry with them through migration certain embodied resources that play a significant role in how they are received within the host community, drawing attention to ‘the tensions between different hierarchies and criteria of status and privilege as travellers move from one context to another’ (Amit 2007: 2).

The translation of status and privilege accumulated in one setting may not, however, be straightforward; as Ong (1999) recounts, despite high levels of cultural and economic capital, Chinese elites struggle to translate these into symbolic capital within the United States. What this indicates is that the significance of these resources within the destination results from how they map onto and are interpreted through the lens of the extant social structure. While it is often the case that on the basis of how embodied privilege is read, such lifestyle migrants are positioned within the local social hierarchy (see Benson this volume), it should not be taken for granted that these relatively privileged migrants will occupy a high status within the destination.

What this highlights is the extent to which the structures and constraints of life before migration may continue to influence life following migration; this might be in new and seemingly unprecedented ways, particularly in the case of entry into social settings whose structure is far removed from that previously experienced. To demonstrate one way in which such structures and constraints continue to operate following migration, it is pertinent to think through the persistence of classed habitus and reproduction. As several scholars of British lifestyle migration document, the class structures and practices that characterise life before migration are carried over into post-migration life even if these are transformed in the process (Oliver 2007; O'Reilly 2009; Oliver and O'Reilly 2010; Benson 2011). The discourse regularly cited by lifestyle migrants of a blank slate following migration acts as a façade for the continued processes of social distinction and stratification – perhaps somewhat re-oriented within the new social setting, and with greater choice over the terms of distinctiveness – in which these lifestyle migrants engage. What becomes clear is that from this perspective lifestyle migration is a process through which classed identities and practices are played out, reproduced and transformed. Classed privilege not only facilitates migration, it is a dynamic at work in post-migration life. It is timely for such understandings of privilege to be extended to beyond discussions of class and into the examination of the operations of relative privilege both as experienced by lifestyle migrants and their host communities. This will allow for discussions of lifestyle migration to extend into a consideration of the impacts on local populations, hierarchies and cultures.

Understanding privilege in these terms calls for the consideration of privilege as both structuring of and structured by the migrant experience. As Benson (2013b) has argued elsewhere, privilege should be the subject of deconstruction within resulting analyses. What this means

is that there is a need to recognise the work of privilege within migration and post-migration lives and to examine the conditions and social processes under which this is reproduced, contested and also, at times, resisted. This is a theme that Benson pursues further in her chapter for this volume, demonstrating through the comparison of the British in France and North Americans in Panama, the conditions under which migrants become aware (or not) of their privilege. It becomes clear that North Americans in Panama are more aware of their privilege than their counterparts in France; while at first they identify their feelings of unease with their relative privilege, attempting to displace this through their actions, over time and through experience they settle into their position of privilege in relation to the local population. As this demonstrates, privilege not only structures migration, it might also structure and be structured by experience within the destination.

The quest for a better life – from mere imagination to experience

Moving back to the individual quest for a better life that initially drives lifestyle migration, there remains unanswered questions about the relationship between imagination and experience that move beyond the mere assumption that everyday post-migration experience is shaped by imaginings and representations of place and a better way of life (see earlier). As we have both demonstrated elsewhere (see Benson 2011, 2012; Osbaldiston 2012), while such cultural dimensions are a feature of the migration decision and frame expectations of post-migration life, alone they are not sufficient to explain the migrant experience; they are merely one dimension of the various conditions and contexts that bring these about. As Halfacree (this volume) argues, representational approaches to understanding migration – for example the privileging of constructions of rurality in counterurbanisation research – may not be equipped to explain life following migration in all its complexities; ‘place exceeds any such socio-cultural framings’ (Halfacree this volume, add page number here; see also Halfacree and Rivera 2012). His manifesto to ‘jump up from the armchair’ invites us to reinsert landscape into the equation, to engage more phenomenological and affective understandings of place in how we interpret migrant subjectivities. These argue for recognition of the wider temporal and spatial processes through which migrant lives are structured and experienced, and that may bring about transformations in the self in ways that are perhaps overlooked in the focus on the representational.

Migrant subjectivities are therefore *in process*, neither fixed nor straightforwardly transformed through migration. Lifestyle migration is

an ongoing quest for a better way of life (Benson 2011), as thoroughly entangled with settlement as with movement (Knowles and Harper 2009). Therefore there is a need to consider the longitudinal development of migrant subjectivities (Halfacree and Boyle 1993), and how, through post-migration lives the lifestyle sought may be refined and transformed (Benson 2011). In this rendering, the journey en route to a better way of life is a process that is worth opening up for discussion.

However, the messy reality of experience may mean that expectations of a better way of life are not met. Rather than the unilinear march towards a better way of life, slow as this may be, Salazar's contribution to this volume demonstrates the rocky progress of achieving lifestyle migration. The two Belgian cases that he recounts demonstrate that this does not come with any guarantees of success. Instead, there are very real possibilities that the desire for a better way of life might meet with failure, or that progress along this route may well be slower and less predictable than originally hoped for.

Similar themes emerge in Vannini and Taggart's account of off-grid living. As they highlight, off-gridders may seek an alternative way of life escaping the technologies and conveniences of much contemporary living, but find themselves facing mundane complications that make them realise that this simpler way of life is quite simply not as simple as they had at first imagined. Despite the radical separation from technology and the sense of removal and escape that they experience, 'No island can afford to be fully separate from the rest of the world, and no human can afford to live like an island of that kind' (p. 205). While this is a reminder of the contradictions between imagination and experience (see also O'Reilly and Benson 2009) that characterise the post-migration lives of many lifestyle migrants, this ambivalence is further shaped by the specific motivations of off-gridders. Far from just being a comment on the difficulty of removing oneself from the technologies and amenities, this powerful message reminds us that even dreams about escaping the structures and technologies of contemporary living are framed precisely through these. The consequence is that life on the island does not fully live up to expectations.

Resisting questions of individualism and (re)structuring the individual

As the Vannini and Taggart piece demonstrates, while we may promote individual agency and privilege in our analyses of lifestyle migration, there are always examples of structural difficulties that limit some individuals from future potential choices. One cannot simply up and leave

once embedded financially (especially) in their new areas. However as it is often the case in lifestyle migration theory, the discourse of individualism espoused by lifestyle migrants is so powerful that the structures that frame choice and freedom are sidelined, with the result that the migrants' rhetoric of individualism is transformed into a point of analytical enquiry. For example, Bousiou (2008) presents the *Nomads of Mykonos* as adopting anti-structural orientations, while D'Andrea (2007) focuses on the pursuit of alternative, countercultural lifestyles by individuals who resemble Braidotti's (1994) nomads in their rejection of the fixed and structural. Such interpretations depict these migrants as free to move at will in search of their 'chosen vision of "the good life"' (Bauman 2008: 58) – be it 'good vibrations' in Varanasi (Korpela 2009a and b) or nomadic spirituality and psychic deterritorialisation through Techno and New Age (D'Andrea 2007) – in their quest for self-fulfilment.

In many ways, these migrations are presented as both evidence and product of the individualisation thesis (Beck 1992); no longer embedded in the traditional structures such as social class, these privileged individuals have the freedom to choose the trajectory of their lives. Globalisation provides further grist to the mill of lifestyle migration; those with the freedom and privilege to move, Bauman's (1998, 2000) 'tourists', are the beneficiaries of time-space compression.

Korpela (this volume) offers a new challenge to this type of use of individualism as articulated in the lifestyle migration of Westerners to Varanasi and Goa. As she demonstrates, a discourse of individuality that permeates the accounts of her respondents, their better way of life marked by the freedom to be who they want to be and live the lives that they want to lead. Drawing on Rose (1998), she claims a much longer history to individualism, stressing how a sense of the individual emerged out of the 'psy' sciences. Against this background, she argues that lifestyle migration should not be interpreted as opting out of society and its structure; rather it remains framed precisely by the ethos of choice within society.

It therefore becomes clear that lifestyle migrants may find themselves in the fortunate position where they are free of the constraints of structure in these ways, where they can choose at will where and how they want to live. The challenge for researchers is to distinguish between the discourse of individualism and the production of this discourse. As Savage (2000) and Skeggs (2004) demonstrate, individualisation may be understood in terms of the middle-class habitus that rejects class as a defining concept. It is therefore important to remain open to such claims of freedom and individuality as a product of middle-class imaginings

and moral systems, drawing attention, once again, not only to their relative affluence but also to the relative privilege of these migrants.

Conclusion

To conclude the volume, O'Reilly brings together what is not simply an overview of the works discussed earlier, but also develops what can be seen as an outline for how we might approach lifestyle migration in the future. While we have set out above a concern with locating issues of structure, agency, imagination, place, action and response within a historical framework, O'Reilly focuses heavily on the relationship of structure and agency to issues of imagination and the 'lived' experience of lifestyle migration. Hinged on her 'practice stories' approach to migration developed through Stones, Giddens and others (O'Reilly 2012), she produces a discussion which renders the phenomenon open to further theoretical debate and consideration.

Of importance to this, as others in this volume also consider, is the imagination. Following on from Bauman and others, O'Reilly (this volume) considers that structuration and practice orientated theory/methodology tends to 'overlook imagination' as a forebear for action. Imagination, she argues, resides in the individual but cannot be deduced as a product of purely psychological invention. Rather, imagination as a type of 'habitus' is produced through one's life stories, which we, at times, can witness in the lifestyles of those who have migrated (see Benson 2012; Korpela this volume). Such life stories are a composite of experience, internalised and external structures, and agency. Nevertheless, it is easy to forget the structural conditions that make lifestyle choices and the legitimisation of these possible (Benson this volume; Korpela this volume; Salazar this volume). As O'Reilly argues, power is an oft-neglected concept in lifestyle migration research, demonstrating the need for more sensitive historical analyses that reveal the structural hierarchies at play in and through lifestyle migration. Such hierarchies may complicate the picture somewhat, presenting challenges to the ability of lifestyle migrants to establish strong economic or social footholds in their new communities. We cannot, however, ignore the power and political discourse that surrounds migration into some nations such as Australia where skilled international migrants can acquire a lifestyle migration only because of their perceived economic benefit to the country. This sits in deep contrast to the current border protection policies enacted by the Australian government against unskilled asylum seekers. Other contemporary examples include recently reported cases of property-tied

residency (exchanging residency for property investments of a certain value) in Southern European countries. Certainly, we could easily begin to establish a case that lifestyle migration is one of the contemporary illustrations of the power embedded in global migration structures.

Theoretically there are several aspects of lifestyle migration that deserve further exploration. As O'Reilly states, after the publication of the original text (Benson and O'Reilly 2009b), the opening up and identification of these has grown immensely. Much of this is derived through the exceptional ethnographic work being undertaken across the world and which is illustrated in this volume. Although there are competing theoretical approaches to navigate, we consider this to be part of a process in which we can become more knowledgeable about internal and external mechanisms that have constructed contemporary lifestyle migration. Multiple entry points, theoretically, can also produce undoubtedly multiple points of analysis that will, if implemented on the ground, enable a broader appreciation of this movement. This volume therefore is another step forward, we hope, towards a better understanding of lifestyle migration.

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Part I

Constraints and Opportunities

2

Lifestyle of Freedom? Individualism and Lifestyle Migration

Mari Korpela

When I started to live here, I realised that it's best when I do what I want. I should do what I want. (Naima 31¹)

The current era is often called the age of individualism: individuality is expected, even demanded, of us. Within this discourse, lifestyle migrants seem to be ideal subjects. Lifestyle migration is often described as an individual's search for a better life abroad and lifestyle migrants often present themselves as active agents who have improved their lives by way of their own unmediated choice; they have taken their destiny into their own hands by escaping unsatisfactory circumstances and do not expect others (or societies) to act on their behalf. As the interview extract above suggests, the emphasis is on 'what I want'. Since the individualised self is a central figure in our times and lifestyle migration a common phenomenon, it is reasonable to look at lifestyle migration in the light of individualisation theories.

In sociology, individualisation is considered to be a characteristic of late modernity, with individuals having become the basic units of social reproduction. Scholars have applied certain sociological theories of individualisation to their empirical case studies of lifestyle migration, but they usually address the issue only briefly. In this chapter, I begin by discussing individualism and lifestyle migration using empirical examples. I review what others have said based on their empirical case studies and I use examples from my two ethnographic research projects among lifestyle migrants in India – one of them focused on Western lifestyle migrants in the city of Varanasi and the other on lifestyle migrant families in the state of Goa. I then move on to explain the empirical

realities theoretically, using first of all, the theoretical insights of the four sociologists who are considered the key scholars of individualism: Anthony Giddens, Zygmunt Bauman, Ulrich Beck and Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim. Although the sociological theories of individualisation and late (or reflexive/liquid) modernity explain lifestyle migration to some extent, I argue that defining lifestyle migration as a celebration of the individualisation of reflexive modernity is a rather uncritical – and obvious – analysis that does not lead very far. In this chapter, I go beyond such a view by using Nikolas Rose's analysis of individualisation and psychology in which he claims that individualisation is a much older and more multifaceted phenomenon than the scholars of reflexive modernity acknowledge. On the basis of Rose's analysis, I argue that internalising the individualised ethos of freedom does not mean escaping the prevalent order, even though individual lifestyle migrants tend to view their life in such terms, but rather the opposite, in that lifestyle migration means internalising the current ethos. Finally, I elaborate on the fact that focusing on individualism when analysing lifestyle migration easily leads to other important factors, such as class, gender and nationality, being ignored.

Two empirical case studies

The empirical data in this chapter comes from two ethnographic studies. The first study (Korpela 2009a) focused on the community of Western lifestyle migrants in the city of Varanasi in northern India and the fieldwork, lasting for 13 months, was conducted in two parts in 2002 and 2003. The material consists of interviews with lifestyle migrants sojourning in Varanasi and locals working with them, as well as a detailed field diary of my participant observation. While in Varanasi, I actively participated in the everyday activities of the lifestyle migrants there: I visited their homes, hung out at popular tea stalls and restaurants, and attended parties, dinner gatherings and classical Indian music concerts as well as other social occasions. Since finishing my fieldwork, I have visited Varanasi several times and am still in contact with many of my research subjects.

The second study focused on lifestyle migrant children and families in the state of Goa in western India. The material consists of interviews with children, young people and parents and with people working with Western children in Goa, as well as a detailed field diary of my participant observation. I also carried out drawing projects with the children and a survey – designed with the children – in a school for expatriates.

The fieldwork in Goa was conducted over ten months in three parts, in 2011, 2012 and 2013. While in Goa, I participated in the everyday lives of lifestyle migrants families there. I visited their homes and spent time with them at swimming pools, beaches and restaurants. I also conducted participant observation in a school for expatriates, daycare centres and children's hobby clubs. Although my fieldwork has now finished, I am still in regular contact with many of my research subjects.

In this chapter, I do not intend to report or analyse my empirical findings comprehensively but to use extracts from my data to illustrate some of my arguments about lifestyle migration and individualism. Using the two different case studies enables me to highlight different aspects of lifestyle migration in regard to the individualisation thesis.

Lifestyle migrants as free individuals making choices and finding themselves

Many studies illustrate that lifestyle migrants emphasise that they have made an active choice to improve their lives by moving abroad. For example, Michaela Benson argues in her study of British lifestyle migrants in rural France that lifestyle migrants typically emphasise their individual agency: through their own actions they have been able to transform their lives (Benson 2007: 100). Her informants claim that their agency was limited in their countries of origin, above all because of pressurised working environments, and that by moving away they have gained agency and control over their lives (Benson 2007: 27, 66, 88). Similarly, many elderly lifestyle migrants say that in their native countries they were assigned the role of a passive old person whereas in their new country of residence they can lead an active life (Benson 2007: 13–15; Haas 2012; O'Reilly 2000). Brian Hoey, who has studied Americans who choose lifestyle migration within the United States as a response to an unsatisfactory working life, also mentions the importance of gaining a sense of control over one's life when deciding to become a lifestyle migrant (Hoey 2005: 31).

Lifestyle migrants typically emphasise the fact that they are living as they want to; a dream is coming true. They are not trying to live up to someone else's expectations but are defining for themselves what they want in life. This is reflected also in their working life. Some lifestyle migrants do not work at all but enjoy a life of leisure. They view work as a constraint on their individual freedom. Those who need to work to support themselves often set up small business ventures in which, crucially, they are their own bosses: they themselves decide when and

how to work, which in turn helps them to define themselves as free individual agents (see Benson and O'Reilly 2009a and b). In addition, many of the lifestyle migrants I encountered in India were working in professions in which they could express their identities or values, for example professions related to art, yoga and new age therapies.

Defining oneself as different from others is also crucial for lifestyle migrants. Several case studies have illustrated how lifestyle migrants distinguish themselves from their fellow citizens who have stayed in their native countries (O'Reilly 2002: 183), from local people in their new destinations and from other lifestyle migrants (see Benson 2011; Korpela 2009a). Defining the self is, however, a question not only of mirroring the self against certain 'others' but of constructing a self 'on its own'.

Here [in India] you are always working on yourself and always working on your character. (Olga 48)

The lifestyle migrants I encountered in India talked a lot about themselves. Working on one's self is appreciated and even expected and there is a commonly shared view among them that there is a core self to be realised and that knowing one's true self does not come automatically – one's true self has to be actively searched for, developed and expressed. Benson and O'Reilly write that the lifestyle migrants' new lifestyle enables them to live in a way that is more 'true' to themselves (Benson and O'Reilly 2009a: 610). The constant self-reflection typical among my research subjects in India is, however, not necessarily common among all lifestyle migrants. According to O'Reilly, British lifestyle migrants in Spain typically do not talk about serious matters with each other but maintain a positive 'front' (O'Reilly 2000). Nevertheless, in both cases the emphasis is on being aware of the self and presenting it in a certain way.

If one aspect of the lifestyle migrants' search for the self is finding the core self, another is inventing a new self. O'Reilly has written about lifestyle migration providing a chance to begin afresh: an opportunity to redefine oneself (O'Reilly 2000: 81, 112). Some of my informants also talked about the freedom to become new, different selves in India.

Here you can invent yourself, you can create yourself. You come here, nobody knows you, you can put the best of your behaviour [forward], you put the best of your character. ... And nobody doubts what you are. You can create your own story in this country, you are free for this. (Olga 48)

Therefore, for many, lifestyle migration offers the possibility of a new beginning, an opportunity to create a new, happier, self and to leave old expectations and roles behind. Some of my research subjects even ended up adopting an Indian first name,² which is a good illustration of a change of identity. In this process, the past becomes insignificant. Anthony D'Andrea, who has written about global nomads (who share many characteristics with lifestyle migrants), states that many of them consider their past insignificant, not only because they have left unsatisfactory circumstances behind but also because the past was constructed under conditions imposed upon them, whereas in their present situation they emphasise their own agency (D'Andrea 2007: 188–189). This, in turn, means that individuals see themselves as responsible for their current life situation and define themselves as free to formulate their lives as they wish.

When talking about lifestyle choices, lifestyle migrants typically hold a very individualistic view. For example, my research subjects in India held the view that responsibility for having an interesting and meaningful life lies with each individual.

I think everybody can have this lifestyle if they want it. If you want it, you can do it. (Ivan 45)

It's a decision, if you want to take also the decision ... you can take this decision. If you don't want to, ... this is your decision. Don't say after [that] we always take holidays.... I think it's really jealousy because they feel sometimes bored in Europe and they cannot leave, they don't have the power to leave everything. (Julia 27)

In the comments above, lifestyle migration is presented as a free choice to which each individual is entitled, if s/he so wishes. The active self that makes choices is a fundamentally free self. The reference to new beginnings also manifests a discourse of freedom – the ethos is that one can simply leave and start a new life and become a new self, with people free to formulate their lives and selves on their own. The ethos of freedom is indeed central to the lives of lifestyle migrants, as the following section illustrates.

Ethos of freedom

I definitely feel freer here [in Goa]. [In Europe] I do not sense the freedom that I have here. (Angie 46)

There [in Europe] you are not free, they chain you. (Lino 48)

Many of the lifestyle migrants I met in India, especially in Goa, emphasised that there they have the freedom to do what they want and look how they want and that their societies of origin were restrictive and oppressive of their individual aims. Moving abroad – becoming a lifestyle migrant – is thus often defined as a step to freedom.

The discourse of freedom among lifestyle migrants in India is manifested in various ways, for example in the fact that many of them drive big, powerful motorcycles but very few wear helmets. They obviously know it can be dangerous but being concerned about safety does not fit with the discourse of freedom. In addition, lifestyle migrants' sometimes excessive use of alcohol (and drugs in the case of Goa) and their preference to work in the informal sector can be seen as manifestations of the ethos of freedom. Lifestyle migrants do not want their actions to be controlled by authorities, or by anyone for that matter.

In addition to such everyday practices, the ethos of freedom appears in the talk of my research subjects in India. They share a discourse in which the self is understood to be free to do almost anything. Lifestyle migrant parents' comments in regard to child rearing are particularly revealing. One of the mothers I interviewed in Goa even went so far as to claim that one can choose one's cultural traditions.

M: Are you teaching your children about the Israeli, English or Indian culture? Do you celebrate some holidays or...?

I: We are bad. We are bad because we choose it. We are global players, we don't want any identification of religion, nothing. We don't want any traditional mark. What the children will pick up from the environment, we are not gonna give to them. If they see it in the environment and if they like it, ok, what can I do, you know? But I won't give them a path, no way. This is 100% their own choice. We don't celebrate any holiday. (Ines 45)

The interview extract above indicates that at least some lifestyle migrant parents in Goa emphasise individual freedom to the extent that they claim to be free of any cultural shackles and want to raise their children accordingly. The ethos of individual freedom is visible also in the following extract:

I try to be conscious of seeing my children...as a product of themselves....If I am aware of them being a product of their own, I allow

them to do more things, which is not necessarily how I would do it.... Freedom basically to develop their own path as children.... A friend of mine who works a lot with children says sometimes that if you say too much yes as a child, you get depressed when you get older. Because you did not develop this feeling of what you want, you only develop this ability to do what you think somebody else wants you to do. And then at some point you lose touch with yourself. And then of course you will get depressed if you are not in touch with yourself. (Andre 42)

This father's comment constructs an image of a responsible self that is free to choose whatever it wants and that this is not only a possibility but the only option that brings happiness (or at least not depression). The emphasis is on the true core self that a child has to learn to realise without outsiders' guidance and on the self as being fundamentally free. Andre, and many other lifestyle migrants, thus seems to hold a very strong ethos of freedom; they see themselves (and their children) as independent agents pursuing their individual goals in free conditions.

Explaining individualism and lifestyle migration in the light of sociological theories: first attempt

When lifestyle migrants define themselves to be free to choose their lifestyle and to define their self, they embrace a discourse of individualism. Sociologists have widely analysed the individualisation in current societies. Anthony Giddens, Zygmunt Bauman, Ulrich Beck and Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim are often bundled together when referring to sociological theories on individualism. Bauman writes about individualised liquid modernity, Giddens about the reflexive self and Beck and Beck-Gernsheim about 'do-it-yourself' biographies in risk societies. Although these scholars have their own perspectives and emphases, they all discuss similar issues: our current societies are individualised, and the self has become responsible for defining oneself and the course of one's life. One must actively make choices about the directions one wants to pursue in life and individuals have internalised the responsibility to choose their own life courses and to narrate their individualised biographies. The self is not given to us but we are what we make of ourselves (Giddens 1991: 52, 75), we create our own identities (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2001: 23) and the self needs to be constantly remade (Bauman 2004: 98) and shown to others (Bauman 2004: 89). According to Bauman, the question 'How can I do it?' has turned into the question 'What can I do?' (Bauman 2000: 32). In other words, the individual can, and in fact

must, choose among a variety of options. Lifestyle migration can be seen as one such option and, in many ways, lifestyle migrants seem to be perfect empirical examples of what sociologists of individualism have been theorising about.

Beck and Beck-Gernsheim write that 'a life of your own' is a widespread desire in the West today (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2001: 22), and many scholars have defined lifestyle migration as a response to this desire. Huber and O'Reilly argue that the most important contributing factor to lifestyle migration is that individual freedom of choice has become so important: people feel that they have a right, and even a duty, to actively search for quality of life (Huber and O'Reilly 2004: 328). Benson and O'Reilly have described lifestyle migration as an individualised action (Benson and O'Reilly 2009a: 618). According to them, 'lifestyle choices are a response to the increased demands of individuals to behave reflexively' (Benson and O'Reilly 2009a: 617). Similarly, Anthony D'Andrea (2007) bases his arguments about countercultural expatriates (who could also be defined as lifestyle migrants) in Goa and Ibiza on the individualisation in our current societies.

One aspect of the current emphasis on individualism is that individuals take responsibility only for themselves. Bauman argues that individuals consequently often escape unsatisfactory situations: disengagement is characteristic of our time (Bauman 2001: 12). This is the ethos of lifestyle migration as well. Lifestyle migrants choose to leave an unsatisfactory life in their native countries and search for a better life abroad. O'Reilly uses this idea when she writes about the 'individualised hunt' in liquid modernity (Bauman 2007) referring to lifestyle migration as an active search for a better life; the aim is to improve one's personal life, not the conditions within wider society (O'Reilly 2012: 103). In fact, disengagement not only refers to lifestyle migrants leaving behind an unsatisfactory situation in their home societies; they may even leave behind their old selves, as I mentioned earlier.

Giddens (1991) emphasises that choosing one's lifestyle is an important aspect of the process of defining one's self-identity, and lifestyle migration is clearly such a lifestyle choice. Theories of individualism emphasise that we make choices all the time. Some choices are, however, more relevant than others: Giddens uses the term 'fateful moments' to refer to choices that have more far-reaching consequences than others, for example marriage, divorce, deciding one's course of study, resigning from a job and so on (Giddens 1991: 113). The act of becoming a lifestyle migrant is one such crucial – fateful – moment in the lifestyle migrants' self-narratives. Several studies have also pointed out that the

decision to migrate is often a response to a difficult – fateful – situation such as divorce or redundancy. Migration is then presented as a way of overcoming the trauma of the events and taking control of one's life (Benson and O'Reilly 2009a: 610).

Lifestyle migration is a process in which self-realisation plays a central role, but lifestyle migration does not make the potential self complete – it merely opens up a space for the development of the (happier) self as the constant self-reflection of my research subjects in India illustrates. A central theme in the theories of individualism is self-narratives. The self has become a project – one must actively construct one's biography and this is an eternal process (Giddens 1991: 14). Giddens (1991) writes about how the self is reflexively understood by the person in terms of her or his biography and Bauman (2000) talks about self-realisation projects and consumerism under liquid modernity. Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2001) use the terms 'elective biography', the 'reflexive biography' and the 'do-it-yourself' biography. The argument is that the self becomes realised in narratives constructed after one has actively made choices on a number of occasions. Giddens in particular has written about the aspect of self-narratives, and for him it is not only a question of narrating past events; the narrative includes the potential future self (Giddens 1991: 54). Benson and O'Reilly use this idea when they emphasise that lifestyle migration should be understood as part of an individual's lifestyle trajectory (Benson 2011: 35; Benson and O'Reilly 2009a: 615).

Lifestyle migration can indeed be understood as a process of defining oneself: it is a project of the reflexive self. The DIY biographies narrated by lifestyle migrants are biographies of the true self as well as success stories of their individual agency. Although many lifestyle migrants narrate their DIY biographies as success stories in which the self has made correct choices, my research subjects in India constantly reflect upon their 'true selves' and reflect on the choices they have made and will make. They thus construct narratives of active selves that are searching for improvement and trying to make the correct choices from a variety of options.

According to Giddens, self-narratives are always fragile because the biography an individual tells is only one among many potential stories (Giddens 1991: 55). The self-narrative is fragile also because one is aware of the fact that one could have chosen differently among a diversity of possibilities (Giddens 1991: 73). Bauman writes that one lives in constant insecurity, as one can never be sure whether the chosen identity is the best after all (Bauman 2004: 84–85). My research subjects in Varanasi seem to reflect on various options a lot, whereas the lifestyle

migrants in Goa seem to be convinced that they have made the correct choice, similar to what has been reported among lifestyle migrants in many other places. All in all, the emphasis is on individual choice.

However, although lifestyle migrants usually tell their self-narratives as success stories, O'Reilly (2000) also mentions the less successful ones, those lifestyle migrants who silently return home after the better life they were seeking for did not materialise. Lifestyle migration thus also shows the flipside of individualism which Beck and Beck-Gernsheim in particular refer to when emphasising the risk factor involved in self-narratives: the path an individual chooses does not necessarily succeed. 'The do-it-yourself biography is always a "risk-biography"' because it can easily become a 'breakdown biography' (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2001: 3).

Lifestyle migrants clearly tell their self-narratives in individualistic terms – they present themselves as active agents who have chosen their own life course. The ethos of lifestyle migration is that individuals make active choices and construct their particular lifestyles and distinctive selves. Reflecting on the sociological theories of individualisation, it is easy to define lifestyle migration as a manifestation of individualism. Empirical analyses of lifestyle migration that follow the argument that individualisation is typical of our era are, however, often somewhat unsatisfactory. First of all, such analyses do not lead very far. They tend to stop at characterising lifestyle migration as a manifestation of individualism. This makes sense, but one is left with the question 'so what?' Secondly, such analyses tend to take individualism for granted without investigating it in detail. A crucial question that remains is where the desire to be recognised as an individual comes from and how this reflects on lifestyle migration in ways other than merely choosing the particular lifestyle and emphasising one's active self. In particular, the sociological theories of individualism do not explain well the ethos of freedom that is so central among lifestyle migrants.

Explaining individualism, lifestyle migration and the ethos of freedom: second attempt

Nikolas Rose offers another angle on the theorising of individualism. He argues that our aim and hope is to have the freedom to 'maximise our life-styles and fulfill ourselves as persons' (Rose 1996: 193) but he challenges the assumption that individualism is a product of reflexive modernity. Rose argues that the roots of individualism go much deeper than is usually acknowledged. Social scientists were writing about

modernisation and individualisation back in the nineteenth century (Rose 1996: 5) and individualisation was promoted in the early days of psychology. Although the key sociologists of individualism acknowledge that it has its roots in the past, in their view the individualism of reflexive modernity is significantly different from its earlier forms. Rose, however, emphasises continuities.

In addition, Rose argues that developments in psychology have contributed to the ethos he labels as the responsabilisation of the self: it has become an obligation to become an enterprising individual (Rose 1996: 154). Consequently, subjects have internalised (in the Foucauldian sense) their personal responsibility for their happiness and success but, at the same time, need many authorities, especially therapists, to assist them in this project (Rose 1996: 197). Rose aptly argues that the existence of the self-projects for which we should take responsibility actually 'suggests that selfhood is more an aim or a norm than a natural given' (Rose 1996: 4). The individual self is not simply given to us but is a project that needs to be actively realised in our ongoing choices and activities. Rose thus argues that our current emphasis on the individualised self has its roots in the development of psychological theories and therapies. There are, however, other crucial factors, namely developments in our liberal democracies and capitalist economies.

Rose claims that the history of psychology in liberal societies is connected to the history of liberal government, with developments in psychology going hand in hand with developments in politics and society (Rose 1996: 12). Active, responsible individuals who make choices are central in the current political discourse and political arena (Rose 1996: 164). According to Rose, the current neoliberal ethos is a powerful contributor but 'is only one way to articulate this more fundamental transformation in mentalities' (Rose 1996: 164). In addition, Rose emphasises that the current individualisation is fundamentally different from the ethos of the 1960s when 'cults of the self promised a liberation of the individual from all mundane social constraints' (Rose 1996: 164) – 'turn on, tune in, and drop out' (Rose 1996: 193). Today's freedom is about realising 'our potential and our dreams through reshaping the style in which we conduct our secular existence' (Rose 1996: 164). In other words, what may at first look like dropping out – escaping – may in fact mean dropping in because one is internalising the prevalent ethos of free and active individuals, who are actually crucial for the functioning of the current society. Rose argues that we are governed by the choices we make, yet that space of freedom is regulated. We are not completely free after all (Rose 1996: 166); rather, our 'agency is produced

in the course of practices under a whole variety of... constraints' (Rose 1996: 189).

According to Rose, then, the psychologised search for the self can be seen as an integral part of the development of capitalism and of liberal democracies. Lifestyle migration can be seen as a 'natural' consequence of these developments: it combines the individualised search for the self with economic rationalism (when moving to cheaper countries) and, at the same time, serves the interests of the prevalent political and economic order. Lifestyle migrants are ideal subjects because they leave instead of criticising and challenging the prevalent order. Instead of making demands on their native societies, they take action by moving abroad. Yet, following Rose, lifestyle migration as an individualistic project is not simply a product of reflexive modernity but has a much more complicated basis that is yet to be properly investigated.

Lifestyle migrants can thus be seen, in Rose's terms, as enterprising individuals who have internalised responsibility for their personal development and success. Lifestyle migrants often criticise their home societies for repressing their individual freedom (Korpela 2009a), yet they behave exactly as the prevalent ethos in those societies demands when they act out their responsibility for their own happiness by moving abroad. They do not aim to challenge the prevalent ethos but, instead, even teach it to their children. Rose's argument that individualisation means that instead of escaping one is actually tightly dropping into the prevalent system is interesting in terms of lifestyle migration. Lifestyle migrants may celebrate the ethos of an escape to extreme freedom but they actually reproduce the prevalent order by acting as the current ethos and the political and economic systems demand. In other words, they have internalised the ethos of individual responsibility and freedom in the Foucauldian sense.

Limits of freedom

Lifestyle migrants sometimes present themselves in almost heroic terms, as the following quotation from a lifestyle migrant in Goa illustrates:

This is a very difficult lifestyle. There are many people who come here but do not appear the next season anymore. Just think how many have come with the intention of settling here but then they run away. Not everyone is able to live this lifestyle, it is so hard. (Lino 48)

Lino is referring to the fact that many Westerners arrive in Goa very excitedly, planning to settle there. They long for a relaxed life in the

sun, but for some the reality is very different. Their business ventures do not work out, they run into obstacles within the local society or they find it too difficult to regularly re-apply for visas. Lino's comment also illustrates how the lifestyle migrants in India (and elsewhere) often narrate themselves in terms of individual success; they themselves have succeeded, whereas many others have not.

Lino's comment leads us to consider who is able to be a lifestyle migrant and who is not. My research subjects themselves would say that those who succeed are the ones who have the courage and willpower to lead an unconventional lifestyle. However, it is not so simple: some succeed while others do not, and failures are not necessarily the fault of individuals themselves.

This issue can be considered in terms of what Beck and other sociologists call the risk society. Individuals are liberated from various social and familial constraints but this freedom is accompanied by greater individual risk (see Beck 1999; Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2001). Beck and Beck-Gernsheim in particular have emphasised that when an individual is responsible for her/his own lifecourse, s/he is also forced to take responsibility for personal misfortune and unanticipated events. Problems and risks that have their roots in societal matters become individualised: when things go wrong, the self is blamed (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2001: 24; see also Bauman 2000: 8). Bauman writes that 'a person has only himself or herself to thank or to blame' for their life being good or bad (Bauman 2001: 9; 2005: 19) and both Bauman and Beck argue that individuals are left on their own to deal with the various insecurities, hazards and ambivalences that current societies and the global order produce (Bauman 2000; Beck 1999).

Beck writes that individuals need to make decisions without the knowledge of their possible consequences (Beck 1999: 75), and failure is considered the responsibility of the individual although structural risks have, in fact, been shifted onto their shoulders (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2001: 24). People (claim to) make choices as individual agents but their choices can lead them into vulnerable situations and they often involve risks that are not necessarily anticipated when the initial choices are made (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2001). Lifestyle migrants are indeed in a vulnerable situation; they are free to deal with the risks of their lifestyle choice as best they can, and some succeed better than others. The existence of various risks illustrates well the dilemma that Bauman has pointed out: increased freedom means decreased security, and individuals constantly struggle with this equation (Bauman 2005: 35–36). Individualism means freedom, but being on one's own is also risky.

Life in the new location may not turn out to be as good as expected. Moreover, having left their countries of origin and the systems there, many lifestyle migrants fall outside of social security systems, public health care systems³ and so on. Initially, individuals may think that they do not need the systems but circumstances may change and they may end up in difficult situations (see Korpela 2013). Individuals are not completely free agents and freedom is not necessarily a path to success: lifestyle migration is thus a phenomenon that is characteristic of our time, not only in terms of individualism but also in terms of risk society and individual vulnerability. In other words, although lifestyle migrants embrace the myth of freedom, the freedom may eventually be a dead end.

Moreover, although lifestyle migrants celebrate their individual freedom and free agency, sociologists have pointed out that, in the current era, instead of being a choice individualisation is a fate (Bauman 2000: 34). Giddens writes that 'we have no choice but to choose' (Giddens 1991: 81), and Beck and Beck-Gernsheim write that 'active contributions are demanded from all individuals' (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2001: 4), and 'one has to become active in order to survive' (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2001: 23) – there is no option to opt out. This leads to the same argument that Rose posed: individuals must internalise the prevalent individualistic discourse. Celebrating individualism does not mean dropping out; it means dropping in.

It is also too simplistic to claim that the current era is merely a celebration of individualism. There is, in fact, a fine line between individualism and hedonism. Although the ethos in contemporary Western societies is that everyone is responsible for their own life and happiness, lifestyle migrants who follow this ethos are often criticised. The attitudes of outsiders in lifestyle migrants' countries of origin are not always very positive (see Gustafson 2002: 908; O'Reilly 2000). When I have talked about my research on lifestyle migrants in various situations – as a teacher, a researcher and in personal interactions – it has become evident that the phenomenon provokes strong reactions and many negative feelings; many people clearly disapprove the life of leisure they believe lifestyle migrants lead. Also, the media sometimes presents the phenomenon in worrying terms in Finland – and, I have been told, in France and Israel (at least in regard to lifestyle migration to India). Therefore, although individuals are responsible for their own life course, there seems to be a limit to how far they can go without being morally judged as egoistic hedonists. Such criticism leads to the question of what kind of individualism is appreciated and what kind is not. We may live

in the era of individualism, but the individualism takes place within certain frames even though lifestyle migrants themselves do not necessarily care about conforming to them. Below, an interviewee responds to my question about what to say to people who criticise his lifestyle as a lifestyle migrant.

I think, it is just to stick to what you want to do.... let them rot. If you are cool and they are not physically stopping you doing it, fuck'em.
(Matt 40)

The comment above illustrates the ethos of freedom: Matt is constructing a narrative of a free individual self who is making correct choices and should not care about others' opinions. Nevertheless, the existing critical views indicate that even in the era of reflexive modernity there are limits to individualism. In other words, the ethos of freedom is in fact a myth of freedom.

An interesting aspect in regard to lifestyle migration and individualism is that the theories of individualisation and reflexive modernity locate individualisation in 'Western' societies, yet many lifestyle migrants claim to have found 'true freedom' only when away from their 'Western' home societies. Therefore, although the theories of individualisation deal with individualism within Western societies, lifestyle migration shows that certain individuals feel that the full potential of their individual freedom can be gained only by leaving those societies and that the freedom available in the Western home societies is not 'real' freedom at all. One can obviously question whether 'real' freedom can ever be reached, but in the lifestyle migrants' discourse their life abroad is often described in such terms. I argue that the freedom is available to them elsewhere because they are outsiders there. They live in a somewhat liminal outsider space and are not tied by local social norms.

Individualism is not enough

The goal of lifestyle migration is happiness and individual satisfaction. Lifestyle migrants emphasise the fact that they have taken their destiny into their own hands, and in this light it is easy to see them as active agents, as ideal individualised subjects. In fact, they can be seen as having taken individualisation to an extreme; by moving abroad, they have liberated (or at least attempted to liberate) themselves from constraints (social, economical or administrative) in their countries of origin, and as outsiders in the receiving societies they are free to live as they want.

Individuals cannot, however, choose whatever they wish; only certain choices are available to them. The reflections on individuality can easily make it sound as if individuals were independent actors pursuing the good in life as best they can. One must not, however, forget that individuals act within the existing structures. They are not free-floating agents, but make their choices within conditions they have not been able to choose. In other words, although lifestyle migrants emphasise their individual agency, their actions are greatly influenced by external factors and structural conditions (Benson 2011: 36; O'Reilly 2000: 23; O'Reilly and Benson 2009b). One's freedom is always limited, and individuals are differently positioned within the structural and cultural conditions. Bauman writes – borrowing from Marx – that 'people make their lives but not under conditions of their choice' (Bauman 2001: 7; see also Rose 1996: 17), which brings us to the key distinction in social theory: whether individuals have free agency or whether, or to what extent, structures determine what happens or can happen (see Bakewell 2010; O'Reilly 2012). This is where theories of individualism run into trouble, and in regard to lifestyle migration as well.

One can go so far as to question how voluntary the initial choice of becoming a lifestyle migrant really is. Lifestyle migrants often say that they wanted to escape a lifestyle that in their view was dull, meaningless and suppressive of their individual needs. Yet, one can also argue that their options in their countries of origin may have been rather limited. Therefore, their choice to move abroad may in fact have been the best one in the given circumstances and, to follow Rose (1996), instead of dropping out, they actually act in accordance with the prevalent ethos. Their departure may even benefit their native societies since they do not challenge the system there; they simply leave without making demands or causing a disturbance.

At the same time, the choice of becoming a lifestyle migrant is not a realistic option for everyone (see Geoffroy 2007: 287). One should not ignore the significance of class: lifestyle migrants are privileged, typically middle-class, agents. Put simply, one needs certain financial capital (at the bare minimum money for flights, rent and food) and lifestyle migrants who earn their living abroad need skills that enable them to earn money. The sociologists of individualism have been blamed for ignoring class (e.g., Atkinson 2008) and the case of lifestyle migration proves this criticism correct: not everyone is in a position to move abroad to search for a more relaxed life. Lifestyle migration is often characterised as a phenomenon whereby the middle classes exercise the individual agency and freedom to move abroad that was previously the

preserve of the elites (see O'Reilly 2007: 285). This does not, however, mean that anyone can choose such a lifestyle. Moreover, the middle-class factor has not been investigated at a deeper level: who, among all members of the middle classes is willing and able to become a lifestyle migrant, who is not and why?

In addition to having ignored class, individualisation theories have been criticised (Dawson 2012) for having ignored the significance of gender and of structural constraints that limit individual agency. They have also been criticised for their lack of empirical engagement and their emphasis on narrow qualitative research, as a consequence of which findings have sometimes been generalised even though they apply only to certain sections of populations. Reflecting on lifestyle migration in the light of the individualisation theories shows both their usefulness and their limitations. The myth of individual freedom is noteworthy among lifestyle migrants, yet it is obvious that lifestyle migration is not a realistic option for everyone and one cannot simply choose a new self or culture. Equally, scholars have so far not paid much attention to gender. A comprehensive analysis of comparative quantitative data is yet to be done and structural analyses have not been very insightful.

Individuals – including lifestyle migrants – act within the existing national order of things (Malkki 1995). One's nationality is indeed very significant in lifestyle migration. Individuals are not completely free to move; they need the correct passports, visas, residence permits and so on. The choice of becoming a lifestyle migrant is available to certain nationalities (those of affluent industrialised nations) but by no means to all. The sociological theories of individualism or Rose's psychological insights do not say much about nationality at all, yet one's nationality greatly affects which choices are available and which are not.

In addition, even if one has been in a position to make the individual choice of becoming a lifestyle migrant, one is not a completely free-floating agent afterwards. Structural constraints exist both before and after becoming a lifestyle migrant. Structures may prevent an individual from taking certain actions, but they may, at times, be useful for individuals. Moving to another country does not necessarily mean that one is integrated into the official structures there. In fact, many lifestyle migrants are not officially registered as residents in their destinations. The issue of residence permits and official registration illustrates well how individuals may run into trouble when on their own, outside of official structures. O'Reilly has written that individuals may end up in a limbo state (see O'Reilly 2007: 286) when they are not officially registered in the locations where they reside but are not registered in

their native countries anymore either. When one is not an official resident, one does not have certain rights and recognition. This can be problematic in terms of health care, property issues, legal issues, business ventures and so on. Consequently, being a free agent has its costs, some of which may not be anticipated by individuals when making the initial choice to become lifestyle migrants.

Scholars of lifestyle migration should not become blinded by the ethos of individualism. Theories of individualisation explain some aspects of the phenomenon but much remains unexplained. Lifestyle migration is not only an individualistic project and should not be reduced to such. Lifestyle migrants often present themselves as free individual actors but the scholars referred to in this chapter argue that individuals have no other choice but to choose, reflect on and narrate the story of themselves. Moreover, individuals make their choices in particular structural circumstances, where certain options are available to certain individuals and others are not. In addition, making choices is always risky and the choice of being a lifestyle migrant is no exception. Lifestyle migration as an empirical phenomenon provides a fruitful base on which to test and develop theorising on individualisation. One should, however, be very careful about generalising lifestyle migration and individualism; analysis should be much deeper than it has been so far.

Conclusion

Lifestyle migrants claim to be doing 'what they want', both in terms of initially choosing to move abroad and in terms of realising, narrating and expressing their active selves when living as lifestyle migrants. Such a personal search for a better life and for one's distinctive identity is typical of our times. The sociological theories of individualism are useful tools for explaining certain aspects of lifestyle migration. Lifestyle migrants indeed appear to be ideal individualistic actors who have taken responsibility for their own lives and happiness. There is, however, much more to lifestyle migration than a mere individualistic search for a better life and an active self; the ethos of freedom also needs to be carefully investigated and analysed. It is important to keep in mind the fact that lifestyle migrants always act within existing structures and systems. Their actions take place within the frames of gender, class and nationality, for example. In addition, in many ways individual freedom is a fate and involves various risks and constraints.

In this chapter, I have argued that although lifestyle migration is often characterised as an escape to a better life this escape can in fact mean

dropping tightly into the prevalent ethos instead of dropping out of it. Individual lifestyle migrants often celebrate an ethos of freedom but the ethos eventually serves the prevalent order instead of challenging it, in spite of individuals often expressing their lifestyle choice as criticism and escape. Individualisation is useful in explaining certain aspects of lifestyle migration but it is not enough to define lifestyle migration as a manifestation of individualism in reflexive modernity; the analysis should go much deeper. It might, for example, be useful to look at lifestyle migration from a Foucauldian perspective. Moreover, the controversies of individual freedom need to be carefully investigated.

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Notes

1. After each interview extract, there is a pseudonym, and the interviewee's actual age at the time of the interview.
2. The Indian names adopted usually carry a Hindu or Buddhist spiritual meaning or a meaning connected with nature.
3. Countries are obviously very different in terms of public healthcare and social security. Most countries from which lifestyle migrants originate, however, have some kind of public health care and social security systems by which the middle classes in particular are often 'secured', and most lifestyle migrants are of middle-class origin.

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3

Negotiating Privilege in and through Lifestyle Migration

Michaela Benson

Introduction

One of the core tenets of lifestyle migration is that the people undertaking these forms of migration can be considered as *relatively* affluent, with migration made possible by the position of privilege occupied by these migrants in relation to local populations within destinations (Benson and O'Reilly 2009; Croucher 2009; O'Reilly and Benson 2009). In this rendering, relative affluence and privilege is mobilised to bring about migration and inextricably linked to the quest for a better way of life. Beyond this, however, privilege needs to be understood in terms of the role that it might play within the migrant experience. The comparison of two cases of lifestyle migration – the British in rural France and North Americans in Panama – presented in this chapter draws attention to how different contexts of migration influence the articulation of privilege and the migrants' awareness of their position of power in relation to local communities.

The chapter takes as its starting point the recognition that privilege is structural and systemic, negotiated through the practice of lifestyle migration (Benson 2013a; O'Reilly this volume). While the relative privilege of migrants may facilitate migration, the change in social setting (through migration) may transform that privilege in various ways. I focus here on the comparison of North Americans to Boquete, Panama and the British residents of the Lot, a rural, inland department in south-west France. This comparison draws attention to the need to consider the contexts in which privilege becomes an aspect of experience that migrants are aware of and that they critically engage with. My discussion of North Americans in Panama reveals that the movement into and settlement in a community stratified along lines of class, 'race' and

ethnicity can result in a heightened and self-conscious awareness of their (elevated) position in local hierarchies (Benson 2013a). For these migrants, the experience of privilege following migration is thus fractured along lines of class, 'race' and ethnicity, a product of the post-colonial relationship between Panama and the United States. While the relative privilege of Britons living in rural France aided migration and shaped their experiences of life within the destination, it is clear that they did not have the same awareness of this privilege in their lives. As I have argued elsewhere, their relative privilege is marked by luxury – they choose to live the way they do – while the local French farming communities have lifestyles borne out of necessity. In this respect, my analysis makes clear that class is the axis around which their privilege is framed, as it was in their lives prior to migration, and thus privilege is un-reflexively reproduced albeit in a different social setting.

Drawing on this comparison, the chapter presents a theoretical framework inspired by Bourdieu to explore these differences in how privilege is articulated, explained and experienced by lifestyle migrants. It draws on the relationship between habitus, field and practice to explain the differences in how habitus responds to and is transformed by lifestyle migration. Inspired by Bourdieu's logic of practice (1977, 1992), the chapter thus considers the possibilities for the development of habitus in the negotiation between privilege as an objective structure and practice.

Approaches to privilege in lifestyle migration research

As we perceive it, lifestyle migrants are relatively affluent individuals of all ages, moving either part-time or full-time to places that, for various reasons, signify, for the migrant, a better quality of life. (Benson and O'Reilly 2009: 609)

In 2009, Karen O'Reilly and I published an article that set out to provide an initial conceptual and theoretical framework for understanding lifestyle migration, particularly in light of the then predominance of lifestyle migration research being conducted among populations migrating within Europe (see, e.g., Benson 2011; O'Reilly 2000). Since then, the above quotation has become the ubiquitous definition of lifestyle migration, although within this it has become taken-for-granted that lifestyle migrants are affluent and that their migration is further made possible by their privilege. This chapter is one way of seeking to reposition affluence and privilege within lifestyle migration as *relative* rather than absolute as they are often presented. This requires an

understanding of how these are negotiated in and through the practice of lifestyle migration.

The mobility-enclosure dialectic presented by O'Reilly (2007) provides a starting point in understanding this negotiation. While British migrants to Spain have privileges which mean they can move in the first place – notably the right to freedom of movement within Europe – their experience on the ground within the destination demonstrates the continuing salience of place, and in particular place-based access to social, cultural, economic and political lives; in other words, such privilege may not necessarily translate into privilege on the ground within the destination. Tensions therefore emerge out of the privilege to move versus the absence of privilege within a new social setting. While the tensions that O'Reilly (2007) identifies are specific to her ethnographic case, her recognition of the processes through which privilege is negotiated is a particularly valuable lesson in recognising the relative dimensions of privilege and affluence and how these manifest in and through practice.

As the field of lifestyle migration research has developed since 2009, an increasing number of international migration flows have been considered as lifestyle migration. New lifestyle flows – or at least those new to scholarly enquiry – appear to differ from earlier trends, notably because of the inequalities between sending and receiving societies, with destinations including former colonies, sites of recent foreign military occupation and developing countries. Such conditions may give rise to new questions about the exercise and negotiation of privilege in lifestyle migration, calling for a more sustained engagement in the discussion of privilege within lifestyle migration. What becomes clear is that these new lifestyle flows are made possible precisely because of contemporary power geometries (see Hannam et al. 2006).

Privilege here relates not to the individual affluence and wealth of migrants – although it is clear that this too may play a role – but the privilege wrought by the migrants' citizenship of powerful nation-states (Benson and O'Reilly 2009; Croucher 2009). Simply put, lifestyle migrants often originate in states that occupy a significant position of power in the global hierarchy, as a result of strong economies and/or political power. The choice of destination is framed by asymmetrical distinctions: quality of life is better there than it is here; the cultural value placed on living elsewhere is better than the value placed on staying put; the cost of property/living is cheaper abroad than at home; the cost and quality of healthcare is better...and the list goes on.

However, new lifestyle flows are characterised by the choice of destinations that occupy positions lower down within the global hierarchy.

The relative positions of power occupied by the sending and receiving countries play a role both in expectations about the quality of life available within the destination and the experience of everyday life following migration. Flows include North Americans moving to Mexico and Central American destinations (see, e.g., Croucher 2009; McWatters 2009), Japanese migrants in Malaysia (Ono 2008) and Westerners in India (D'Andrea 2007; Korpela 2010).

While historical conditions underwrite all forms of migration, colonial traces are writ large on these new lifestyle flows, both in terms of how destinations are imagined and how they are lived by migrants (Benson 2013a). Against this background, it is timely to consider these migrations through a postcolonial lens. In the related field of research on mobile expatriate workers, postcolonial approaches have been adopted to reveal the continuities and discontinuities between contemporary forms of expatriacy and its colonial predecessors focusing also on the resonance of colonialism in imaginings and practices (Farrer 2010; Fechter and Walsh 2010). Such an approach would undoubtedly have value for understanding new lifestyle migration flows, historically situating the power asymmetries that facilitate these, and revealing continuities and discontinuities in the movement and settlement experiences of contemporary migrants in relation to their colonial predecessors.

For most scholars, privilege within lifestyle migration remains undeconstructed. The characteristics of privilege are taken-for-granted, with privilege acting as a structural condition that makes migration possible, while also reproducing structural inequalities. What is notable is that there is very little sense of how these migrants understand, experience and respond to their relative privilege in their post-migration lives; in this respect, the agency of the migrants within the limits of their privilege is neglected. Evidence from my ethnographic research among lifestyle migrants in Panama runs counter to Croucher's assertion, that 'most Americans in Mexico are comfortable with, and sometimes blissfully unaware of their relative privilege' (2009: 181), as not only were respondents aware of their privilege, they were quite ambivalent about it, often attempting to displace it (Benson 2013a). This demonstrates a reflexive engagement by migrants with their own privilege, their experience of privilege as situated actors, a recognition that can encourage the deconstruction of privilege in ways that have not been acknowledged previously within lifestyle migration research.

I argue that in order to understand privilege and its role within lifestyle migration – both the act of migration and life following migration – it is necessary to focus on the conditions under which privilege

is experienced by lifestyle migrants. Migration provides context, as individuals find themselves moving between 'different hierarchies and criteria of status and privilege' (Amit 2007: 8). New social, cultural and political environments throw the relative privilege and affluence of migrants into sharp relief in ways that they cannot ignore and were not previously accessible to them (Benson 2013a).

The focus on the conditions under which people recognise and experience their privilege also highlights that different dimensions of this privilege might be experienced in different settings and at different points in time. The experience is shaped by the way that hierarchies and systems of stratification within the destination are structured; the roles of class, race, ethnicity and gender within these will influence how lifestyle migrants are made to feel their privilege as I demonstrate below in my comparison of lifestyle migration to France and Panama.

Habitus, field and practice

In order to understand how privilege operates in the lives of these migrants, it is necessary to take into account the conditions and contexts in which they feel their privilege, and also how they then adapt their practices and actions to account for this. Beyond this, there is a need to understand privilege not only as a structure that might influence the lives and experiences of these migrants, but also as a structure that they might internalise and embody in different ways. In this respect, my argument is inspired by Bourdieu (1977, 1992), in particular his reflections on the relationship between habitus, field and practice, as I lay out below.

In developing the concept of lifestyle migration elsewhere (Benson and O'Reilly 2009), I have argued that lifestyle migration can be considered as evidence of 'reflexive habitus', a concept developed by Sweetman (2003) to suggest that the practice of reflexivity itself may be considered as having become second nature, habitual in this era of late modernity. Lifestyle migration can then be understood as a part of the reflexive project of the self in which these relatively affluent households unquestioningly engage (Benson 2011). Here, however, I further deconstruct the relationship between habitus and migration to examine how this relationship maps onto questions about field and practice. What becomes clear through the examples that I present here is that while this sense of reflexive habitus might be an appropriate way of considering the migration of the British to rural France, this cannot necessarily explain the case of North Americans migration to Panama. Instead, it might be more

valuable to think of processes by which '[w]ays of thinking can become habitual. Once learned they change from something we struggle to grasp to something we can think *with*, without thinking *about* them. In other words, for much of the time our conceptual apparatus is not itself the subject of reflection' (Sayer 2005: 27; original emphasis).

The theoretical framing of this chapter derives from Bourdieu's (1977, 1992) concern with the relationship between habitus, field and practice. In particular, it questions what happens to habitus – the interdependence of human agency and social structure – under the conditions of lifestyle migration. Friedmann has argued that migration, as an example of social change, might bring about 'a massive readjustment of migrants' habitus' (2005: 318) as migrants strive for economic survival. But what would this mean in the case of lifestyle migrants, whose migration is not primarily motivated by the desire for improved economic circumstances?¹ In what respects can they be considered to be moving from one social space to another, and into new, unfamiliar social fields? What is the role of privilege within the movement and settlement of these migrants? And under what circumstances might lifestyle migration then be considered as a form of social change that requires a corresponding transformation in habitus and practice? These questions rest upon an understanding of habitus as 'durable but not eternal' (Bourdieu 1992); while most often habitus is reinforced, it can at times be transformed (see also Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). It is dynamic, in new social fields adapting to the rules of the game (Hillier and Rooksby 2005).

Friedmann's (2005) presentation of migration as social transformation rests not only on the notion that habitus is mutable (under certain conditions); it additionally draws attention to an understanding that through migration, migrants may enter new social fields. The account of social transformation resulting from migration suggests that migration signals a movement into new social fields, which require the internalisation of objective social structures, the transformation of habitus and the development of new practices. Migration might therefore coincide with movement into new (unfamiliar) social fields, and may therefore preface some adjustment to habitus. What is also clear, however, is that migration does not mean that the migrant exits the social fields in which they were previously embedded; this is clear in the extensive work on transnationalism where migration itself may act as an indicator of enhanced social status within the originating community. In this respect, understanding migration through the relationship between habitus, practice and field, requires an understanding of the complexity of the contexts in which these are located. It is not simply the case that through migration,

migrants move from one social space to another; this movement is at best partial. It is common to find that migrants continue to occupy a position within a transnational social space, perhaps exiting some social fields as they enter into new social fields in the host society. In some cases, migrants' entry into the social space of their new residential environment is also partial, and is reflected in their practices.

Nevertheless, there is a need to consider further what impact even partial entry into the social space of the host society might have on habitus. Looking across the migration literature it becomes clear that social standing in one society does not necessarily translate into an equivalent status in the receiving community, the result of how immigrants are positioned within local labour markets, their skills and qualifications devalued. But is it also clear that even in cases where social, economic and cultural capital maintains its value from one setting to another, there might be problems converting this to symbolic capital within the new society. As Ong (1999) argues in the case of Hong Kong Chinese elites living in California, while they have levels of cultural, social and economic capital, tastes and lifestyles that emulate and resemble those of their Californian neighbours, they do not seem to be able to convert these into symbolic capital. Ong attributes this to the visible ethnic difference of her respondents; in other words, the possession of capital is not recognised because they are embodied by ethnic Chinese. Arguably, in the case of the lifestyle migrant respondents presented in this chapter, the issue is different, their whiteness acting to enhance their symbolic capital (see also Knowles and Harper 2010).² This demonstrates that the process of embodiment that lies at the heart of the adaptation of habitus to new social fields is deeply impacted by objective social structures, not only as these embed class difference but also other hierarchies, for example those drawn along the lines of ethnic and racial difference.

While the 'fit' between habitus and (residential) field generates a sense of belonging, with people moving to locations where this fit may be emplaced (Savage et al. 2005), I argue here that under the conditions of migration this 'fit' may not be so readily available. More importantly, this may need to be worked at as individuals negotiate their way through a landscape characterised by different social spaces, familiar and unfamiliar social fields.

The contexts and complexities of privilege

The comparison of two empirical cases of lifestyle migration here highlights how differences in setting have undoubted consequences for the

experience of post-migration life and for the recognition of relative privilege. This focus on how privilege frames migration and settlement aids in the further deconstruction of the workings of privilege.

Setting the scenes

The chapter draws on ethnographic research conducted with life-style migrant populations in two different field sites. The first piece of research was conducted between 2003 and 2005, a 12-month ethnographic study of the British living in the Lot, a rural, inland department in the southwest of France (see Figure 3.1). My respondents were mostly white and middle class, leaving behind professional-managerial jobs in



Figure 3.1 Map of administrative divisions in France, with the Lot marked up

the public and private sector. The Lot has a very low population density and agriculture is the primary economic activity in the department; it also has one of the lowest household incomes in metropolitan France. Over the course of the fieldwork I conducted unstructured interviews with respondents, extensive participant observation and collected life and migration histories (for a fuller account of the methodology see Benson 2011: 16–19).

In my first trip to Panama in 2007 (as a tourist), I was struck by the presence of North Americans in Panama City and through discussions with local people, discovered that there were several parts of Panama where notable North American communities had started to congregate. The following year I travelled to Boquete, an area in the highlands to the West of the country (see Figure 3.2) close to the Costa Rican border, with the intention of conducting pilot research. I followed this up in 2009 and 2010, and have conducted in excess of three months of ethnographic research in the area. Boquete is situated in Chiriquí Province, an area known for its agricultural production. The primary crop within Boquete and the surrounding area is coffee. The history of the area shows that the town of Boquete was established by European, North American and Panamanian settlers in the early twentieth century, as the region was deemed suitable for agricultural production. Recently, the global coffee crisis has resulted in a devaluation of land in the area. North American respondents in Panama had occupied similar social positions before migration to those of respondents in France and were notably of white, European origin (although there were some exceptions). My research to date has included unstructured interviews with

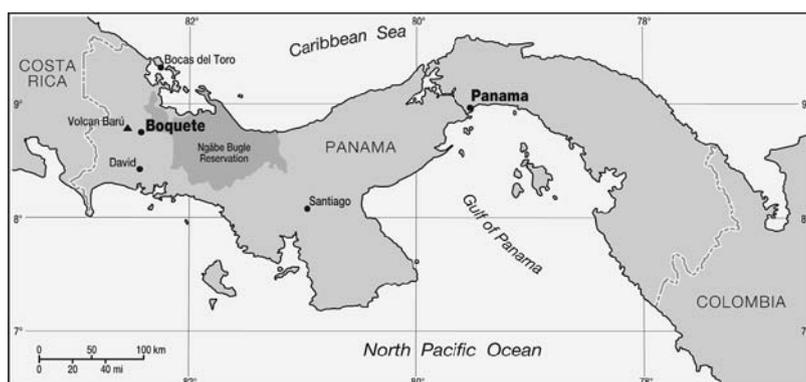


Figure 3.2 Map of Panama, indicating the location of the field site, Boquete

North Americans and local Panamanians, participant observation and the collection of life and migration histories (for a fuller account of the methodology see Benson 2013a).

Although the contexts of their migration differ significantly, both empirical cases are illustrative of lifestyle migration. The motivations behind British migration to rural France have been well-documented, linked to the desire for the rural idyll, replete with a sense of rural community, and contrasted to the ills attributed to urban life (Barou and Prado 1995; Benson 2011; Buller and Hoggart 1994). The better way of life that people seek is clearly represented by the rural, with its slow pace of life, close-knit community, and natural amenities; indeed, as Buller and Hoggart (1994) stress, in many ways rural France has been appropriated by the British middle classes in lieu of the English countryside which is no longer affordable or accessible. Beyond this, however, it is clear that migration is also influenced by a sense of dissatisfaction with life in Britain: what it offers now and what it might offer in the future. As I have argued at length elsewhere (Benson 2011), the classed dimensions of this migratory process are particularly pertinent, with a discernable middle-class culture characterising the British population of the Lot. In this rendering the 'taste' – understood here in Bourdieu's (1984) terms as socially constructed – for rural France and the way of life imagined to be available there is a feature of British middle-class culture (Benson 2011; see also Buller and Hoggart 1994); ideas of how to live in rural France take as their starting point the valorisation of rural living (Benson 2011).

The framing of Boquete as a destination for lifestyle migration by North Americans presents an account of the natural amenities – the beautiful environment, the proximity of raw rainforest, the moderate climate – alongside the cost benefits of living in Panama. Many respondents were holders of *pensionado* visas, a visa programme specifically designed to attract Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) from foreign retirees through property ownership, which additionally provides visa holders with property and import tax exemptions, and a range of significant discounts on the cost of travel, healthcare and everyday expenses. Often migration narratives were set within the context of how unbearable or unsustainable life in the United States and Canada had been. For example, for many US citizens, these accounts embedded a critique of the political system and stressed that the cost of living back in the United States – particularly as a result of health insurance payments – would mean that they could never afford to retire. However, the additional context of the historical power asymmetries between the United

States (and other Western powers) and Panama frames such lifestyle flows and the migrant experience in particular ways (Benson 2013a).

The British in rural France

In many ways, the analysis of British migration to rural France presented in my earlier work (Benson 2011) resembles Oliver and O'Reilly's (2010) account of the British in Spain. Drawing on the concept of habitus (as laid out by Bourdieu (1977, 1992)), Oliver and O'Reilly (2010) demonstrate how lifestyle migration, although perhaps driven by the myth of reinventing the self and starting over with a blank slate (imaginings which conveniently omit any sense of class difference), is not as (self-) transformative as portrayed (see also Benson 2011). Their ethnographic accounts demonstrate that class is difficult to shake off; embodied by the individual, it continues to influence practices and actions in life following migration. In this respect, it becomes clear that, at least for these relatively affluent and privileged migrants, migration does not rupture habitus, but rather reinforces and reaffirms the classed dimensions of this.

Both the Spanish example offered by Oliver and O'Reilly (2010) and my own work (Benson 2011) suggest that in life following migration a 'fit' between habitus, field and practice is maintained or quickly re-established. The messiness of the migrant experience in the case of the British in rural France demonstrates that despite moving from one country to another they do not fully exit, and thus continue to occupy, a position within British social space. The extent to which they are part of a new (French) social space is also questionable.

The persistence of notably classed habitus and practice suggest that migration cannot simply be understood as coinciding with a move from one social space to another. In life following migration these migrants continue, at least partially, to operate in a social space where they have knowledge and understanding of the rules of the game, and through which they reproduce class position, inequality and difference. Indeed, their continued engagement in processes of distinction whereby they position themselves vis-à-vis their British middle-class others reveals that they have not completely exited British social space. Importantly, this does not preclude the possibility of them entering French social space. The transition into some fields within the destination is aided by similarities in the way that these are structured (when compared to the equivalent British social fields). Habitus, the result of the internalisation of structures in one social space, would therefore be relatively

easily transposed onto life within the new social space; these migrants may thus be able to give the impression of knowledge of the rules of the game, even if the actual reality is a process of trial and error, adapting knowledge, understanding and practice to the new social environment (see also Benson 2011).

A consideration of the different social fields in which these remain engaged is significant in understanding this partial exit of/entry into social space. For example, in the case of my respondents in France, it is clear that they retain a stake within the field of housing. As I have argued elsewhere (Benson 2013b), within the British middle classes, owning a house in France acts as a positional commodity; it is a signal of status that contributes towards the accumulation of symbolic capital and a marker of both economic and cultural capital. Within the new geographical environment, these migrants have to adopt different strategies (e.g., moving to rural France, reflecting on and actualising an appropriate way of living in the French countryside) to maintain and perhaps enhance their position within the British field of housing, deploying not only their economic capital, but also social and cultural capital to legitimate their way of life. This demonstrates the extent to which they remain caught up in the processes of distinction that shape the British middle classes (Benson 2011). This leads to a suggestion that they remain engaged in a transnational social space made up of other Britons.

What I have not made clear elsewhere is the extent to which these migrants have chosen to exit other fields, for example, many of them withdraw from the British education system, choosing instead to put their children into French schools (which raises interesting questions about class reproduction (see O'Reilly 2009)). In this respect, the lives and experiences of these migrants additionally reveal that there is a sense of partial exit from British social space.

This partial exit needs to be placed within the context of a simultaneous partial entrance into French social space, engaging in some social fields. What is perhaps surprising is that these are not necessarily only the equivalent social fields to those that they have exited in Britain. Particularly notable, for example, is the fact that respondents in the Lot are very much part of the local social field of housing as well as the British field of housing. Within the local social field of housing, the rules of the game and the logic of practice appear to resemble those that are already familiar to the migrants as a result of their engagements in the British field of housing. What this demonstrates is that despite engaging in foreign (social) fields, whether consciously or not, these migrants are

able to deploy the dispositions developed in one field to another, translating these in relation to the logics that guide the new field. It is in this manner that these affluent migrants transpose their practices to local processes of status discrimination and distinction.

However, there are other local social fields that they find more difficult to negotiate, for example, education. Although there is not space to fully elaborate here, it is clear that for family migrants educating their children in French schools is a significant source of anxiety, despite protestations that the French system yields better results than the British system. In particular, it seemed to be the case that many parents struggled to reconcile their expectations of education to a system where the pedagogical structure was unfamiliar. While in Britain pedagogical practice focused on bringing individual children up to a particular attainment level, in France the teaching strategy meant that those who struggled to keep up were left behind, retaking the year. As one parent stressed, if she had known more about the French education system before migrating, she might not have made the decision to move to France; while her son had initially struggled within a couple of years he had risen to the top of his year group.

Oliver and O'Reilly (2010) argue that the case of the British in Spain demonstrates that despite the desire to transcend class distinctions and ignore past social status, there is in fact a very limited capacity for habitus to be transformed, to be reinvented through migration. This discourse of reinvention also exists, although not as strongly, within the narratives of the British in rural France. Once again, the persistence of classed processes of distinction highlight the extent to which these migrants remain caught up in the symbolic struggles of a transnational British social space. But even within French space, there seems little need for them to transform their habitus; the new social structure that they enter into, albeit partially, is not challenging to their habits and dispositions. However, it is also clear that the perception of whether habitus has been transformed depends upon context; it might be the case that negotiating a position in some fields requires a more significant transformation in habitus because the structures of that field are more unfamiliar than in other cases.

How then does this relate to privilege? What has become clear through my analysis elsewhere and here is that these migrants remain engaged in British middle-class processes of distinction (Benson 2011), while also slotting into the French social structure (probably in a relatively similar position to that which they occupied back in Britain). In a situation where the local 'way of living', imagined and romantic as this is,

is aspired to by migrants and acts within their quest for a better way of life as a qualifier of their progress on this journey, respondents often gloss over differences or draw attention to them to demonstrate their admiration for the way that their French neighbours live. The particular 'others' that they admire are often their neighbours who work within the farming community, working their smallholdings year round to make a small income, harvesting their crops to sell on the local market.

What these presentations reveal is how far removed the lives of the migrants are from those led by their neighbours. For example, the migrants do not witness the economic necessity that drives their neighbours' actions, including the continuation of their working lives long into what the migrants consider as retirement (cf. Oliver 2008). What is notable is that while the migrants have the luxury to live the way they do in rural France, their French neighbours, at least those native to the rural communities, live the way they do out of necessity, reflecting the binary opposition between luxury and necessity that Bourdieu (1984) presented as markers of the French social structure. In this manner, it becomes clear that through their actions, these British migrants occupy a strong position in the local field of power.

For the British in rural France, there seems to be very little awareness of the differences between themselves and their French neighbours. Their reflexivity about the appropriate way to live in rural France denotes a concern over their lifestyles and shows the processes by which they adjust to life in the Lot, incrementally tweaking their understanding of what it takes to live in *la France profonde*. The similarities in the position that they occupy within the social structure before and after migration does not cause reflection on their position within, in this case, a classed hierarchy, with the result that they do not seem to have an awareness of the privileges of this position. In contrast, migration to Panama – as I demonstrate below – represents a significant and felt shift in terms of status, at least as this is measured in relation to the local social structure.

Gringos in Panama

In contrast to the case of the British in rural France recalled earlier, in new lifestyle flows such as North American migration to Panama the privilege made manifest through migration is multi-dimensional and drawn along a variety of axes. The 'easy' fit between habitus, field and practice that characterises the lives of respondents in France is replaced by an unsettling disjuncture between these, with the result that there

is clear evidence of habitus being recalibrated to create a better 'fit'. In particular, it became clear that once living in Boquete, the migrants became aware of their own difference and the extent of social and economic inequalities. Although they had awareness of the inequalities in their country of origin – this was made clear, for example, by several respondents who had lived in cities in the United States where high proportions of the population had been Hispanic – I argue that they came face-to-face with these in Panama in unprecedented ways.

Their awareness (and concern) about inequality was regularly relayed to me through the comparison of how much money different populations in the area had to live on: 'The Americans live on \$500 a week; the Panamanians on \$500 a month; and the Indians live on \$500 a year.' Their explanation of these three 'tiers' of the local community often conveyed a sense of uneasiness not captured within the quotation itself, followed or prefaced by a nervous laugh, expressed in a matter-of-fact way, or followed by a passionate statement about how they were working against these inequalities. As this example demonstrates, unlike Croucher's (2009) respondents in Mexico, these lifestyle migrants in Panama explicitly drew attention to inequalities within the destination, inequalities that they too were part of. While they did not articulate these as privilege, their worries and concerns about their actions and their impact on the local community demonstrate a degree of reflexivity about their role in local social and economic transformation.

Taking a step back, it becomes clear that the power geometries between sending and receiving countries – in this case the relationship between the United States and Panama – and the racialised social order of Panamanian society – itself the result of Spanish colonialism – shape the privilege of these migrants. Such power geometries in their contemporary incarnation are encapsulated in the term 'Gringo', the epithet that Panamanians use to refer to North Americans (Theodossopoulos 2010). Living in a Central American country, the migrants find themselves 'racially marked', experiencing their own difference, the result of the privilege of whiteness, in ways that for many of them were previously unknown (Fechter 2007). In many ways this is a context that should be considered as postcolonial. The migrants' imaginings of the destination undoubtedly embed colonial relationships of power and inequality, which are made manifest in their lives following migration (Benson 2013a; see also Fechter and Walsh 2010).

As I argue, the migrants' narratives about local social and economic inequality convey their discomfort with their own difference and elevated position within the Panamanian social order. Within these

narratives, the sense that they needed to do the right thing in respect to their Panamanian neighbours and their (often indigenous) employees emerged as prominent themes about post-migration life. For example, respondents in Boquete seemed keen to stress that they had taken the time to get to know their neighbours and, in the case of their employees, who were often Ngäbe Bugle (one of the seven indigenous groups in Panama), that they treated them well. For example, Tessa explained that in the case of her Panamanian friends, she had learned that they, 'do not understand straight and level; they are more creative and artistic and don't think in a linear way'. Christy explained that although she could not afford to sponsor a local child to go to school, she did support the two Panamanians who worked for her, providing them with meals and letting them watch TV in her house in the evenings. Beyond this, however, the migrants also drew attention to what they saw as the less favourable attributes of the local population, attributes that included exploiting those coming to Panama in search of property – 'taking people for a ride' – and a general lack of ability to turn up on time – a more relaxed, *mañana* attitude to life. As these brief examples demonstrate, the migrants were clearly ambivalent about the local population, in ways that demonstrated the underlying power inequalities that drive their relationship to one another.

Here, I focus in detail on the migrants' anxiety over how and what to pay their employees (often local Panamanian and indigenous people) as a way of interrogating and deconstructing further their privilege. Frequent themes within this were the concern over whether they were being just and fair, how their employment practices related to those of others and whether these were in line with local norms. What becomes clear is that by taking on the role as employers, the migrants enter into a system of class relations in Panama in ways that the British in rural France do not. This suggests a sustained engagement in social space, in particular within the local field of power. The following example illustrates how employment practices can shift over time, revealing a change in how migrants' experience their position vis-à-vis the local community and their employees. As I argue, this is evidence for the process through which *habitus* is transformed and innovated in order to adjust to the rules of the game that structure the local social field.

I met Nicholas and Tracey for the first time in 2008, and was invited to their home for lunch one day. One topic of conversation was their employment of a Ngäbe Bugle worker, Enrico, who they employed full-time to tend their coffee finca (translates as farm) and garden. Within minutes, Nicholas and Tracey were keen to stress that they paid Enrico

what they thought was a reasonable salary, more than other people might pay their workers, also being sure to pay his social security contributions. Their ethic of care extended to his family, making sure that his school-aged son had a uniform and shoes so that he could attend school. They recalled with fondness the outing to David (the closest city) to make these purchases that they had taken with Enrico and his son, the memory of the son's first ride on an escalator and eating ice cream together. They had provided Enrico with a small house, and generally felt that they looked out for him. Their early account of their relationship with Enrico had a tone of familiarity but also, and perhaps inevitably, a sense of paternalism.

Over time, however, they became aware of how their actions in relation to Enrico were being perceived by others:

While we were finishing up the property [small property on their land for an indigenous worker] a local Panamanian said, 'He shouldn't live there. It's too good for him. He should live in a shack.' And we ended up putting our Indian worker in a house that was better than what a lot of our Panamanian neighbours live in, and they did not like that. They look down on them...in retrospect that was probably culturally insensitive of us.

This interaction highlighted to Nicholas and Tracey the local social hierarchies and their initial lack of understanding of the complexities of these, and in time caused them to reconsider the terms of their arrangement with Enrico.

When I returned to Boquete the following year, I met up with Nicholas again and he took me on a tour of the area, including a visit to his coffee finca. In the grounds of the finca there were several small buildings. The first of these was a small house that Enrico, the Ngäbe worker, had lived in the previous year. This set the scene for Nicholas to explain how his relationship with Enrico had changed. Earlier in the year Nicholas and Tracey had made the difficult decision not to renew his contract; until then, he had been on a continuous series of separate contracts. However, they had become more knowledgeable of employment regulations in Panama, which would, they assured me, require them to make a permanent commitment to their worker if they continued to employ him. Recently, they had found that Enrico was asking for more help with the finca, suggesting that they employ another person to help him with his work, but asking around, Nicholas and Tracey felt that other people expected their workers to do a lot more than he was doing. This

seemed to instill in them a sense of mistrust in their worker, which had ultimately led to them choosing not to re-employ Enrico when his last contract had come to an end, finding another indigenous employee to do the work instead.

This one example illustrates clearly a common trajectory of the relationship between these lifestyle migrants and their employees. From initially being concerned that they treat their employee in a just manner, providing him with comfortable living quarters and taking his opinions into account, Nicholas and Tracey's narrative reveals that over time they became more acutely aware of their position within the social hierarchy and perhaps the way that their early actions had been inappropriate to local norms. In other words what seems to have happened is that over time the space between employers and employees seems to widen.

I argue that this can be explained through an understanding of what might happen to the 'fit' between habitus, field and practice as a result of migration. Unlike in the case of the British in rural France, it is very clear that these privileged North Americans occupy a much more elevated position in the Panamanian social order than they do in the North American context. The same caveats about whether they have fully exited North American social space/fully entered Panamanian social space apply; what becomes clear is that both of these contexts continue to structure their experience. However, through the establishment of employment relationships, these migrants position themselves within the local social field of power.

Beyond this, it is clear that these North Americans occupy a position of relative power within broader Panamanian society. This position is recognised by the Panamanian authorities, and on several occasions Panamanian government ministers and officials attended the Tuesday Morning Meeting in Boquete, a weekly event run by and for the North American population, keen to enlist the advice, support and approval of this affluent population.

Unlike my respondents in the Lot, by migrating to Panama, these relatively affluent migrants find themselves in a significantly elevated position. For example, it is unlikely that in their lives in the United States they would have had opportunities to meet with government ministers and officials; in other words, their position within the field of politics was weak while in Panama, despite the fact that they have no political rights, they occupy a stronger position. Their location within the local social field is similarly strong, the result not only of employment relations, but also the symbolic capital attributed to them on the grounds of their whiteness. Their ambivalence reveals that even in this position

of privilege, there is a notable lack of fit between habitus, field and practice; they are not confident in the rules of the game.

As an aside, it is clear that these migrants have an awareness of their privilege. On the one hand, as they make clear in their attempts to overcome difference – inviting these others into their homes, teaching them English (in exchange for Spanish), learning about their lives – they do not want to be complicit in the perpetuation of inequality. On the other hand, however, their role within this community resembles that of benefactors or patrons, relying precisely upon their relative privilege. At times, as I have demonstrated elsewhere (Benson 2013a), they may put their status within Panamanian society to work to improve the living conditions of others. However, it becomes very clear that privilege acts as a structure informing their experience as Gringos in Panama.

Over time, the process of re-establishing ‘fit’ takes place, as they increasingly internalise the objective conditions under which they operate – in this case their locus of privilege. It may appear as though in this process they become increasingly comfortable with their position of privilege, but it would be more apt to stress that they internalise privilege into their habitus. In this manner, they generate new dispositions for maintaining their position in the local social field, dispositions that go on to shape practice. I argue that this process draws attention to the emergence of what we might in this instance call a *lifestyle migrant habitus*; a set of dispositions resulting from the embodiment of social transformation brought about by lifestyle migration of which privilege is a central feature.

Conclusion

This chapter has questioned the constitution of relative privilege as experienced by lifestyle migrants in two different locations. As I have demonstrated, the different historical and material conditions, power relations between sending and receiving countries shape privilege in particular and notable ways. While for the British in rural France privilege is mostly shaped by class difference, for North Americans in Panama privilege is fractured along lines of class, ‘race’ and ethnicity, shaped by postcoloniality. The conditions which might generate an awareness of privilege among the lifestyle migrant population are thus quite different: the British in rural France seem unaware of their relative privilege despite demonstrating it in their representations of their local French neighbours; North Americans in Panama are made aware of their difference through their interactions with the local population,

and through their actions both resist and reproduce it. What becomes clear is that privilege is a structure that in both cases has become internalised to the migrants' habitus.

The relationship of habitus, field and practice provide a more nuanced understanding of the processes through which privilege may become internalised in this way. It is clear that for the British in rural France, habitus has not undergone an extensive transformation; their ambivalence about their lives in France, the contradictions between expectation and experience (Benson 2011) require some readjustment, but this is limited by their partial entry into social fields where they largely occupy similar positions to those they held in Britain and know the rules of the game. In contrast, North Americans in Panama find themselves in a position where they occupy considerably elevated positions in local social fields, positions that require a considerable transformation in habitus and practice. As Nicholas and Tracey's example demonstrates, this happens over time as they attempt to reconcile their habitus and practices to their position in the field of power.

What becomes clear is that the differences in the constitution of privilege and their embodiment of its effects, result in a more accentuated transformation of habitus in the case of the North Americans, made robust through everyday experience, while for the British in France, this is more subtle. Nevertheless, it becomes clear that in both cases, lifestyle migrants possess significant symbolic capital that places them in a position of economic, cultural and social dominance in relation to the local population.

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Notes

1. This is not to suggest that other forms of migration are necessarily or exclusively, concerned with economic success.
2. One of the significant failings of the lifestyle migration literature to date has been its neglect of whiteness as a way of analysing the lifestyle migrant experience. Arguably, this might be the result of the predominance of studies on intra-European migration, but as the field moves towards the study of new lifestyle flows between the Global North and Global South there is an

urgent need to address whiteness as privilege. In a cognate field of migration research, the study of expatriate populations, this is a more established theme (see, e.g., Fechter 2007; Knowles and Harper 2010; Leonard 2010); this could offer up lessons for the development of this theme within lifestyle migration research.

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Part II

Revisiting Assumptions

4

Theorising the ‘Fifth Migration’ in the United States: Understanding Lifestyle Migration from an Integrated Approach

Brian A. Hoey

Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of relevant theory for examining both rural and urban lifestyle migration in the United States. Specifically, I explore key explanatory models born of research into what has been called ‘non-economic migration’ occurring since the early twentieth century as context for encouraging an integrated perspective combining elements of each. I highlight changes in how some Americans appear to negotiate calculations of personal and collective quality of life engendered by an emerging economic order based on principles of flexibility and contingency – the effects of which are experienced by individuals, families and entire communities. Through a focused review of relevant literature from a range of social science disciplines and drawing on data from my own ethnographic encounters with lifestyle migrants in their everyday lives, I suggest the need to combine macro- and micro-levels of analysis. Finally, I intend to identify immediate and long-term prospects for lifestyle migration at a time of protracted fiscal and social insecurity and what this might suggest about not only challenges but also opportunities faced by persons and places in the United States.

Given that lifestyle migrants, by definition, do not move to pursue place-dependent opportunities for work – unlike most voluntary migrants – they cannot be characterised as labour migrants. Rather, work appears to become a calculated means to an end; something that permits these migrants to be in a place somehow personally meaningful

that they believe will fulfil a 'lifestyle commitment' (Hoey 2005). The range of migratory forms that might be categorised in this way is broad and international. In the United States, it has been referred to as 'non-economic' or 'amenity' migration in order to emphasise individual motivation shaped by influences other than promise of economic gain. The term 'non-economic' emerged as a way to depict migration patterns in which people in their productive working years voluntarily relocate to geographic areas held by experts to be without significant, recognised forms of economic opportunity. Researchers investigating demographically and behaviourally similar migration in Europe and elsewhere outside the United States have tended to use the term 'lifestyle'.

Turnaround migration

According to decennial Census data compiled in 1980, the population in rural United States jumped 14 per cent during the 1970s. While pronounced a mass 'return to the land' by popular media, many scholars were sceptical that in-migration from urban and suburban areas could reverse a nearly century-long trend of declining rural population. Data in the 1980s seemed to confirm their suspicion. Exacerbated by a pronounced economic downturn and that decade's 'farm crisis', most rural areas again experienced a net loss of population. By the mid-1990s, however, data suggested that the 1980s might have been a temporary setback in a longer trend's early stages as population in many rural counties again showed significant growth through in-migration from metropolitan areas.

This apparent alteration in prevailing patterns of migration from rural to urban areas was important not only as behaviour with potentially significant consequences for the physical and social landscape but also as catalyst for change in leading theories of voluntary migration. Prior to the 1970s, behavioural models had relied more or less exclusively on economic explanations of motivation. More importantly, they assumed 'rational actors' such that individuals were thought to select a community of residence that promises to optimise wage-earning potential. Defined in these terms, this conscious maximisation of financial good constitutes the paramount of rational behaviour. Demonstration of seemingly irrational behaviour on the part of significant numbers of migrants to rural areas – while still in their productive working years – challenged the dominance of economic explanations (see Berry 1976; Williams and Sofranko 1979). Given established assumptions, what appeared as a sudden preference for rural lifestyle understandably shocked social

scientists who held that non-metropolitan locales were disadvantaged when compared with the diversity of economic opportunities offered potential residents by metropolitan centres.

Census data and other such macro-level sources allow for examination of *net* migration – the balance after out-migration is weighed against in-migration. Because the value for net migration necessarily conflates personal decisions about leaving one place with those for moving to another, implications for behaviour cannot be easily deduced. Without individual-level data on behaviours and motives, analysis of such data has been necessarily speculative and based on consideration of structural changes and county-level differences with regard to these changes as well as pre-existing characteristics. Among these characteristics are quantity and quality of *amenities* associated, for example, with geographic location – those most closely tied to 'natural' as opposed to other features of an area. The geographer Edward Ullman (1954) was among the first to suggest an important role for amenities in contemporary migration. Ullman asserted that elevation of amenities in the mental calculus of migrants would depend on important demographic and economic changes following World War II. These changes included growth of early paid-retirement, longer life expectancies, increased mobility due to transportation and communication improvements and an increasingly service-based economy.

In Ullman's estimation, natural amenities such as climate and geography as well as idealisation of small-town living, instead of what he described as 'narrowly defined economic advantages', would generate population growth in non-metropolitan areas of United States in the twentieth century's second-half. Giving support to Ullman's projection, research 40 years later by sociologist David McGranahan (1999) found that county-level population and employment change since the early 1970s was more closely related to amenities – such as varied topography and proximity to surface water such as ponds, lakes and shorelines – than urban proximity, population density, or economic type.¹ Speaking in the context of his long-term study of in-migration to the largely rural Gallatin Valley area of southwestern Montana, sociologist Patrick Jobs (1992) finds a 'paradigmatic shift' in migration theory during this period, when motives among migrants seemed to swing to a more conscious valuing of non-economic factors, not at all surprising.

As I have already suggested, explanations have varied for both a 1970s turnaround in urban-to-rural migration and what later became characterised as a 'rebound' during the 1990s to the apparent 1980s slump or 'reversal' in the previous decade's jump. Three main explanatory models

are worth discussing in greater detail. First, the *period effects* model refers to influences specific to particular points in time – effects thought to be unique economic or demographic circumstances to which any observable fluctuations in population growth or decline may be attributed. Second, the *regional restructuring* model holds that observed patterns of migration may be an expression of a shift from a concentrated industrial economy to a more diverse structure of employment characteristic of a post-industrial, service- and information-based economy furthered by technological advancements in transportation and communication. Finally, supporters of the *deconcentration* model hold that an apparent shift towards more dispersed settlement patterns reflects a move to increasingly important non-economic factors in migration decision-making.

Importantly, the period-effects model attributes the 1970s turnaround to a unique confluence of circumstances whereas, to different degrees, the other two see it as an evolution in population distribution or even a hint of ‘revolutionary’ tendencies in American social and cultural life. According to the period-effects model, 1970s non-metropolitan growth can be explained through the focused influence of economic and demographic factors particular to that historical period. These factors include an oil crisis and a subsequent economic recession that accelerated a decline in manufacturing at the same time that heavy industries – the foundation of an American way of life for the better part of a century – were already becoming less labour-intensive through technologically fuelled gains in automation. The net result was significant loss in production sector jobs – a trend that has continued. The ‘race riots’ that ripped through American cities like Detroit during the late 1960s and early 1970s are also seen as a key precipitating factor – at least as regional sources of period-effects on migratory behaviour, especially embattled cities of the northern tier of ‘Rust Belt’ states historically most dependent on manufacturing. Demographic forces such as the baby boom cohort’s coming of age are also seen as having played a significant role. Many baby boomers – having attended college in small towns – are thought to have opted for work in areas outside declining labour markets tied to traditional, urban centres of industry. At the same time, large cohorts born in the first two decades of the century chose to retire in smaller-sized communities throughout the country and, especially, in places within the warm and dry southwest.

The regional restructuring model similarly attributes change in population distribution to significant economic shifts, but it is less dependent on this period-constrained effect for explaining events. More important

are fundamental changes in the organisation of production activities characteristic of ongoing deindustrialisation and globalisation. An essential aspect of this model is its portrayal of 'functional differentiation' wherein some locales prosper and even become centres of regional, national and/or global economies at the direct expense of other areas in a kind of zero-sum game. The importance of these centres of growth depends on their emergent roles within a presumed post-industrial economic order wherein certain locales gain through a tendency towards agglomeration while others lose relative status and population. This perspective holds that any 1970s turnaround was the realisation of a long-term trend made more dramatic by period-based influences – most particularly the mid-1970s recession. Once the shakeout of deindustrialisation is more or less complete – proponents of the model hold – certain well-positioned metropolitan areas will again grow in response to imperatives of this new economic order.

Supporters of a deconcentration model give particular attention to residential preferences as a form of *consumptive* behaviour and major driver of migration. While emphasising consumption patterns born of individual behaviour, enthusiasts of this perspective nevertheless recognise the significance of structural and technological changes and their impact on production activities as an essential context. In their view, fulfilment of long-standing preferences in the United States towards lower-density, high-amenity locations was less spatially and socially constrained when compared to historical periods prior to the 1960s. Certain facilitating factors, such as advances in transportation and communication, spread of services and changing distribution of employment, have allowed more people to realise pre-existing cultural aspirations or fulfil latent American ideals of rural living.

The sociologist Neil Smelser (1962) referred to such factors as 'elements of structural conduciveness' in the possible emergence of social movements. Beginning with research conducted by Calvin Beale (1975), a researcher at the Economic Development Division of the US Department of Agriculture, deconcentration theorists held that a 1970s 'turnaround' was only the beginning of a long-term shift – possibly on the order of a social movement – and a fundamental redistribution population in the United States enabled by such changes. The geographer Brian Berry (1976) provided a term and general definition for the phenomenon. Berry described the gain of non-metropolitan areas as a process of 'counterurbanization', given that it occurred in direct opposition to an historical tendency towards increasing population concentration.

Of these leading interpretations of non-economic migration, the deconcentration perspective took a more 'revolutionary' as opposed to an 'evolutionary' approach. Those most convinced that the 1970s represented a true turning point suggested that a 'clean break' had been made with past migratory trends. They emphasised that observed changes were more than a temporary fluctuation or anomaly. Proponents asserted that urban-to-rural migration is an expression of fundamental predispositions in American culture. As observed in the late twentieth century, this migration was at least a *reassertion* of tendencies that had been pushed into the recesses of collective American psyche by ongoing industrialisation and urban concentration beginning in the second-half of the nineteenth century and continuing through World War II. These tendencies include an appreciation for freedom of mobility and desire to be closer to nature as well as to seek a romanticised Frontier.

Explanations for urban-to-rural migration drawing on these three perspectives fall out along two basic lines that emphasise either elements of *production* or *consumption*. Interpretations on the production side rely on understanding the presumed logic of contemporary capitalism wherein individual actors – as well as corporate collectives – purposefully exploit opportunities created by shifting economic conditions in different locations that result from ongoing deindustrialisation and capital decentralisation. Production-side explanations centre on economic and structural factors and tend to emphasise consideration of rational, calculating social actors. In contrast, consumption-side explanations focus on decision-making in terms of what are often emotionally informed consumption choices and, at least so far as individuals are concerned, what consequences these choices have for construction of identity.

While I recognise explanatory value within both lines of reasoning for migration behaviour, my concern with lifestyle migration has led me to highlight consumption side contributions in my own research. At the same time, I have documented what changing conditions for work have meant for lifestyle migrants as well as choices made in response to structural changes (e.g., see Hoey 2005; 2010). An *integrated* approach to explaining lifestyle migration that combines data from macro- and micro-levels as well as explanatory models from production and consumption sides seems to best capture on-the-ground conditions and the contexts that shape lived experience. Understanding migration trends depends on being able to separate out a variety of factors ranging from possible changes in the propensity for certain persons to relocate, greater salience of certain preferences in determining place of residence, as well

as structural and socio-cultural changes that serve either to enable or constrain action.

A fifth migration?

As I have already suggested, the story of lifestyle migration in the United States must be contextualised within a history of distinct patterns of migration. Some researchers who have looked at historical trends in American migration refer to today's inchoate patterns of internal migration in the United States as the 'fifth migration' (see, Fishman 2005; Lessinger 1986; 1991; cf. Wolf 1999). The urban historian Lewis Mumford (1925) may be credited with establishing this numeration in the early twentieth century through describing emerging conditions for what he termed a 'fourth migration'. Mumford described how to that point the United States had seen three important migratory periods. In his reckoning, these began with clearing the continent through pioneer settlement leading to eventual relocation from rural areas to emerging industrial towns together with immigration from Europe. Lastly, he describes growth of great metropolitan centres of commerce and finance at the expense of these industrial towns. For Mumford, whatever materialised as America's next, or 'fourth' migration would become the dominant pattern of the twentieth century. Coming partly from what we would now describe as a regional restructuring perspective, he cited sources for a 'radical decentralization' of urban economic and social functions that would redistribute population throughout entire regions through what is today called 'suburbanization'.

Mumford saw remarkable changes in transportation in his time – including most especially how the automobile could reshape the physical and social world – together with amazing innovations in communication, such as telephone and radio, as well as widespread electrical transmission. He rightly saw these things as profoundly distributive and decentralising agents for the coming age as they allowed both individual and collective actors (e.g., corporations) greater freedom with regards to decisions about where to locate and with whom they would need to interact – ultimately making unnecessary a traditional, largely rural interdependence with others based on geographic proximity. Although his emphasis was, on the one hand, focused on technological and structural conditions for emergence of the suburb on a mass scale, Mumford (1925: 130) more generally recognised that these periods of 'flow', as he called them – in a manner remarkably sensitive to concerns that would come to preoccupy postmodern theorists – were ultimately caused by

'new wants and necessities and new ideals of life'. For Mumford (1925: 130), periods of flow provided an opportunity for people to 'remould' themselves and their institutions as 'great tides of population ... unloosed all the old bonds'. In this respect, Mumford's outlook was analogous to the deconcentration perspective.

Migration of families from cities into suburban areas was a significant period and one most Americans associate with the 'American Dream' as rooted in the notion that homeownership is an essential achievement and basic condition for middle-class membership. Coming home from the Korean War, my father used the 'GI Bill' to obtain his MBA and eventually a corporate job with IBM.² After having grown up in a crowded Brooklyn tenement as a son of Irish immigrants, he was able to take his family to residential suburbs and, thus, fulfil a dream sustained by daily commutes to newly sprouted, suburban office parks. This prosperous period in American history – aided at least in part by federal legislation such as the GI Bill and Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956 – made mass-scale suburbia possible. In turn, suburbia made possible naturalisation of a work and family culture that people have – at least until recently – taken for granted as American 'tradition' (see, Baumgartner 1988). Today, many struggle to reconcile past cultural ideals with changing economic realities by slowly constructing new work and family arrangements and personal goals (Hoey 2010). That is one important contribution of the study of such phenomenon as lifestyle migration to our understanding of contemporary life in the United States and elsewhere – to explore the means by which some people attempt negotiate disconnect between an established moral order and the changing social and economic conditions for fashioning a life.

In some respects, we might characterise post-war suburbanisation as less a distinct migratory pattern than a reorientation within overall urbanisation of the twentieth century. The geographer Yi-Fu Tuan (1974) believed that suburbanisation is a 'reaction' to the city and a stage in an ongoing process of urbanisation – what amounts to frontier in a city's expansion. When compared with earlier migrations, rather than seeking economic opportunity elsewhere, at first young families sought to realise and display achieved status made possible by work still tied in important ways to urban areas left behind. Later, driven by rising racial tensions in the late 1960s and early 1970s, large numbers of families fled economically declining metropolitan areas to greener pastures of the urban hinterland in what for places like the Michigan city of Detroit can realistically be described as an exodus with its mid-century population more than halved in a few decades. Large numbers of families

abandoned such cities in a wave of out-migration now expressively called 'white flight'.

Although both urban historian Robert Fishman and land economist Jack Lessinger describe four distinct migratory patterns leading up to the present period – including the suburbanisation at least partly foreseen by Mumford – they come to completely opposing conclusions about *where* migrants of a putative fifth great population shift in the United States are likely to be going. In short, Lessinger has held that our next most significant migratory period will be relocation from both urban and suburban areas to those places on the outermost metropolitan fringes in what is generally described as *ex-urban*. Conversely, Fishman describes what he feels will be a period of *re-urbanisation*. Importantly, despite their obvious difference in orientation, they ascribe very similar motivations to their would-be migrants – regardless of where they may be going.

Although Lessinger's scheme does not match Mumford's, they both recognised the same basic patterns. Lessinger's primary concern has been to establish reasons for emergence of what he first termed the 'fifth migration'. He necessarily draws on the work of those who attempted to explain demographic data that suggested rising demand for rural and small town living in the 1970s. In examining this so-called rural rebound, Lessinger (1986: 33) concludes that the suburbs would see an out-migration akin to that previously experienced by the central city because 'a new kind of real estate consumer is emerging... [who] prefers the simple yet cosmopolitan lifestyle found in many nonmetropolitan areas'. In this fifth migration, Lessinger predicts a category of person he terms the 'Caring Conservator', born of dissatisfaction with status quo values that define fragmenting relationships of work, family and community characteristic of suburbia. In his view, the suburb will fall to a vast, deconcentrated 'penturbia' through the force (again) of changing consumer tastes.

Caring conservers save and guard their resources. They will do this by law, by propaganda, and by appeal to conscience. The will to conserve extends to savings, investments, energy, clean air, and water. It extends to cultural artefacts like historic buildings, parks, all forms of art, and people. (Lessinger 1986: 34)

According to Lessinger's late 1980s projections, the caring conservers he expected to participate in this pent-urban migration would demand the kind of judicious regional planning that Mumford so desperately

wanted for the earlier suburban migration – what today we might call ‘smart growth’ (see, American Planning Association 2002). They would seek quality of life, effectively guarding liveability in destination communities through protection of open space and historic preservation efforts – mixing nature appreciation with a post-industrial ideal. At least in some respects, Lessinger’s work reflects assertions made in futurist Alvin Toffler’s (1980) book *The Third Wave*, which predicted creation of a post-industrial lifestyle in the American countryside where people connected electronically to service- and information-based work would value careful use of resources and environmental protection. Lessinger’s unbridled enthusiasm for the Third Wave’s transformative potential lead to an essentially utopian view that did little to address an apparent contradiction in Caring Conserver behaviour that simultaneously demonstrated conviction for place attachment even while severing a range of attachments elsewhere. That is, they uproot themselves from places of origin often abandoning public challenges and, in destination communities, drive up land values and taxes leading to closure of historically communal access points to natural areas.

Much like Mumford, who saw a nascent conservation movement and early attempts at coordination among municipalities through regional planning – efforts often overwhelmed by exuberant suburban growth in the second half of the twentieth century – as progressive reactions to wasteful and destructive periods of earlier migratory flows, urban historian Robert Fishman holds that the unsustainable nature of suburbanisation has led to a set of contemporary *countertrends*. In his view, these developments will contribute to multi-racial reurbanisation of America’s inner cities. Indeed, there is now some popular reference to a ‘back to the city’ movement – a kind of alter ego to an earlier, ‘back to the land’ movement with origins in the Great Depression – that is prompting discussion over potential for urban reinvestment. While Mumford declared urban density obsolete and its decline inevitable in a world hyper-connected by developments in transportation and communications, Fishman believes that density is again desirable for reasons that – while consistent with those of pre-industrial time – reflect yet another shift in consumer values of post-industrial origin. Fishman’s fifth migration entails not further deconcentration by way of an emerging penturbia, but rather the rediscovery and/or recreation of traditional urbanism. Specifically, Fishman (2005: 359) explains that ‘In a strange alchemy, precisely the disadvantages of inner-city districts in the age of the fourth migration – pedestrian scale, resistance to the automobile, aging housing stock, “obsolete” retail and manufacturing facilities, reliance on mass transit,

minority and immigrant populations – are turning into advantages for the fifth migration.' Each of these two migration theorists, in their own way, draw on regional restructuring and deconcentration perspectives.

Migration in this nascent period of Mumfordian 'flow' might be understood as a result of feedback from the fourth migration and, in particular, broad opposition to suburban sprawl fuelled – as in earlier migrations – by a frenzied rush for maximum growth and individual profit together with a newfound desire for personal quality of life that enhances and is improved by commitment to a broader, collective liveability. The impact of great periods of migration on American society came not by way of population redistribution, in and of itself, but rather from materialisation of the predominant *lifestyle* that migrants in each period pursued and the prevailing cultural ideals that these expressed. This is surely revealed in recent history of suburbanisation in the United States. Now, in an emerging fifth migration, we have people seeking – in rural, small town and urban landscapes – a quality of experience seldom effectively duplicated in suburbia, despite more recent attempts by practitioners of New Urbanism to architecturally engineer communities to meet their desires.³

Although Fishman's assertions concerning prospects for reurbanism (even if not 'new' urbanism) are restrained when compared to Lessinger's boosterish claims regarding penturbia, we might be inclined to discount his vision as similarly idealistic were it not for recent qualitative studies such as that by sociologist Japonica Brown-Saracino (2009) on urban and small-town redevelopment. As Brown-Saracino notes, in virtually all literature on both urban and rural gentrification there is an overwhelming expectation for gentrifiers to possess a 'frontier' mentality such that they are inclined to value places more for what they might become than what they are either now or have been in the past. That is to say, most writing on the topic of gentrification has pronounced these migrants as opportunists who seek lower-cost housing to build financial capital and status through a transformative processes of 'reclamation' from long-time residents. Thus, they are seen as necessarily creating a relationship of distance and conflict between themselves, as newcomers, and long-time residents.

Brown-Saracino's more ethnographic work suggests that on-the-ground reality is not as simple as prevailing characterisations. She finds no straightforward relationship, for example, between socioeconomic status of newcomers and their ideological stance regarding their role in destination communities. Of particular interest is that she identifies a category of gentrifier – a majority of those in her four study sites – that

she calls the 'Social Preservationist'. She states that 'Like environmentalists who seek to preserve nature, social preservationists – those who adhere to the preservation ideology and engage in related practices – work to preserve the local social ecology' (Brown-Saracino 2009: 9).

Akin to Lessinger's largely theorised 'caring conservers' and certainly like the real-life lifestyle migrants in my own research (see, Hoey 2010), Brown-Saracino finds that most newcomers in her study share concern for fostering sense of place, community and authenticity that stands in self-conscious opposition to the callous frontier-minded invader of largely negative, popularised notions of the urban, small town and rural gentrifier. Similarly, Fishman (2005: 363) asserts that the reurbanism he heralds 'means the end, or at least the softening, of the gentrification era'. In a manner that seems at least to partly accept Lessinger's description of an emerging consumer – the caring conserver who acts to guard a particular quality of life and character of place – Brown-Saracino (2009: 265; cf. Lawrence-Zúñiga 2010) suggests that foremost among the desires of her preservationists, who act in apparent response to the rapid change, uncertainty and invasive market forces of a globalisation are: '[A] desire to preserve the authentic and fragile, whether a dilapidated Victorian home, a 200-year-old landscape, or the faces, voices, and everyday presence of people seemingly detached from the mechanism of change that many gentrifiers have come to associate with themselves.' Brown-Saracino finds that while there is much scholarship on the outcomes of such in-migration, there is comparatively little known about their motivations, beliefs and daily practices. This is another area where research on lifestyle migration – given the largely ethnographic approaches taken by scholars of this phenomenon – makes an ongoing, though typically unacknowledged, contribution to migration research generally.

Lifestyle migration

Taken together, these studies suggest that lifestyle migration may be a response to feedback from earlier migratory flows and the wants, necessities and ideals of life associated with these periods. Taking an integrative approach, it is sensible to conclude that today's response may lead to a fifth migration in the United States that entails *both* aspects of 'exurbanization' and 'reurbanization' through shared interest in quality of life fostered in the deliberate cultivation of a sense of place, community and authenticity. As a cultural anthropologist who has studied voluntary migration to *rural* areas for over a decade, I tend to know more about

those particular migrants – their motivations, backgrounds and experiences – though, I suspect that lifestyle migrants, whether rural- or urban-bound, share fundamental concerns and strategies, even if presented with distinct, largely place-based challenges and opportunities.

High in-migration from metropolitan areas and the reality of lower income potential in the Grand Traverse region of coastal Northern Michigan – where I conduct much of my research – prompted coining '[A] view of the Bay is half the pay.' Lifestyle migrants tend to offer the idiomatic expression not with frustration, but rather as a measure of personal pride. Its use appears to declare membership in the local by newcomers as well as a means of emphasising the nature of a lifestyle choice motivated primarily by non-economic considerations. Consistent with Brown-Saracino's social preservationists, it appears to emphasise a choice to live more 'in tune' with ideals of a quest for something more personally fulfilling than the kind of maximisation expected of the 'rational actor'.

Lifestyle migrants in my own study speak of 'letting go' of predominant means of defining success and a need to be open to taking risks necessary to make their own way – including going into work for themselves, which they have done in high numbers (Hoey 2005). At least in some respects, lifestyle migrants in my research are akin to a category of newcomers encountered in sociologist Lyn MacGregor's (2010) study in rural Wisconsin she refers to as 'alternatives', who – due in large part to the depth of their sense of agency – are able to take the risk of moving to a place where they do not know anyone. They take this leap with the faith that they can *make* what they were looking for by carving-out lives and livelihoods that balance economic necessity with broader personal goals while finding fulfilment together with like-minded people. Both groups hold a deliberate, goal-oriented ethic of individual agency paired to a logic of commitment that is, ironically, tied less to a sense of obligation to any particular place in the strictest sense than to personal goals and values that motivated their relocation – their lifestyle commitments.

So, lifestyle migrants generally challenge popular association between relocation and career plans – something born, perhaps, of the aforementioned influence of traditional economic models used to explain migration behaviour. It is often true that one's job quite literally depends on following the whims of an employer. It is certainly historic fact that during rapid development in the post-war years, many families were relocated as corporations grew and reached into new territories. For most families, there was little opposition to going along with a plan laid out by their employers. It was part of the arrangement – an oft-unspoken

contract – between workers and paternalistic firms where employees gave up a little freedom, self-reliance and control today so that their family could depend on the employer being there for them in retirement.

While defining oneself by way of a job and its attendant rituals might have been something embraced by urbanist and writer William Whyte's (1956) memorable 'Organization Man', who as corporate employee not only worked for but felt he *belonged* to the Company, today's workers are savvy to the fact that there is no guarantee of stability in the world of work as a source for self-definition (Sennett 1998). The study of lifestyle migration may provide some insight into one way that today's workers attempt to adjust and who thus create potential for further change. That employers view employees as 'free agents responsible for their own employability' is evidenced in findings of the Families and Work Institute (2004: 10). Work and family scholars such as Jill Paine (2006) reveal details of a younger generation of workers' relationship to employers and their apparent proclivity towards higher levels of job mobility when compared with earlier generations. Today's lifestyle migrant may be a product of the simultaneously enabling and challenging flexibility, mobility and potentially superficial connectivity of contemporary life. As individuals, they attempt to use opportunities presented by these changes even as they, ironically, search for 'roots' or 'authenticity' in particular places they come to see as comfortable eddies in global flows – as potential anchorage for the unmoored (Hoey 2010). This represents a significant change in orientation, in expectations, in strategy and finally in priorities and values – the kinds of changes that Mumford felt, nearly a century ago, trumped population redistribution alone as factor in the impact of any major period of migratory flow on American society.

Where to next?

Patterns of migration during the twenty-first century's first decade continued a general directional trend that began in the last few decades of twentieth century with overall movement of population from the Northeast and Midwest to the South and West – a shift from the so-called Snow (or 'Rust') Belt to the Sun Belt. However, the United States is presently experiencing the lowest rates of internal migration since World War II. Housing sales are down dramatically over the past several years. Many 'empty nesters' are either unwilling or unable to relocate upon retirement. Further, many young Americans appear to be moving in much smaller numbers and buying fewer houses than a few

years ago – perhaps due to basic insecurity about jobs and inability to obtain credit. In fact, many would be empty nesters continue to provide shelter for adult children (members of the so-called 'Millennial' or 'Gen Y' cohort) who may have little choice in the current economic climate but to remain at home with aging parents.

According to data from the US Census Bureau's Current Population Survey, the largest declines have been in long-distance moves of more than 100 miles – a fact with an especially big impact on the broader economy given that these relocations are a particularly important engine for regional growth (Frey 2010). For would-be commuter migrants – those who move within 100 miles from origin communities and jobs – rising gasoline prices have had a dampening effect on relocation. While comparatively inexpensive gas helped fuel suburbanisation for decades, we now may be at a tipping point where transportation costs are having an important effect on relocation decisions. Current statistics on migration suggest how rapidly housing and labour market conditions, together with consumer energy prices, can influence migration.

The demographer William Frey (2007; 2009) suggests that we are witness to a 'migration correction' in the wake of a housing market gone bust and an associated 'migration bubble' having subsequently burst in the middle of twentieth century's first decade – a double-barrelled downturn fired by easy credit and speculative stimulation of market prices in many southern cities such as Phoenix, Las Vegas and Tampa in general and, in particular, numerous exurban areas around the country. Many places with the most pre-recession overbuilding have seen equally dramatic drops in housing prices and in-migration. Labour migration from the state of Michigan to these 1990s and 2000s Sun Belt boom-towns, for example, slowed in light of falling home values and rising unemployment in these once desirable destinations – conditions too much like places in their economically depressed home state. Latest data available through annual sub-national population estimates from the Census Bureau suggest that through the beginning of twenty-first century's second decade, late 2000s trends continue and, by Frey's (2012) estimates, will raise the prospect of a 'new normal' about where people all over the country decide to locate.

Here we are returned to conjecture about what might be the next (or 'fifth') migration to follow the suburbanisation that defined patterns of twentieth-century residential development and cultural norms in the United States. Robert Fishman – whose thesis is that we are likely to see renewed appreciation for the city and an ensuing era of reurbanisation – would no doubt find comfort in data that suggests that many

large metropolitan areas have grown faster than suburbs (and especially exurbs) during the last several years. Close examination suggests, however, that positive numbers in urban areas may be due, at least in part, to natural increase, immigration and what some have called ‘wind-fall staying’ of would-be migrants who are unable to leave given effects of an economic crisis that began in 2007 (Frey 2010). For his part, Jack Lessinger – who forecast an inexorable rise of exurban penturbia – would cringe in light of recent demographic data available for these locales. As with most migration phenomenon during the 2000s, when it comes to migration in areas beyond the traditional suburb, that decade is split between a very different first six years and the years that followed a vivid reversal of fortunes in 2007. The most recent information available suggests that the least dense, outer suburbs – the exurbs – have seen extremely low growth (Frey 2012).

In consideration of these numbers and in light of broader changes, urban and regional planner Christopher Leinberger declared those ‘fringe suburbs’ effectively dead. Importantly, Leinberger (2011) holds out no hope – even after economic recovery – that exurbs will make a comeback. He asserts that we are experiencing a ‘profound structural shift’ as significant as that which took place in the 1950s when suburbs boomed at the expense of cities. Even by the 1960s, more Americans lived in the suburbs than central cities. Just 20 years later, the balance of jobs in the United States shifted to the suburbs as well. Another ten years and the country had become dependably suburban with a solid majority calling them home (Kasarda 1995; Muller 1981). No doubt facts derived of this earlier shift are dramatic, but what of a possible structural shift today? What might be in store for us now? Leinberger (2008) is unequivocal in his statement that: ‘[F]or sixty years, Americans have pushed steadily into the suburbs, transforming the landscape and (until recently) leaving many cities behind. But today the pendulum is swinging back toward urban living, and there are many reasons to believe that this swing will continue. As it does, many low-density suburbs and McMansion subdivisions... may become what inner cities became in the 1960s and 1970s – slums characterized by poverty, crime, and decay.’ Granted, it’s a bit dramatic, but Leinberger’s basic regional restructuring view has some real merit.

Drawing on persuasive research exploring consumer preferences, Leinberger believes that the shift away from rapid exurban growth is long-lasting. Specifically, he points to major demographically driven changes wherein both Baby Boomers and Millennials – two massive demographic groups – are developing a *lifestyle preference* for urban downtowns,

micropolitan areas, or new urbanist-inspired suburban town centres (see Hoey 2007). Thus, we may have pent-up demand for walkable, centrally located neighbourhoods with mixed-used, higher-density development and forms of 'alternative transportation' that would allow for essentially car-free living on a day-to-day basis. Areas that have tended to fair better through the economic turmoil, attracting – or at least keeping – residents and seeing less decline in housing prices have all or most of these characteristics (Leinberger 2008; 2011). Although Mumford declared urban density outmoded nearly a century ago in a world quite dramatically inter-connected by advances in transportation and communications, today that density has become desirable once again. What became disadvantages of inner-city districts during the long period of twentieth-century suburbanisation – including its pedestrian scale, housing stock, retail and manufacturing facilities, reliance on mass transit and diversity of residents – appear to emerge as distinct advantages in our current age.

Leinberger's pronouncement of exurbia's imminent decay is as strident as Jack Lessinger's earlier prediction of its ascendancy, which was indeed on target for the 1990s and early 2000s. Arthur Nelson (2009), an urban studies professor, has projected housing demand based on consumer preference surveys. His findings suggest that 44.5 million new attached and small-lot housing units – very much distinct from the popularly branded 'McMansions' of American exurbia – will need to be built by 2020 to accommodate demographically driven demand. Further, his prediction that 27 million more large-lot homes currently exist than will be needed in 2020 bolsters Leinberger's argument for the relative decline of exurbia. Nelson concludes that more than two-thirds of all new housing units required between now and 2020 will need to be rental units as both Baby Boomers and Millennials seek the flexibility of rental over homeownership.

Unlike both Leinberger and Lessinger, Frey is less inclined to drama. For his part, he leaves open the possibility of changes in preference – though he is fairly sure, at least in the short term, that young Americans are unlikely to set their sights on an exurban frontier: 'The fact that outer suburban [i.e. exurban] growth has continued to falter two years after the recession ended calls into question whether today's younger generations will hold the same residential preferences as their forebears. It is possible that the new financial risks they face, along with increased environmental and economic concerns, will change perceptions of where to find their version of the American Dream' (Frey 2012).

Joel Kotkin, demographer and professor of urban development, is not convinced that we are likely to see a major event through shifting

preferences for community type. Challenging New Urbanist optimism, who build confidence through predictions of Fishman, Leinberger and others for robust reurbanisation, Kotkin (quoted in Alva 2012) predicts a simple 'reversion to type' following a sustained economic recovery wherein trends underway in the first part of the 2000s recover and continue with suburbs rebounding as predominant destination for movers. Nevertheless, Kotkin (2006) suggests that 'we need to look at current suburbia not as a finished product, but something beginning to evolve from its Deadwood phase'. Thus, the suburb – in order to survive – must respond to changing market conditions and consumer demands in order to transform itself. Specifically, Kotkin (2006) appears to embrace the notion that while the suburb may remain the primary category, any particular suburban community could succeed or fail in attracting migrants and retaining residents based on how well it can learn from 'our ancient sense of the city' and, in particular, how well its leaders recognise 'the need for community, identity, the creation of "sacred space", and a closer relation between workplace and home life'.

At least on this final assertion, I find that I am in thorough agreement with Kotkin (see Hoey 2010). In fact, my most recent research with lifestyle migrants suggests that the lessons that Kotkin identifies may be essential to America's next act (Hoey 2014). As Mumford described for earlier periods of migration, today's trends may be seen as the result of feedback from the preceding period – most recently suburban sprawl that came to define the American landscape during the twentieth century. As Mumford noted, the impact of great phases of migratory flow on American society has always come not by way of population redistribution alone, but rather from materialisation of the predominant lifestyle that migrants in each period have pursued and the cultural ideals that were accordingly expressed.

Central to my own work examining lifestyle migration is the question of how people choose to respond to everyday struggles between contending obligations and visions of the good life. Where do people find the moral orientation that allows them to define 'the good' at a time of shifting social and cultural categories and diminished importance in traditional sources of shared meaning? Following an integrative approach, I tend to think that as far as lifestyle migration is concerned we will continue to see the same underlying tensions being worked out in choices that individuals and families make in their attempt to negotiate challenges and opportunities of an ever altered cultural, social and economic landscape. Whether relocation decisions lead to rural areas,

small towns, exurbs, suburbs or urban centres, lifestyle migrants appear motivated by similar vows.

Kotkin correctly identified a fundamental set of needs much like those so often documented in the accounts of lifestyle migrants – regardless of the prevailing residential pattern. I would say that a fifth migration in America will be distinguished not by any singular pattern of *where* migrants choose to go but rather by compelling *motives* that they have for relocating, the ways in which they *frame* their decisions, and – specifically – by the lifestyle commitments that they make for starting over in these communities. I believe that what Lyn MacGregor (2010; cf. Hoey 2005; 2006; 2010) found in her study of in-migration to a small town in the Midwestern United States should be a guiding principle for our many examinations of lifestyle migration in whatever context. Specifically, we must explore how orienting ideas about obligation and agency – specifically the extent to which lifestyle migrants feel that it is an essential good to bring their everyday lives into resonance with a set of larger personal goals – simultaneously provide motivation for individual action, define subjective identity, and help shape conditions for collective experience in destination communities laying within rural areas, small towns and urban centres.

Notes

1. See also McGranahan and Sullivan (2005) and McGranahan (2008).
2. Known officially as the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, the bill provided loans to start a business or farm, payments of tuition and living expenses for secondary and post-secondary education, and low-cost mortgages. The program ran until 1956.
3. New Urbanism is reformist design movement that emerged in 1980s community planning (see Katz 1994). Its proponents aim to transform all aspects of community design from new or 'greenfield' developments to urban infill and redevelopment of existing structures or 'brownfields'. At the core of new urbanist reform is a call to create 'healthy neighborhoods' defined by walkable scale, open spaces for public recreation, a range of housing options and businesses in 'mixed-use' design, and cultivated 'sense of place' (Duany and Plater-Zyberk 1992).

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5

Jumping Up from the Armchair: Beyond the Idyll in Counterurbanisation

Keith Halfacree

Let us not take the study, the lamp and the ink out of doors, as we used to take wild life – having killed it and placed it in spirits of wine – indoors.

(Edward Thomas 1909/2009: 132)

In the overemphasis of cultural studies on the cultural forces beneath the landscape, it has lost interest in the landscape itself.

(Mitch Rose 2006: 542)

Introduction: rural lifestyle migration

The rural features centrally within the wide spectrum of experiences that comprise the attempts to ‘escape to the good life’ that are signalled by lifestyle migration (Benson and O’Reilly 2009). More specifically, though, this is a rural framed theoretically as a *social construction*, informed strongly by social science’s late twentieth century ‘cultural turn’ (Nayak and Jeffrey 2011) and its foregrounding of the role of the socio-cultural realm within everyday life. This perspective – the chapter cautiously labels it a paradigm,¹ such has been its influence within rural studies from the late 1980s – has sought to articulate ‘the fascinating world of social, cultural and moral values which have become associated with rurality, rural spaces and rural life’ (Cloke 2006: 21). It is these cultural values that lifestyle migrants frequently seek to experience (e.g., Benson 2011; Hoey 2005, 2009). However, this chapter argues

that understanding the place of the rural within such lifestyle migration must not end with these values; even if it may usefully start with them. Its place is argued to exceed any such socio-cultural framing.

Engaging aspects of a wider ongoing critical (re)evaluation of the social construction paradigm, the chapter examines the migration of people towards more rural areas, a set of practices corralled under the taxonomic label 'counterurbanisation' (Halfacree 2008).² Following this introduction, the chapter presents three ways in which migrating towards the rural can be addressed. First, it discusses how counterurbanisation within the social construction paradigm became predominantly presented as a 'representational practice', underpinned in particular by the culturally inscribed attractions of the 'armchair countryside' of the 'rural idyll'. Such a reading firmly associates counterurbanisation with lifestyle migration, as already suggested. Yet, when this reading is reflected on, it is immediately clear that there exists mismatch between the geographical imaginary and 'real' rural places, a disjuncture which gives pause for thought as to both the explanatory adequacy of the representational perspective and even of how scholars delineate 'migration' generally. Attention shifts, second, to recognising more-than-representational aspects to counterurbanisation, where the affective powers of the more-than-human rural environment, in particular, receive sustained attention. While this 'environment' only becomes physically (as opposed to socio-culturally) 'active' following relocation, it is argued in the third reading that granting such attention can be justified by adopting a more 'event' perspective. The 'event of counterurbanisation' and the central place of the more-than-human world 'beyond the armchair' within this are illustrated in the chapter's second main section. This sketches two East Anglian case studies drawn from the 'new nature writing' literature. Following an event-ual framework, developed roughly from Schillmeier (2011), both migrations are shown to be societally every day occurrences that are not everyday for those involved; disruptive, which is both negatively and (increasingly) positively evaluated; and express strongly the emergent role of an active more-than-human rural environment. Finally, a conclusion both summarises the chapter's findings and reflects on their implications for examining lifestyle migration more generally. It also cautions that a key message is not that counterurbanisation or lifestyle migration scholarship should discard the socio-cultural paradigm but that careful use of more-than-representational, more-than-human and event-ual sensitivities extend its scope into what Ingold (2008: 1809) terms the 'creeping entanglements of life'.

Migrating towards the rural: beyond representational action

Counterurbanisation as representational practice

Jon Murdoch's (2006: 177) contribution to the *Handbook of Rural Studies* outlined 'a propensity on the part of more and more households to leave the city in search of a better life in the countryside...[a process that has] changed the character of rural communities and rural society'. This depicts well what social scientists have come to term counterurbanisation (Halfacree 2008). The term seeks to articulate, as its name suggests, a reversal in the demographic fortunes of rural and urban areas in the former's favour. It is thus set up in explicit contrast to urbanisation, a defining spatio-demographic feature of the modern age. Moreover, while this key socio-demographic phenomenon is typically represented as a process peaking in the Global North in the late twentieth century, it persists strongly into the present. In short, notwithstanding detailed debates on how it should be understood and differentiated (Halfacree 2008; Mitchell 2004), counterurbanisation typically involves 'pro-rural migration' (Halfacree and Rivera 2012) or the net movement of people towards more rural destinations.

Focusing on the practice of counterurbanisation, as compared to its spatio-demographic outcomes, there has been a noted change in emphasis within scholarship over time. In the early years, reflecting cultural expressions such as Jeffersonian agrarianism and the 'frontier thesis' in the United States (Bunce 1994), counterurbanisation could be positioned as an emerging 'natural' phenomenon. As overall societal prosperity grew and new transportation and labour-saving technologies were adopted by large sections of the population, an 'instinct' to live in more rural settings became practically realisable. Thus, Berry (1976: 24) argued that counterurbanisation expressed a 'reassertion of fundamental predispositions of the American culture...antithetical to urban concentration'. The positivistic underpinnings of the then recent 'quantitative revolution' (Nayak and Jeffrey 2011) was, furthermore, able to give a degree a theoretical rigour to such explanations, with the urban-to-rural shift via counterurbanisation becoming a Ravensteinian 'law' of migration (Boyle, Halfacree and Robinson 1998: 59–60).

The 1970s was, of course, also a period where such spatial 'laws' and their positivist underpinnings were increasingly challenged by critical scholarship. Marxian accounts, stressing the central importance of the economic basis of society, linked counterurbanisation firmly to dynamics within the class structure of capitalism. This provided a 'wholly darker,

more hard-edged, materialistic and realistic explanation' (Fielding 1998: 42). In contrast, humanistic critique took issue with the de-humanisation intrinsic to the idea of spatial laws and sought to investigate how counterurbanisers explained their behaviour. This work burgeoned, not least in the United Kingdom (Boyle, Halfacree and Robinson 1998: 143–148). It provided thorough insight into the complexity of the counterurbanisation process for its practitioners, while retaining the importance of class perspectives.

Uniting all of this scholarship, however, and to a degree weathering the storms of dispute between the various 'isms' that sought to make their mark on counterurbanisation, has been the central importance given to the role of spatial representations – imaginary geographies – of rural/rurality (and urban/urbanity). From Jeffersonian images of a 'true' America onwards, the importance of meanings of rurality 'put together in words, images, figures, graphs and tables' (Nayak and Jeffrey 2011: 99) was central. Notwithstanding the caveat that counterurbanisation usually requires some 'favourable' economic context for those involved (Fielding 1998) – from a job accessible from a rural residence, to having sufficient resources to buy a country property, to the potential for downsizing and/or downshifting – it has come to be seen as a *socio-cultural* practice or set of practices.

More specifically, what are termed in the migration literature 'environmental factors' are accorded considerable importance for the practice of counterurbanisation. Such factors extend beyond biophysical attributes (temperature, topography, vegetation, wildlife and so on) to incorporate fundamentally cultural expressions. For example, in a review of 'amenity migration', Gosnell and Abrams (2011: 306, 308, emphasis added) asserted that within 'the variety of factors operating at multiple scales [that] contribute to making the movement ... possible', a key role is played by '*social constructions* of rurality and urbanity, and their effects in individual decisions to relocate'. Or, from Dirksmeier's German perspective:

... [t]he *structure and situation of a rural area ... are of little relevance* to the newcomers' motives. It is the *conception* of an idealized rural lifestyle which is crucial in determining the actions and attitudes of people at the time of their arrival. (2008: 160, my emphases)

The present author's work has also made this same broad case (Halfacree 2008).

It is the central importance given to socio-cultural factors in drawing people into the rural that associates these expressions of

counterurbanisation with lifestyle migration. The rural environment and what it is associated with existentially have come to feature prominently within the late modern 'projects of the self' (Giddens 1991). Migration to what seemingly promises to be a better way of life represents one of the 'escapes' (O'Reilly and Benson 2009: 4) that lifestyle migration signals. In contrast, other forms of counterurban migration, such as those undertaken for more explicitly economically instrumental reasons (Halfacree 2008), might be undertaken to improve quality of life and life chances but remain less focused on lifestyle; they are more about emancipatory than life politics (Giddens 1991).

Turning to the representations of rurality that seemingly underpin much lifestyle counterurbanisation, highly prominent are versions of a 'rural idyll'. Thus, with British lifestyle migration to rural France, Benson (2011: 1) illustrated explicitly how such an idyll not only 'inspired the act of migration...but also framed...post-migration lifestyle choices' (also Hoey 2005, 2009). However, this concept of a rural idyll is possibly even more slippery than that of counterurbanisation, similarly provoking academic debate on its content, analytical value and cultural importance (Bunce 2003; Nicolson 2010; Short 2006). For example, idyllic ruralities vary considerably geographically, culturally, socially and historically. Such diversity immediately raises questions of whether 'something' transcends the cultural representational dimension to explain more fundamentally associations made between the rural and the 'good life'. Rose's (2006: 545) suggestion of 'landscapes' gathering 'dreams of presence' through which one may 'attempt...to hold onto the worlds that always eludes our grasp' may have explanatory mileage here, as may associations between rurality and re-enchantment (Evans and Robson 2010), an issue briefly returned to later.

Crucially and highly appropriate within all of this intellectual 'chatter', the rural idyll is widely acknowledged as a product of a largely urban 'bourgeois imaginary' (Bell 2006: 150). As such, it suggests a potentially very powerful force within contemporary capitalist society. Pursuing this, Canadian geographer Michael Bunce in his influential 1994 text *The Countryside Ideal* coined the term 'armchair countryside'. This suggested a spatial imagination or representation thought-up, fine-tuned, embellished, promoted and, of course, critiqued, if not literally in the comfort of an armchair located next to a warm, cosy open fire, then at least at the office desk and on the computers of largely urban cultural producers, arbiters and mediators (including academics).

A key recurrent finding that emerges from critical investigation of rural idylls, however, is how they typically present a 'mistaken view

of the countryside as pastoral' (Nicolson 2010: 122). There is considerable mismatch between idyllic representations and academic accounts of actual rural places and people. For example, while the English rural idyll typically expresses Bell's (2006) artisanal pastoral farmscape, actual English farming landscapes include 'super-productivist' (Halfacree 2006) agribusiness spatialities that inscribe an everyday geography bearing very little relevance to any conventional idyll. More socially, British lifestyle migrants to rural France are soon forced to face up to a 'disjuncture between...expectations and the local culture' (Benson 2011: 61), while work within 'neglected rural geographies' (Philo 1992) presents a diversity of populations, including residents in considerable hardship, poorly mirrored within idyllic representations. Even for the counterurbaniser, '[d]ruidery, the daily grind, is not limited to the office. They await you in the countryside too' (Nicolson 2010: 123).

This sense of mismatch between, crudely put, rural 'image' and 'reality' recently provoked the present author and a colleague to revisit the assumption of lifestyle counterurbanisation as so predominantly 'representational' (Halfacree and Rivera 2012). The revisit soon suggested just how much counterurbanisation frequently encompasses much more than can be explained by armchair representations. Moreover, widening the explanatory lens soon leads to critical reflection on the more general dominant epistemological and ontological scholastic framing of 'migration'. Migration, in sum, is about a whole lot more than relocating from A to B 'a self-contained object like a ball that can project itself from place to place' (Ingold 2008: 1807). In this it is about more than representation.

Counterurbanisation as more-than-representational

Within the social construction paradigm's framing of counterurbanisation, neat and simplistic accounts of the relocation process have increasingly been rejected. This is because the idea of 'culture' is fundamentally not that of any distanced and discrete elite culture but of the more immediate, entangled and embodied 'cultures of everyday life' or 'inhabitation' (Ingold 2008). The present author, for example, explicitly rejected the usual possibility of being able to reduce relocation to a single reason, asserting instead that '[r]ather than look for one or two relatively self-contained reasons for migration we must expect to find several, some relatively fully-formed, others much more indefinite' (Halfacree and Boyle 1993: 339). Furthermore, these multiple strands are regarded as often highly elusive and incoherent, relating as they do not just to discursively expressed (or even expressible) 'decisions to move'

but in part to more subconsciously or even unconsciously embedded priorities, projects and proclivities (Halfacree and Boyle 1993).

Nonetheless, such complexity *within* a still predominantly representational perspective is no longer seen as enough. A focus on spatial representations within counterurbanisation ignores a recent growth in scholarship, associated in human geography with Nigel Thrift (2007) in particular, that has sought to downplay such quasi-cognitive emphasis within the practices of everyday life (Macpherson 2010). This non-representational or, after Lorimer (2005), more-than-representational perspective does not deny the importance of representations within everyday life. Instead, it builds, in particular, on Merleau-Ponty's (1945/1962: xviii) assertion of how '[t]he world is not what I think, but what I live through'. In other words, it calls on researchers to de-centre the social construction and cognitive realms of representation when explicating everyday life in favour of attending to:

shared experiences, everyday routines, fleeting encounters, embodied movements, precognitive triggers, practical skills, affective intensities, enduring urges, unexceptional interactions and sensuous dispositions. (Lorimer 2005: 84)

It favours, in short, a focus on practice and action over thought and contemplation; embedded, entangled inhabitation (Ingold 2008).

Nonetheless and notwithstanding its usefulness elsewhere, the applicability of a more-than-representational sensitivity to understanding lifestyle counterurbanisation may not be immediately apparent. This is because, *as conventionally understood*, such migration as noted earlier is *defined* a priori as largely a representational instrumental action within a reflexive project of the self (Giddens 1991). Unlike so much else in life it is 'contemplative' (Thrift 2007: 114). Lifestyle migrants typically seek 'escape' (O'Reilly and Benson 2009: 4) and rare are those who migrate, whether or not to the countryside, 'by accident' or without careful thought. Consequently, the relevance and certainly the prominence of any more-than-representational perspective is only likely to come into its own when the *experience* of counterurbanisation rather than the relocation process itself is interrogated. It is of the 'lifestyle' more than of the 'migration'. In particular, it becomes important to help explain why counterurbanisers tend to stay in rural destinations, not least when they experience directly the frequent mismatch between represented (idyllic) and lived ('real') rurality noted earlier (Halfacree and Rivera 2012).

Specifically, and notwithstanding numerous other ‘moorings’ promoting spatial inertia that together explain why Moon (1995: 514) could assert that ‘migration ought to be viewed as a contradiction to the usual endeavours for locational and social stability’, adding a more-than-representational perspective enables a fuller indication of how the rural world of the counterurbaniser’s destination can engage the migrant. In part, this entanglement will involve representations but its fuller significance can only be appreciated when a more-than-representational sensibility is prominent.

On the one hand, as discussed earlier, migrants have likely been engaged by representational rurality in the rationale for their move, and this connection carries on in subsequent lives. This includes attempts ‘to resolve ... disjuncture’ (Benson 2011: 63) between actual and imagined as migrants seek to bring their dreams to fruition (Halfacree and Rivera 2012). On the other hand, the rural that is more-than-human (Whatmore 2002), in particular, can come into its own in a fuller and livelier sense following relocation. Rurality in the guise of landscape and nature becomes both affective and effective. It can ‘scape’ the in-migrant as it ‘press[es] hard upon and into our bodies and minds, complexly affect our moods, our sensibilities’ (Macfarlane 2012: 341). It may do this under several interlinked themes (Halfacree and Rivera 2012; Halfacree 2013):

- *Slowing down*, within a less outwardly frenetic landscape;
- *Feeling life*, notably becoming attuned to the rhythms of nature and the seasons;
- *Connectedness*, rhizomatic links with plants, animals, inanimate objects, or other people;
- *Place-based dwelling*, becoming and sensing embeddedness or rootedness within everyday life;
- *Learning by doing*, practice promoting a re-focused sense of one’s life.

While all of these themes are clearly open to representation (as the case studies outlined later will demonstrate), a more-than-representational sensitivity is required to appreciate more fully how the complex ‘scaping’ of the migrant occurs.

Overall, therefore, a more-than-representational perspective indicates how the rural environment is not just an object, hopefully rewarding, for the migrant to negotiate, as it is itself far from passive. It presents an ‘animated’ (Rose 2006: 538) and lively ‘zone of entanglement’ (Ingold 2008: 1807) with an ‘atmosphere’ that ‘creates a space of intensity that

overflows a represented world organized into subjects and objects' (Anderson 2009: 79). This may be linked, as suggested by Macfarlane (2010), to experiences of re-enchantment. Nonetheless, while cultivating re-enchantment might be important for explaining in part 'why people stay' (Halfacree and Rivera 2012), both more-than-representational and more-than-human perspectives may still be regarded as rather peripheral to the counterurbanisation *process*. This is unless how this process is conventionally delineated is itself subjected to conceptual reappraisal. Such re-scripting is the chapter's next task.

Counterurbanisation as event-like

Although frustratingly elusive to pin down (Anderson and Harrison 2010), the concept of the 'event' is a key component of non-representational theory (Thrift 2007). Axiomatically but perhaps somewhat counterintuitively, an event is understood as '*not* just something that happens' (Fraser 2010: 57, my emphasis), with major impacts perhaps but ultimately 'done and dusted' over a relatively discrete period, thereby making it relatively straightforward to signify and represent. Instead, the event provides a metaphorical gateway or portal to a radically different 'before and...after' (Fraser 2010: 65). Events provide 'new potentialities for being, doing and thinking' (Anderson and Harrison 2010: 19, emphasis removed) that exceed any purpose, logic or rationale that the action involved may initially express. Consequently, 'it is not the event itself that is the bearer of signification. Instead, all those who are touched by an event define and are defined by it' (Fraser 2010: 65). The event:

has neither a privileged representative nor legitimate scope. The scope of the event is part of its effects, of the problem posed in the future it creates. Its measure is the object of multiple interpretations, but it can also be measured by the very multiplicity of these interpretations: all those who, in one way or another, refer to it or invent a way of using it to construct their own position, become part of the event's effects. (Stengers 2000: 67)

Events, therefore, while clearly being (usually) nameable and thereby capable of representation are not reducible to any such definitive legislation. They cannot be signed-off so easily. Indeed, following on from the action itself, any such 'initial' representation really only articulates the starting point of the event. As Rose (2006: 550) argues, 'representations

initiate and provoke rather than constrain and tie down'. More generally, analytical attention needs to shift 'away from the objects, narratives, and performances where culture ostensibly manifests to the movements, inclinations, and desires for which those objects, narratives, and performances provide direction' (Rose 2006: 538). Thus, the event may always be capable of (partial) representation but such practice has to be provisional and continuous as the event is a moving target and its scope indeterminate. Indeed, it is through indeterminacy or contingency that events may 'gain importance' (Schillmeier 2011: 516) and thereby actually become *events*.

Events are most usually seen and imagined as large in scale and scope. Noted examples include wars, 9/11, the fall of the Berlin Wall, nuclear disasters or global illness pandemics. However, they can also be 'small'; the quotation marks indicating how significance should not necessarily be related to size. Schillmeier (2011) includes such highly personal things as strokes, falling in love and the onset of dementia as comprising events for those it touches. It is from this more personal perspective that migration and, specifically in this chapter, counterurban lifestyle migration can be presented as a candidate for event-like status.³ Attributing such as status to lifestyle counterurbanisation radically rebalances how it is to be interpreted and mapped out.

If counterurbanisation is regarded as having event-like qualities, then the relocation and the reasons given for it are still of importance – Rose's (2006: 538) 'objects, narratives, and performances'. So, therefore, from the scholarship reviewed above, are representations of rurality, as they help to explain the presence of the person(s) in the rural environment. However, potentially this just marks the beginning of analysis. Attention then turns to how relocation opens a gateway to potential realisation of Rose's (2006: 538) 'movements, inclinations, and desires'. An event perspective leads to counterurbanisation being seen as 'distributed' into the future, as much as it is rooted in the past (Halfacree and Boyle 1993). It also makes it hard – if not impossible – to determine when, if ever, it is 'over' and therefore amenable to any final representational inventory. Event-ful counterurbanisation brings to the fore the unfolding of post-relocation (Benson 2011) and, within this, raises the effective 'definitional' potential of the more-than-representational and more-than-human effects and affects introduced in the last sub-section. These latter forces now *do* become, in other words, key 'persons of interest' within the lifestyle counterurbanisation *process*.

Touched by the event of moving to East Anglia

The movement of nature writers

To illustrate briefly some sense of an event-like unfolding of lifestyle counterurbanisation, the chapter turns to two short case studies. Both are migrations to rural East Anglia in England and are also linked by their writers being both friends and key figures within the 'new nature writing' (Cowley 2008; Mabey 2010a: 188–190). The latter is an essentially humanistic body of work that foregrounds 'a community of fellow beings' (Mabey 2010a: 189), balancing the voices of the human and the more-than-human (Matless 2009). It is what Hunt calls a psychoecology that combines intellectual traditions to present:

experiential and cultural accounts of the natural environment and living organisms, drawing upon autobiographical and travel narratives, art, literature and folklore as well as the many branches of natural history. (2009: 71)

In this respect, the new nature writing connects to earlier writings on 'nature' (e.g., John Clare or Gilbert White). These heterodox studies, often in the form of journals, expressed well 'affective moments' where one is 'unexpectedly "caught", or "struck"' (Mabey 2010a: 176). However, such 'associations and resonances' (ibid.) were displaced by the rise of more systematic scientific 'fascination with the mechanisms of nature' (Mabey 2005: 107) when intellectual division of labour became progressively entrenched through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

New nature writing's stepping-away from the latter 'disenchanted' (Macfarlane 2010) perspective has parallels with the jumping out of the office armchair to study counterurbanisation advocated in this chapter. It appears especially powerful at expressing more-than-representational and more-than-human sensibility. It consistently 'reinvigorates the quotidian aspects of commonplace surroundings habitually unnoticed due to familiarity' (Hunt 2009: 72) and specifically, within these surroundings, expresses 'an awareness of the provisional status of scientific truths with *an overarching confidence in the existence of the more-than-human world*' (Stenning 2013: 46, my emphases) and its agency.

The two writers' accounts of personal relocation and its aftermath may thus not express definitive examples of lifestyle counterurbanisation but are ideal resources for illustrating three key themes

within what Schillmeier (2011: 515–516) terms ‘cosmopolitical events’. These themes are:

1. The specific type of event may take place every day but it is not everyday for those it touches.
2. The event will ‘disrupt and alter the normalcy of social reality (cosmos)’ (hence cosmopolitical), potentially in two directions:
 - a) Negatively – ‘often abrupt, unexpected, alienating and endangering’.
 - b) Positively – ‘freeing, liberating and emancipatory’.
3. The event increasingly foregrounds ‘the contingent but specific effects ... that make up their complexities’.

It is under the latter two themes that the more-than-representational and more-than-human assert themselves, with third theme in particular being central to making the event event-ful.

Every day but not everyday

As one would expect from the discussion so far in the chapter, the spatial relocation that took place in both examples was clearly not an everyday experience, even if the academic literature has demonstrated how every day such migration now is (Halfacree 2008, 2012). This observation, of course, qualifies the argument made earlier of how any migration is rarely undertaken ‘thoughtlessly’. Richard Mabey’s migration expresses this excellently. His memoir, *Nature Cure*, begins with how he had come to the conclusion that he had to move away from the Chiltern Hills of southern England where he had lived all his life. Although a highly respected and successful nature writer, Mabey had ‘drifted into a long and deep depression, couldn’t work, used up most of my money, fell out with my sister – my house-mate – and had to sell the family home’ (Mabey 2005: 4). He had become ‘clotted with rootedness’ and like a bird needed to ‘flit’, a ‘word [taken from nature poet John Clare] that catches all the shades of escape’ (Mabey 2005: 1, 2, 1–2). Consequently, while not ‘chosen or planned’, he ‘caught a chance’ (Mabey 2005: 4) and relocated to rooms in a friend’s farmhouse in remote East Anglia, a location with which he was, however, familiar from frequent visits.

Mark Cocker’s memoir centring on his intimate interest in corvids, *Crow Country* (Cocker 2008), also begins with an account of the non-everyday character of his move. This time the relocation is more clearly lifestyle counterurbanisation, albeit only over a short distance of about 10 miles from the city of Norwich to the Yare Valley. Ostensibly provoked

by the need for space for his work and family, but clearly underpinned by his love of nature and the countryside, the migration proved *in practice* to be far from instrumentally ‘mundane...heavily institutionalised in and through facilitating networks’ (Halfacree 2012: 212). Instead, relocation to the run-down, damp and litter strewn – yet affordable – *Hollies* was described as expressing ‘a suppressed trauma’ (Cocker 2008: 7). Indeed, unlike Mabey, Cocker (2008: 13) rejects any idea that human migration can be described as ‘flitting’, asserting instead how:

when humans move house, they don’t migrate. They’re thrown into turmoil. There is no handrail of tradition or inherited understanding to steady the journey. There is no homing instinct to guide their passage across it. There is just the unfamiliar and the muddle of the unfamiliar.

This account, in short, thus diverges dramatically from a social construction framing of lifestyle counterurbanisation as following the lure of the culturally emplaced ‘handrail of tradition’ that is the rural idyll.

However, working through the ‘muddle of the unfamiliar’ – this every day that is not everyday – can ultimately prove highly rewarding. For Cocker (2008: 10), ‘[p]erhaps it was part of the wider madness of that year of moving house that we eventually decided to buy the *Hollies*. Not that we have ever regretted it. We love it. It’s changed our lives’. To explore how lives changed, attention now moves to the post-migration everyday.

Unbuttoning normalcy

Disruption and its ‘unbuttoning of normalcy’ (Schillmeier 2011: 530) were strongly apparent within both accounts of migration to East Anglia. For Mabey (2005: 10), the move raised key existential questions: ‘Where do I belong? What’s my role? How, in social, emotional, ecological terms, do I find a way of *fitting*?’ The ornithological flitting metaphor was continued in how he saw his move as ‘the thing I’ve been scared of all my life: the rite of cutting the cord, leaving the nest, spreading one’s wings’ (Mabey 2005: 5). In residential terms, one might say that Mabey’s reflexive project of the self was only now beginning. Immediately though, the importance of the rural place came through:

[u]p in the East Anglian borderlands I know I’m going to have to confront the daily realities of country life in a way I never have before. The weather, for a start [wind, rain] ... big farming [the landscape of

agribusiness, anathema to his ecological vision]...this bare [treeless relative to the Chilterns] and quintessentially watery place. (Mabey 2005: 10–11)

Likewise, Cocker could perceive an appropriate incongruousness in toasting the family's move with warm champagne, since it expressed 'a celebration of estrangement' (Cocker 2008: 14) rather than any arrival at a rural idyll. He further noted how it took his elder daughter a year to overcome her dislike of the new home and how:

we were all overwhelmed by the experience [as] the comforting routines of our Norwich life had been *demolished overnight*, and... we had all been *cast up on the shores of uncertainty*. (Cocker 2008: 13, my emphases)

However, in both cases these negative experiences of disruption – aspects of a liminal condition commonplace within lifestyle migration (Hoey 2005) – were soon displaced by 'freeing, liberating and emancipatory' currents. Both writers, as one might expect from naturalists, found these elements in large part from experiencing the diverse more-than-human inhabitants of the East Anglian landscape. This landscape, as Lorimer expresses it with respect to Mabey (Merriman et al. 2008: 197) but which is also the case for Cocker, 'throb[s] and hum[s] with activity...creating...[a] richness of effect, and affect' in both memoirs.

Mabey, for example, reflected how disruption and confusion was transcended as what he termed his temporary 'lair' became home:

I came to mine [home] almost by reflex, with as little thought about what I was doing as a migrant marsh harrier returning to the fen – 'naturally', if you like. If I'd consciously had to plan and choose where I was going to go in what was, for me, the most momentous change in my life, I would never have made it. That dithering between equally desirable alternatives would have been quite paralysing, a sure route back into my state of immobilising anxiety.... [However,] I'd fetched up, as a fledgling, in a situation I'd never dreamed of, in the simplest possible habitation, in a lair that felt, symbolically, like the primeval shelters humans made in woodland clearings. But it worked. I grew up fast. I got out of the house. I was being about again.... Less than six months after moving to East Anglia I felt back in touch, in control of my life again, grounded. (2005: 74, 102)

However, one must not over-state the role of the more-than-human. Mabey found his emotional grounding and emancipation not just through the shelter of 'nature' but also in an intimate human way. This was through what developed into a new relationship that came out from the migration via his East Anglian friendship network, namely with his now partner Poppy. A Norfolk-raised Childhood Studies lecturer whom he had met years before and bonded over a mutual 'love of plants' (Mabey 2005: 61), Poppy was to become more than 'companion and comfort' (Mabey 2005: 102). Overall, one sees how Mabey's 'encounters with his local environment are both parochial *and* sociable' (Stenning 2013: 46), including a vital importance given to 'social dimensions of natural events' (ibid.) such as the coming of spring. In sum, a whole new environmental–emotional everyday reality was coming into existence.

In the Yare Valley, a strong emancipatory atmosphere was also soon sensed by Cocker. The environmental contrast is less strongly noted than for Mabey, as Cocker was more familiar with the East Anglian landscape, flora and fauna. However, as he begins in the book to muse on how the landscape of the Yare Valley increasingly imposed itself upon him, a kind of rapture is suggested. Furthermore, Cocker also reflects on how the role of the migration had begun to become 'extended' beyond any initial represented instrumentality:

[t]he proximity of a natural landscape had been carefully considered when we made the decision to move... Yet the feelings I encountered as I made my way down to Hardley Flood and, more often, as I walked back to the car with dusk blossoming all around, was *far more than simply the pleasure of convenience* [for a nature writer]. Equally the *sense of elation* seemed *out of proportion to the landscape around me or the experience it afforded*. (Cocker 2008: 17, my emphases)

In short, the migration enabled, as with Mabey, a new environmental–emotional everyday reality within the Yare Valley to emerge. This finally aligned Cocker (2008: 66, my emphases) squarely with his beloved rocks:

[b]y the time we moved to the valley... my own needs were aligned to the ecology of my sacred bird. I felt deeply jaded by the congested terraced streets of inner Norwich. *I wanted to break free*. I wanted an airborne cradle of sticks from which to scan the world passing below, wide horizons to stretch my gaze, and the open space with its faint breath of the steppe to fire my imagination.

Event-ual outcomes

With their relocations to and within East Anglia, both Richard Mabey and Mark Cocker thus eventually found their requisite experiences of holistic well-being and space, respectively. Nonetheless, the significance of these migrations does not end here. By the end of both memoirs, both relocations can be seen as inadequately and even rather insipidly represented by this pair of reasons. Indeed, the memoirs would be very much shorter if there was not much more to tell within the overall relocation narratives. It is this 'excess' that gives the migrations most clearly event-like/event-ual characteristics.

After Rose (2006), the relocations provided direction for movements, inclinations and desires to develop, not least via the 'contingent but specific effects' of more-than-representational and more-than-human experiences of rural East Anglia. These experiences, furthermore, provide not just the means for a new everyday reality to emerge but are also more agentic, as Rose (2006: 542, my emphases) further suggests when he speaks of how landscape 'solicits and provokes, *initiates* and connects...*engenders its own effects* and affects'; the affective can be effective. Notwithstanding the already-noted importance of Poppy's affectiveness and effectiveness for Mabey, it was these active rural place experiences that emerged quickly and strongly through the migration that rapidly asserted themselves within both memoirs. The initial relocation is rapidly displaced, dissolved and potentially effaced. In particular, entanglements with contingent but specific more-than-human natures increasingly enchant both writers.

Within Mabey's migration from the Chilterns to East Anglia, it is the windiness and the wetness of the area, in particular, that comes to feature especially prominently as a component or ingredient of his everyday life. It is a status that he muses on considerably (also Mabey 2010b) and ultimately with a degree of inconclusivity one might perhaps expect of an 'inhabitant' who makes his 'way *through* a world-in-formation, rather than *across* its preformed surface' (Ingold 2008: 1802). First, the wet weather stimulated an all-round re-birth:

[i]t was the sense of possibility that set me right. The floods that [first] autumn were like a second spring, quickening the place, pulling strings, jerking earth and vegetation – and me – back into life. (Mabey 2010b: 36)

Second, out of this renaissance came a new awareness of his own networked agency. This was especially prominent in the fenlands,

with the consequences reflected upon through an explicit social science lens:

[t]he fens, in Bourdieu's words, are a habitus, a field of play and natural possibility... And walking in the fens this summer, I've felt, in the most flattered way possible, water-shaped myself, caught up in the current. I'm momentarily one of the company. I ferry seeds, stuck to my shoes. I make brief openings in the reed canopy every time that I peer across at a pool. Whenever I step onto the peat... tiny efflorescences of moisture spread round my feet, and I have the feeling that yards, maybe miles, further on, I'm squeezing water out onto some slumbering aquatic growths. (Mabey 2005: 186)

In summary, acknowledging how 'boundaries between self and nature are easily breached' (Stenning 2013: 50), Mabey (2005: 74) muses that finding 'a way of "fitting" seems... no more likely to come from deliberate choice than from accepting a degree of drift, from tacking with events, going with the flow' and how finally, again also foregrounding the role of other human and non-human agency:

[w]hat healed me... was ... a sense of being taken not out of myself but back *in*, of nature entering me, firing up the wild bits in my imagination. If there was a single moment when I was 'cured' it was that flash of loving inspiration by Poppy, that sat me down under the beech tree in my old home, and made me pick up a pen again.... The physical rejoining came later, and my translation from the depths of forest country to bright and shifting landscape of the fens was a huge metaphorical support. *I really did have to listen, and look up.* (Mabey 2005: 225, latter emphases mine)

Mark Cocker, too, building on the earlier quote on the sense of rapture he felt returning to his new home, suggests throughout his memoir how the more-than-human in the guise of the landscape, with its atmosphere and diverse agencies, is implicated in remaking his everyday existence. First, it works towards building a similar sense of home to that expressed by Mabey. Specifically, the psychoecology of the landscape promoted a 'consubstantial' relationship between Cocker and the Yare Valley, whereby there develops a 'spatial relation... between beings and a place, such that the distinct existence and form of both partake of or become united in a common substance' (Gray 1998: 345). For example:

[t]he Yare valley was now [becoming part of my identity]. We'd opened our lungs and breathed it in. For the first time the Yare valley had enveloped us and sampled our presence. It seemed a perfect consummation. For only the second occasion in my life [the first was his Derbyshire childhood] I felt truly home. (Cocker 2008: 18)

Or, reflecting further how specific '[l]andscapes impose their own kind of relationship':

I've...learned to love a different register of features. Subtly and unconsciously they have become embedded in my experience. For instance it is a first task on arrival at any point of the marsh to scan the five-bar gates and their curious adjunct in this incised landscape, the fence extensions that lean into the dykes at an angle...I have learned equally to treat each dyke like a hidden valley that you inch towards and...scan quickly. (Cocker 2008: 18–19)

In summary:

[t]he space all around seems a part of such close encounters. It particularises the moment. Things seem special. I could be wrong. The background conditions may be far more prosaic. It may be that I am simply trapped by the sheer impediment of the river, and I am just making the most of the wildlife that's to hand. But I don't think so. In the Yare valley so many of the things that I had once overlooked or taken for granted were charged with fresh power and importance. It gave rise to a strange and fruitful paradox. I had come home to a place where everything seemed completely new. (Cocker 2008: 24)

Second, this sense of a consubstantiated homeliness also saw Cocker revisiting in the memoir the rationale for the move to the Yare. The migration begins to be picked apart and representationally reassembled differently. The lived reality of which the migration is a part itself has changed and its 'interpretation...become[s] part of the event's effects' (Stengers 2000: 67). As Cocker muses:

I sometimes wonder whether, in my passion for the Yare and its rooks, necessity wasn't the mother of invention. The real origins of my obsession were those regular slow-flowing crocodiles of cars, traffic light to traffic light, through the heart of the city. (Cocker 2008: 20)

This negative experience was increasingly 'abandoned' (Cocker 2008: 20) as the modest River Yare 'asserted itself with subtle power' (Cocker 2008: 19) and 'hemmed' (Cocker 2008: 20) him in. Finally, though, a central agentic role must also be accorded to the corvids:

[r]ooks are at the heart of my relationship with the Yare. They were my route into the landscape and my rationale for my exploration... Yet when I look back it seems bizarre to recall how little they once meant to me. Before we moved I gave rooks no more thought than any other bird. Rather, I gave them less. They seemed so commonplace. (Cocker 2008: 25)

The migration has now become, in short, less for family space than for *Crow Country*.

Conclusion: rethinking lifestyle migration

This chapter has argued that confining scholarship on lifestyle-orientated counterurbanisation to the representational study, lamp and ink (Thomas 1909/2009: 132) of Bunce's (1994) armchair countryside is frequently overly restrictive. One must instead sometimes jump up from this armchair, exit the metaphorical study and acknowledge how a fixation on such 'cultural forces' (Rose 2006: 542) as the rural idyll neglects roles played by other components of the rural scene. Particular attention has been called to the importance of the more-than-representational within counterurban relocation, especially as expressed through the more-than-human landscape. Moreover, if a lifestyle counterurbanisation can be seen as meriting (quasi-)event status then an armchair perspective becomes still more inadequate. Counterurbanisation-as-event *foregrounds* post-migration entanglements and experiences rather than according the act of relocation and its denoted rationale a priori status of 'privileged representative' or 'legitimate scope' (Stengers 2000: 67). Specifically in the two nature writer memoirs noted here it was argued that the more-than-human had a powerful affective and effective role that 'construct[ed its] own position' (Stengers 2000: 67) in excess of anything anticipated or expected, even from two nature writers!

These conclusions have implications for the study of lifestyle migration more generally and, in particular, for how one understands 'lifestyle' within this broad spectrum of migration experiences. For Giddens (1991: 81), in a key formulation, lifestyle was 'a more or less integrated set of practices which an individual embraces, not only because such

practices fulfil utilitarian needs, but because they give material form to a particular narrative of self-identity'. The argument developed in this chapter calls for researchers to scrutinise this definition.⁴ Three issues, in particular, present themselves.

First, Giddens (1991) expresses lifestyle as largely constituted through the everyday choices a person makes (and the routines that consequently emerge). While not refuting the role of (albeit constrained) choice (agency) within the 'strategic life planning' (Giddens 1991: 85) of the late modern self, as Benson (2011) has demonstrated for Britons in rural France and as Mabey and Cocker experienced, this does not mean that chosen 'reasons for moving' necessarily come to inscribe or represent the new lifestyle. Indeed, there may be much dissonance, even if a 'good life' is still attained.

Second and related, lifestyle must not be seen as overly fixed but as inherently mobile, mutating and evolving as the event of lifestyle migration plays itself out. Notwithstanding the central importance of routines and their role in promoting integration, the project of the self is, as Giddens (1991) emphasises, *reflexive*, immediately indicating the possibility of agent led change.

Third, lifestyle involves more than just this latter representational reflexivity, however. The 'narrative of self-identity' within lifestyle migration is not just in the reflective hands of the lifestyle migrant. Instead, a more-than-representational and more-than-human sensitivity appreciates both how a whole host of other forces, potentially both human and non-human, work to shape this narrative, again in often unexpected and dynamic ways. The extent to which a lifestyle is thus in the hands of a lifestyle migrant is always provisional and uncertain, seemingly 'waiting' for a Poppy, spring flood or murder of crows to come along.

Overall, while in Giddens' (1991) terms, counterurbanisation and other forms of lifestyle migration may be highly 'commodified' – articulated through the market, embedded within networks of migration, engaging mediated and encultured forms of idyllic rurality – they are also 'personalised'. However, this personalisation is not overly auto-biographical (Thrift 2007: 7–8) or voluntarist (Atkinson 2007). It is indeed the case that 'commodification does not carry the day unopposed' (Giddens 1991: 199) but challenging commodification's dominance is not just undertaken by reflexive, representing human agents but also comes about through the often subtle and elusive plays that comprise the broader 'creeping entanglements of life' (Ingold 2008: 1809) in all its forms.

The chapter concludes with three further qualifications. First, all lifestyle migrations should not be seen as events, even where they have major consequences for those involved. As Fielding (1992) recognised, migration does tend to be a 'big deal' but often much of this significance gathers closely enough around the relocation itself that it can be effectively and legitimately – if never completely – represented by it. In other words, lifestyle migration can certainly be 'transformative' (Benson 2011: 1, 3) without being an 'event'. Deciding whether or not a migration is event-ful, in other words, is always an empirical and longitudinal matter.

Second, the examples of Mabey and Cocker should not be seen as 'representing' the event-like playing out of counterurbanisation in general, even in East Anglia, or even for male nature writers moving to rural East Anglia. Multiplicity is central to the idea of the event, as 'all those who are touched by an event define and are defined by it' (Fraser 2010: 65), indicating an irreducible degree of uniqueness and specificity. Thus, while Mabey framed his migration as being in tune with natural behaviour, Cocker stressed its unnaturalness. The role of landscape and the more-than-human is equally multiple such that, for example, talking of an East Anglian atmosphere 'risks reification of the inexhaustible complexities of affective life' (Anderson 2009: 80). Mabey, for example, drew attention to windiness and wetness but it was noted how their roles remained somewhat unresolved and a similar sense of irresolution is apparent in Cocker's memoir. Once again, event-fulness is always an empirical and longitudinal matter.

Third, this chapter is not a call for either counterurbanisation or lifestyle migration researchers to abandon the social construction paradigm, even if one may reject paradigmatic status. It took intellectual struggle to establish the validity of this perspective and it remains vital for understanding the initial 'escape' that the migration expresses, even if it is less good at representing the subsequent quest for a better way of living (O'Reilly and Benson 2009). The chapter thus ends with Mabey's perspective on this issue, channelled by Anna Stenning (2013: 50):

Mabey considers whether our reliance on language is likely to 'estrangle us from nature', and admits that words obscure our sensual immediacy. Yet [language and imagination are] 'also the gateway to understanding our kindedness [*sic*] to the rest of creation... to become awakens, celebrators, to add our particular "singing" to that of the rest of the natural world'. [Mabey 2005: 37]

Sometimes, in other words, we *do* also need to sit back down in those comfortable office armchairs....

Notes

1. There is substantial critique of the Kuhnian concept of the scientific paradigm. The unfolding of this chapter implicitly articulates aspects of this critique.
2. In many other areas of migration research other paradigmatic perspectives, notably a political economic focus on the 'economic', remain more dominant (Halfacree 2004).
3. Other forms of migration, such as flows of refugees and otherwise displaced persons, might fit into the 'large' events category, however.
4. There are, of course, many critiques of Giddens's conceptions of lifestyle and the reflexive project of the self. These cannot be gone into here but a good start is with Atkinson (2007).

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Part III

Spaces of Imagination

6

Migrating Imaginaries of a Better Life ... Until Paradise Finds You

Noel B. Salazar

Introduction

Lifestyle migration has become a popular term to denote 'voluntary relocation to places that are perceived as providing an enhanced or, at least, different lifestyle' (McIntyre 2009: 4). Of course, virtually all forms of migration are related to aspirations of a 'better life'. The focus of lifestyle migration is on 'the lifestyle choices inherent within the decision to migrate' (Benson and O'Reilly 2009b: 609). David Conradson and Alan Latham (2005) describe the motivations behind such migratory moves as self-realisation involving self-exploration and self-development, with career advancement only a distant secondary concern. Enabled by wider economic and political conditions, lifestyle migrants are 'often, but not always, well educated. They may come from wealthy families, but more often than not they appear to be simply middle class' (Conradson and Latham 2005: 229).¹ They typically possess 'high levels of cultural capital derived from education, professional skills and cultural knowledge' (Benson 2012: 6). The classificatory box of these more 'privileged travellers' (Amit 2007) encompasses types as different as 'residential tourists', 'rural idyll seekers' and 'bourgeois bohemians' (Benson and O'Reilly 2009b: 611). Technically speaking, they are expatriates living outside their 'fatherland'. However, not all lifestyle migrants retain their original citizenship and not all maintain regular transnational family, social, financial or professional ties. Many officially change their domicile, clearly intending to live their professional and personal life 'elsewhere' indefinitely.

The decision to look for a new (and better) way of life most often is preceded by a watershed event either in the personal sphere (e.g., divorce, disease or death of a loved one) or professional sphere (e.g.,

redundancy or retirement). For lifestyle migrants, then, resettlement is 'a way of overcoming the trauma of these events, of taking control of their lives, or as releasing them from ties and enabling them to live lives more "true" to themselves' (Benson and O'Reilly 2009b: 610). Lifestyle migration, not unlike other types of boundary-crossings (cf. Salazar 2010b; 2011c), seems to be 'a vehicle for engaging with a significant life-cycle transition' (Amit 2007: 6). At the same time, lifestyle migration is not limited to a specific age group (in contrast with, for instance, retirement migration). Although it involves taking risks, these are accepted as worthwhile because the migratory move is considered 'transformative' (in various ways), offering both an escape from situations of stress and potentially jeopardised status and providing its own source of symbolic capital.

Lifestyle migration is broader than what has been described as (international) 'counter-urbanisation' (Halfacree 2012), because lifestyle migrants do not necessarily prefer non-urban settings. In contrast with 'amenity migration' (Moss 2006) or 'seachange' (Osbaldiston 2012), the attractive characteristics of the new dwelling – natural amenity, climate, recreation or affordable housing – only partially explain the motivation behind the move. In other words, lifestyle migration does not automatically imply 'downshifting' to a smaller, rural or more slow-paced community to live in 'voluntary simplicity' (Tan 2000). Contrary to 'lifestyle travellers' (Cohen 2011), the stress is on resettlement rather than on continuous mobility. And although the intention is to (re)build a new first 'home' (Ahmed et al. 2003), property ownership is not always present (unlike second home ownership). For the purpose of analysis, however, it is useful to limit lifestyle migration to more permanent migratory moves, while similar seasonal patterns are better captured by the term 'lifestyle mobility' (a specific form of seasonal migration). While most research on lifestyle migration so far has focused on Western lifestyle migrants (Benson and O'Reilly 2009a), it is by no means only a Western phenomenon (e.g., Ono 2009).

In this chapter, I reflect critically on the role of sociocultural imaginaries in 'becoming' a lifestyle migrant. While much research on lifestyle migration has focused on personal motivations, I disentangle here the role of socially shared imaginaries and the increasingly common valorisation, if not romanticisation, of boundary-crossing experiences, whereby migratory movements are seen as a desirable and even normative path towards fully realising one's human potential. In such a context, how do people understand and attribute meaning to lifestyle

migration? To what extent do lifestyle migrants appropriate or contest dominant imaginaries of identity-through-mobility? As I ethnographically illustrate, with examples from Belgians living in Tanzania and Chile, the imaginaries that inspire and guide lifestyle migrants do not really prepare them, neither for the fact that their lifestyle aspirations cannot be realised immediately nor for the multiple risks or potential failure of their endeavour. My empirical findings corroborate the idea that lifestyle migration involves an ongoing complex of processes rather than a single act of resettlement.

Movo ergo sum: the 'becoming' of a lifestyle migrant

In the context of this chapter, 'lifestyle' refers to the way people live their life, typically reflecting attitudes, values or worldviews. It is the relative amount of importance attached to different (major) aspects of life and, as such, is a means of forging a sense of self. Lifestyle can be used as a means of socially stratifying people, an idea already present in the work of Max Weber (1968: 305–306), who emphasised the link between status hierarchies and social power, seeing lifestyle as an instrument (next to formal education and hereditary or occupational prestige) that gives people social status. The link between lifestyle and social structure was popularised by Pierre Bourdieu (1984), who argued that taste and its expressions (including lifestyle) mark out distinctions between people and symbolically represent social rankings. In Bourdieu's framework, lifestyles are the result of particular material circumstances and a specific 'habitus' or embodied culture. Lifestyles thus reflect and (re)affirm people's social position which, in turn, reproduces the structures that define social positions.²

Nowadays, lifestyle choices are commonly seen as the outcome of individual aspirations, preferences and values, rather than socially shared traditions and customs. Because the latter are believed to have lost their power and there is an assumed 'openness' about how individuals live their lives, the concept of lifestyle has become ever more important to identity, forcing people to negotiate among a range of options. In his individualisation thesis, Anthony Giddens (1991) suggests a de-coupling of the association between class and lifestyle. Other aspects of social position (including age, gender, ethnicity and sexuality) create a wider range of possibilities for subjectivity formation. Giddens therefore focuses on the 'reflexive project of the self' and the ways in which individuals find meaning and create narratives of identity through the lifestyle choices

they make, using available social understandings and material resources. He describes lifestyle as:

...a more or less integrated set of practices which an individual embraces, not only because such practices fulfil utilitarian needs, but because they give material form to a particular narrative of self-identity...Lifestyles are routinised practices...but the routines followed are reflexively open to change in the light of the mobile nature of self-identity. (Giddens 1991: 81)

Importantly, he adds, '[T]he selection or creation of lifestyles is influenced by group pressures and the visibility of role models, as well as by socioeconomic circumstances' (Giddens 1991: 82). This reminds us that lifestyles are always (at least partially) structured by the social milieu – family relationships, educational experiences, community involvement and work patterns. Moreover, recent research findings reconfirm that class remains important (Oliver and O'Reilly 2010).

One way of expressing the desire to construct a personal life-course, especially for the middle classes, is through translocal mobility. Several authors have described how lifestyle migration is intrinsic to the trajectories of individuals, as 'a part of their reflexive project of the self' (Benson and O'Reilly 2009b: 615) or as 'the search for a potential self' (Hoey 2005), whereby they escape different forms of disillusionment through seeking an alternative lifestyle. Indeed, lifestyle migration is often marked by a break, a contrast, a turning point, and a new beginning (implying that the migratory move can, at times, be fairly unplanned). It can therefore be conceptualised as a process of 'becoming', through the spatial practice of resettling. Such an idea of 'becoming-through-movement' (*movo ergo sum*) is part and parcel of the perceived historical shift from inherited or acquired identities to a focus on identification (Bauman 2007), a change from relatively stable (place-based) identities to hybrid (achieved) subjectivities characterised by flux (Easthope 2009).³ This 'recasting of identity in terms of flexibility, adaptability and instant transformation' (Elliott and Urry 2010: 7) poses important challenges to traditional views of social belonging and cultural rootedness (Lien and Melhuus 2007).

Not unlike tourism (cf. Williams and McIntyre 2012: 209), the decision to become a lifestyle migrant involves two seemingly opposing processes: (1) a desire to be 'elsewhere' that is deeply rooted in socio-cultural imaginaries; and (2) a desire to belong and feel at 'home' somewhere (and such an attachment is not necessarily limited to one place).

Since the aim of lifestyle migrants is to settle (more or less permanently), they are expected to go through a process of adaptation and acculturation. With the perceived freedom to choose where to settle come additional burdens, including risks that go with the decisions involved in migrating.

While it has been acknowledged that becoming a lifestyle migrant involves risks (Benson and O'Reilly 2009a), there is surprisingly little research on actual failure (at least from the point of view of the lifestyle migrant and his or her social network). The contradiction between (pre-departure) expectations and experience on the ground is well captured in the literature and is common to virtually all types of boundary-crossing travel. Many lifestyle migrants sense that their new life is not quite how they imagined it would be. Most, however, insist that they are successful in their move (O'Reilly 2000). In other words, they choose to emphasise their success and to minimise those aspects in which they have been less successful. But what happens when things go so wrong on the social or economic level that even return migration becomes almost impossible?

The multiple risks of lifestyle migration are enhanced by the fact that the sociocultural valorisation of translocal (and often transnational) mobility makes the migrants responsible for their own 'becoming'.⁴ An important element here is choice, the unquestioned 'freedom to select from the multiplicity of lifestyle models and places presented through marketing and other forms of mediated expression' (Williams and McIntyre 2012: 218). Lifestyle migrants are encouraged to develop a 'style of living that will maximise the worth of their existence to themselves' (Rose 1996: 157). Partly influenced by neoliberal and free market ideologies, people engaging in lifestyle migration are associated with positively valued characteristics such as flexibility and freedom. They are required to take responsibility and to regulate their migratory moves in a manner that confirms they are freely choosing individuals while, in fact, they act within clearly defined fields of possibilities (cf. Bourdieu 1984). In other words, their migration 'choices' are pertinent to and normalised within the dominant mobility ideologies with which they engage. This partially explains why lifestyle migration is more popular in certain cultures or societies than in others.

The currently dominant mobility ideology in much of the Western world equates geographical movement with social fluidity (Salazar and Smart 2011). It negates the fact that social structures also contribute to mobility behaviour, that migratory moves are subject to social constraint and that opportunities of upward socioeconomic movement to which

people seemingly respond by being physically mobile are as much ‘freely’ wanted and realised opportunities as choices by default – with the legal structures regulating who can and cannot move across physical borders and social boundaries being crucial. Because valorisations of mobility are distributed socially, they contribute to the classification of individuals according to their different social positions. However, there is very little research on why and how these values differ (apart from obvious differences in travel opportunities and resources). Clearly, sociocultural imaginaries play an important role here, and it is to a discussion of these that I turn next.

Imagining ‘greener pastures’

The climate is definitely better and the overall quality and pace of life is much more pleasant. There are many [British] people who have settled here who are working hard and providing a good lifestyle for themselves and their families. (Provan 2004: 2–3)

Imaginaries – culturally shared and socially transmitted representational assemblages that interact with people’s personal imaginings and are used as meaning-making devices and world-shaping devices (Salazar 2011a) – are at the roots of many (if not all) migratory moves.⁵ The motivations to cross boundaries are usually multiple, but greatly linked to the ability of migrants and their social networks to imagine other places and lives. Earlier research on migration tended to separate the imagination, as an external impact, from practice. Yet, imagining is an embodied practice of transcending both physical and socio-cultural distance. Various anthropologists have described how collective imaginaries of a better way of life, or a possible future, motivate migration (Appadurai 1996; Benson 2012; Salazar 2011b; Vigh 2009). Aihwa Ong (1999) argues, in her critique of Appadurai’s work, that there is a need to consider the role of wider structural conditions in facilitating or hindering the realisation of these imaginaries. It is therefore important to recognise the historical and material conditions that facilitate life-style migration.

In the cultural logics of migration, imaginaries play a predominant role in envisioning both the green pastures and the (often mythologised) memory of the homeland (Jackson 2008). Migration is as much about these imaginaries as it is about the actual physical movement from one locality to another (Salazar 2013). The images and ideas of other (read: better) possible places to live – often

(mis)represented through popular media – circulate in a very unequal global space and are ultimately filtered through migrants' personal aspirations. Migration thus always presupposes some knowledge or, at least, rumours of 'the other side' (Salazar 2011b). Although global capitalism may accelerate flexible mobility, imaginaries of such movements play out in uneven and even contradictory ways in the desires of people (Glick Schiller and Salazar 2013). Important are 'access to economic resources and powers of symbolic legitimation, neither of which are distributed equitably... In this respect certain individuals are much better placed to be successful "authors" of their own lives than others' (Smith 2006: 54).

The quest for a more meaningful existence that drives lifestyle migrants is socially as well as culturally constructed (Osbaldiston 2012). As Karen O'Reilly and Michaela Benson argue, '[T]he material and social construction of particular places offering an alternative way of living is crucial... revealing the role of imagination, myth and landscape within the decision to migrate' (Benson and O'Reilly 2009a: 3). Indeed, lifestyle migrants hardly journey to *terrae incognitae*, but to destinations they already virtually 'know' through the widely circulating imaginaries about them (Williams and McIntyre 2012). Empowered by mass-mediated images and discourses, such imaginaries have become global and have changed the way in which people collectively envision the world and their own positionalities and mobilities within it (Morley 2000). For lifestyle migration in particular, 'The typical discursive representation of this form of migration (fuelled by television shows and other forms of the mass media including lifestyle magazines and the internet) suggests that it is consumption-led, tourism-related and leisure-based' (Torkington 2012: 74). Daniel Williams and Norman McIntyre identify quality-of-life markers (e.g., climate, nature, facilities, employment, security, family ties and tradition) as 'the key building blocks of the imagination' that motivate lifestyle migrants to undertake journeys or to relocate (2012: 223).

Importantly, imaginaries are never simply imposed in a one-way direction, but are appropriated and acted on in terms of co- and counter-imaginaries (cf. Salazar 2010a). Clearly, 'wider culturally specific imaginings make lifestyle migration an aspiration for many people; indeed, the experiences of those who have undertaken this migration strengthen and reinforce these imaginings' (Benson 2012: 13). One of the central challenges related to imaginaries is the lack of correspondence between the projected ideals and aspirations on the one hand and the perceived and experienced reality on the other (cf. the 'American dream'). This is

not different in the case of lifestyle migrants, who soon realise that they are not the only ones with imaginaries about their dream destination:

[T]hese powerful images or imagined worlds constructed by individuals and nurtured and amplified by electronic communication and mass media enter into the collective imagination in real places initiating and maintaining political action in defiance of those local and global forces that seek to question their authenticity and imperil their continued existence. (Williams and McIntyre 2012: 223)

Not surprisingly, one common expression of socio-cultural imaginaries are utopias, critical visions of good and possibly attainable alternative styles of live, located either spatially (elsewhere) or temporally (in another period) distant.⁶ As a variation on power, utopias propose an alternative by designing a future that aspires to become. Usually, they remain poetic fantasies of a desirable but unattainable perfection. Although many lifestyle migrants seek to 'go native', for example, their participation remains often imaginary. Similar to the 'global nomads' described by Anthony D'Andrea, many lifestyle migrants:

[T]end to reject their homelands both spatially and affectively, resituating national origins through a reversed ethnocentrism. They make critical, often disdainful assessments about tourists and other expatriates seen as parochial and conformist. In sum, they are displaced peoples with displaced minds. (D'Andrea 2006: 99)

Bye bye, Belgium

You know, people who really want to leave [Belgium], who fundamentally want to change, they dare the challenge and emigrate definitively. (Roggeman and Van der Schaege 2005: 44)

The following examples of Belgian lifestyle migrants in Tanzania and Chile help to illustrate the previously outlined conceptual framework.⁷ While immigration to Belgium is relatively well-documented, it is extremely hard to find reliable data regarding contemporary Belgian emigration, let alone to clearly differentiate lifestyle migrants from other types. Organisations such as *Vlamingen in de Wereld* (Dutch-speaking) or *l'Union Francophone des Belges à l'étranger* (French-speaking), which help Belgian citizens to emigrate, estimate that only half of the Belgians living abroad (approximately 300,000 people) are officially registered as

such.⁸ Despite the lack of official data, Belgian emigrants do get remarkably good coverage in the media, through weekly radio programmes such as *Les Belges du Bout du Monde* and in television programmes such as *We are from Belgium* and *Made in Belgium*.⁹ They are also represented well on various social network sites.

According to the staff working at *Vlamingen in de Wereld*, many Belgians have the intention to build a new 'home' (and life) abroad, often leaving without having secured a new job. Remarkably, many have never been to the country they want to migrate to, not even on holidays (and they often do not speak the language). Some have not even chosen a 'destination' when they look for help to emigrate. The most common reasons given to leave Belgium include: (1) the bad climate; (2) no good future for the children; (3) a bad quality of life; and (4) escape (from something or somebody). That imaginaries play a powerful role in Belgian emigration, too, is most powerfully illustrated by the following anecdote that the staff of *Vlamingen in de Wereld* shared with me. At the beginning of the millennium, the *Lord of the Rings* movie trilogy made numerous people wildly enthusiastic about New Zealand. All of a sudden, so many Belgians wanted to emigrate to New Zealand that at one point the Belgian Government decided to organise an information meeting with its Ambassador in New Zealand to explain to the potential emigrants how the 'real' New Zealand differed from the one presented in the fictional movies.

Reading the testimonies of Belgian migrants in volumes such as *Les Belges du Bout du Monde* (Joveneau and Thiébaud 2008) and *Out of Belgium: Stemmen van Belgen uit het Buitenland* (Roggeman and Van der Schaegehe 2005), one is struck by the large number of emigrants that can be classified as 'lifestyle migrants'. This is apparent, among other things, from the places where these people live. Apart from historically popular destinations such as neighbouring European countries, the United States, Canada or Australia, some have resettled in South America or Africa. Below, I present the detailed cases of two young Belgian lifestyle migrants. Both were born in the same year, grew up in the same city and studied at the same university. Both became lifestyle migrants but, as will become clear, in rather different ways.

Tanzania, here I come...

Tanzania is among the poorest countries in the world. While more affluent migrants are relatively rare, Europeans have always been around since the colonial era. Apart from some research on the 'expatriate

bubble' in Dar es Salaam (Smiley 2010a and b), there are no studies on lifestyle migration. The lifestyle migrants I met were mostly concentrated along the coast (including on Zanzibar) and in the northern highlands (in and around cities such as Arusha and Moshi).

When I first met Jan (pseudonym) in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania's largest city, he was 30 years old. He recounted his upbringing in Belgium as being relatively uneventful and his life in Belgium as not very exciting. At the end of his law studies at university, he had an existential crisis, not knowing what to do with his life and where to live it. Jan's experience living abroad was limited to having spent five months as an Erasmus exchange student in Paris. He had also travelled twice to West Africa with his girlfriend Els. The first time they went on holidays to Senegal, the second time on an adventurous roundtrip by minivan, all the way from Belgium and back. Reading the public travel blog they kept about this journey is very helpful in understanding how Jan's idea to become a lifestyle migrant germinated.

According to the blog, neither relatives nor friends were surprised when the young couple announced the plans for their road trip. Everybody was rather curious as to whether they would ever return. Before leaving, Jan mentioned that he had a passion for African music and culture and that he dreamt of possessing a mango plantation. Jan and Els left with open minds and with the necessary documents allowing them to work abroad. Their itinerary was driven by continuous attempts to stay off the beaten track, avoiding places with too many 'white people' (people like them). On the way, they spent some time with Jan's cousin in Spain, who had fallen in love with a Spanish girl during his time as an exchange student and who had decided to permanently settle in Spain. Upon arrival in Morocco, Jan and Els wrote about the scores of Africans who were desperately trying to migrate to Europe. A couple of months into their journey, they started wondering what they themselves were actually doing in Africa, roaming around without a clear plan or goal. This existential question was answered by a rhetorical one: 'Are we not always on the move?'

After nine months, they arrived safely back in Belgium. Jan worked half a year in an office job before enrolling in an applied Master's in Maritime Science programme. Afterwards, he worked for a year at two Belgian ports as an administrator. It was one of his superiors who informed him about a job opportunity at the port of Dar es Salaam. Jan applied, got the job and left for Tanzania. However, he quickly decided to return to Belgium because the collaboration with the European boss at the port proved to be difficult. The two met again in Europe and negotiated a

proper working agreement. Soon after, Jan left again for Tanzania and has never left since (except for going on holidays). Importantly, Jan never consciously chose to live in Tanzania – he would actually have preferred a West African country – but he definitely did everything he could to live on the African continent, his (imagined) paradise.

When I met Jan, he had been in Tanzania for over two years. I had noted that few of the Belgians living in Dar es Salaam had ever heard of him. Jan confirmed that he felt absolutely no need to hook up with compatriots. He was more interested in meeting Tanzanians and he was taking Swahili courses to have more fluid conversations with the locals. However, Jan did have a small circle of like-minded friends from across the Western world (usually with Tanzanian partners) with whom he regularly met during social activities.¹⁰ He was quite harsh in his judgement of Western expatriates who live in an ‘expat bubble’ (also he was familiar with the expression) and who behave like neo-colonials (cf. Fechter and Walsh 2010). According to Jan, these people were mainly interested in money, adventure and women – acknowledging the fact that the majority of expatriates are male. Interestingly, his own lifestyle could be characterised along similar lines. Jan was earning three times as much as he had been in Belgium, he drove around on a big motorbike (not without danger given the poor road infrastructure of the city) and, judging from the many pictures on various social network sites (on which Jan’s friends are more active than himself), he enjoyed being surrounded by beautiful Tanzanian ladies.

Jan conceded that earning good money and having a good job was important, but argued that this was not at all the reason he was in Africa. In his words: ‘You can find a nicely paid position elsewhere too. It’s just nice to live here, but it depends on what you’re looking for’. He simply loved being in Africa because it gave him much more ‘possibilities’ and some adventure too. The ‘superfluous’ things in his life had disappeared and life in Dar forced him to always keep a sharp eye and be flexible. Jan somehow felt that he ‘needed’ to be where he was. However, not everything was that rosy. Jan mentioned the traffic, bustle and generally more aggressive sphere of a city such as Dar es Salaam. To escape the busy city life, he had bought a considerable plot of land with banana trees (not a mango plantation as he had imagined years earlier) near one of the secluded beaches south of Dar es Salaam. He invited me over one day to show me the small thatch-roofed hut he had built there to spend the weekend quietly.

In the beginning, Jan still had his girlfriend Els in Belgium, although he soon realised that the relationship could not last and that they each

would have to go their own way. Jan tries to be ‘selective’ in the people he befriends, especially because many Tanzanians see *mzungu* (white people) as money machines (Salazar 2011b). He stated that having a Tanzanian girlfriend was not evident. In fact, Jan had been briefly married to a Tanzanian lady soon after he had arrived, but realised that this had been a big mistake. Four years after we first met, Jan is still living in Dar es Salaam and recently got (re)married to a Tanzanian woman. He continues living live as fully and intensely as possible. As he says himself: ‘Always on the move, never resting’.

Chile, here I come...

While Tanzania is among the poorest countries in the world, Chile has made big economic leaps forward over the last decades – the so-called ‘Chilean miracle’. It was the first country from South America to join the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, the so-called ‘rich man’s club’ of nations. Owing to its geographical location and morphology, Chile has traditionally been a country of immigrants (Salazar 2013). While there are around 1500 Belgians officially residing in Chile, the Embassy of Belgium estimates that the real number is probably double. Half of them live in the capital, Santiago, and many are married to Chileans.

Peter (pseudonym) is one of them. He was born in the same year and in the same city like Jan and he studied biotechnology at the same university, too. After his studies, he worked for a brief period in a factory in Belgium. Peter stated that already as a teenager he had decided for himself that he did not want to spend the rest of his life in Belgium. He disliked the fact that Belgium was so densely populated and dreamt of living somewhere with much more open space. When I met Peter in Chile, he had been living in Santiago for four years. During this time, he had unsuccessfully applied for many different jobs. He blamed the difficulty in finding employment on the *pitutos*.¹¹ The Belgian Embassy staff in Santiago added that foreign degrees are rarely recognised in Chile and that many European migrants have the wrong idea that they possess skills and knowledge that the Chileans do not possess. And, as has been noted elsewhere, overestimating one’s capacity can lead to failure (Kargillis 2011: 51). In short, this particular situation illustrates the problems of migration imaginaries that automatically couple geographical with social mobility (cf. Pajo 2007).

Ironically, Peter’s wish to leave Belgium was also partially related to the fact that he had witnessed ‘failure’ before. His parents divorced when

he was a child. While Peter was at university, his father got himself into trouble by helping a woman from Latin America obtain her residence permit through a sham marriage. This led to strong familial tensions. Peter got to know Elisa, his future Chilean girlfriend, while playing an online game. They started chatting and phoning each other and met soon afterwards, when Peter went on holidays to Chile. It was his first love relationship ever. Elisa, who was in the process of divorcing her Chilean husband, took the opportunity to move to Belgium and start studying. Over five years, Elisa lived with Peter, while her three children had to remain in Chile as her divorce was not yet legalised. He paid for all her expenses, even having to borrow money from a friend to survive. Mainly due to language problems, but also because Elisa gave birth to a baby during her studies, she did not obtain her university degree.

While it was Elisa's dream to marry a foreigner, it was Peter's dream to live in a 'paradise' elsewhere. So they combined both. Peter was happy to be able to leave Belgium. He arrived in Santiago without any concrete plans and had to sustain his wife who tried her luck with university studies in her home country. When I met Peter, he was living together with Elisa and the four children in a small apartment in one of the poorer neighbourhoods of the capital. He told me he spent most of his time at home and rarely went downtown (they do not have a car and his international drivers license is no longer valid). Although the neighbourhood is plagued with drugs and violence (and Peter had just been mugged when we met), Peter did not complain. In his words, not without irony: 'It can't really get worse'. Fortunately, the ex-husband of Elisa helped out financially. If they had the money, Peter and Elisa would immediately relocate elsewhere. They dreamt of starting up a tourism-related business in the Chilean countryside, where her relatives have a walnut plantation.

Like Jan, Peter was not really interested in meeting other Belgians in Santiago (and hardly knew any Belgians in Chile). Avoiding compatriots also meant avoiding nosy questions about his precarious living conditions (and he could simply not afford to attend the social activities organised by the Belgian Embassy or the various Belgian expat clubs). At the same time, Peter missed having good chats with like-minded people, as he was used to while in Belgium. He felt that Chileans considered him too much as a *gringo* (foreigner) with money, rather than as a person like them. Peter maintained regular contact with his family (especially his mother) and close friends in Belgium. In Chile, he moved around in a relatively small social circle. Three years after I met Peter, not much seems to have changed. Peter and Elisa's plan to resettle in the Chilean

countryside – a step closer to Peter’s original dream of living in a more open space – has not materialised. They still live in the same poor neighbourhood of the capital and now try to survive by running a small agribusiness specializing in export.

Conclusion

To be, I would now say, is not to be in place but to be along paths. The path, and not the place, is the primary condition of being, or rather of becoming. (Ingold 2011: 12)

The cultural assumptions, meanings and values attached to lifestyle migration need to be empirically problematised rather than assumed. Like other types of migratory movement, lifestyle migration is an ongoing process of ‘becoming’, involving the circulation of people, social interactions and cultural expressions (cf. Schuster 2005). At the same time, lifestyle migration remains a choice (or a series of choices) related to privilege and opportunity that is not universally accessible. The ultimate goal is often discursively packaged as one of enhancing or changing lifestyles and potentially redefining the self. As such, the discourse surrounding lifestyle migration is strikingly similar to the romantic stress on existentialism, and the quest for authenticity (Benson 2011a; Osbaldiston 2012). However, the two case studies described in this chapter serve to qualify the imagined ‘transformative’ aspect of lifestyle migration. Rather than changing attitudes and values – the contemporary ethos of incessant self-transformation – the migratory move helps to strengthen the attitudes and values Jan and Peter already had before they left (cf. Salazar 2004). In this sense, the lifestyle decision to migrate does not always have the cathartic effect imagined. This chapter thus lends support to other studies reporting that people are migrating in order to consolidate their lifestyle values (Benson 2012).

While lifestyle migration research often focuses on the culturally specific imaginings of destinations, the cases of Jan and Peter point to the importance of considering the qualities of a better way of life sought. Chile and Tanzania are not *a priori* imagined as offering a better way of life; they are not collectively imagined as destinations that offer this, but they become the locus of a better way of life because of the unique opportunities presented to individuals such as Jan and Peter. However, widely circulating imaginaries did mould the broader context in which lifestyle migration to these countries became possible and in

which the experiences on the ground are being framed. For Jan, it was a romantic, even neo-colonial, image of the African continent as a whole that pushed him to move. It did not matter where in Africa he landed, as long as he could experience African culture (and, unarticulated, enjoy the privileged position of being a 'white man'). For Peter, the imaginary was even more diffuse. He had an old dream of leaving Belgium, looking for a geographically and socially different 'landscape'. Chance contacts made him land in Latin America.

Apart from the unconventional destinations – compared to what is described in the literature – the life histories of Jan and Peter match very well the characteristics of lifestyle migrants that I had outlined in the introduction. In addition, their cases help us to demystify the phenomenon of lifestyle migration. They show us that the decision to become a lifestyle migrant may well be individual, but that it is partially structured by socially shared imaginaries. Interestingly, in both cases tourist mobilities prefigured the migratory move, which was partially motivated by a middle-class ambition to be different (Bourdieu 1984). The actual move was relatively unplanned. Both Jan and Peter stumbled upon their (imagined) 'paradise' rather than carefully choosing it. As noted elsewhere (Osbaldiston 2012), the relocation was not only a physical one but also involved changes in profession, consumption trends and socialities. The decision to become a lifestyle migrant clearly entailed risks that were not avoided but rather consumed in order to find 'a better life'. Those risks were hard to predict as they are mostly elusive and constantly changing their form.

To capture more fully the complexity of risks related to lifestyle migration, we need to combine micro-approaches with macro-approaches, embedding personal experiences and agency within wider social and structural challenges. Importantly, the story of Peter points to something that has been neglected somewhat in the literature on lifestyle migration (although it was noted elsewhere, see Scratchmann 2009), namely actual failure. Most lifestyle migrants face challenges while adapting to their new environment and have to come to terms with the difference between the life they had imagined and how it turns out on the ground. However, there are also those who utterly fail socially and economically, sometimes to the point that even return migration becomes virtually impossible. The scarce research about this topic hints at the fact that failure could be more common than is assumed (Kargillis 2011). Failure can be self-ascribed or attributed by the social environment(s) in which the lifestyle migrant moves. As Christina Kargillis notes, 'lifestyle expectations of "living the dream" often result

in failure due to an underestimation of spend versus income while the need to create one's own opportunities is also apparent. However, dreams do come true for some' (2011: 196). The stories of Jan and Peter only confirm this.

Both case studies stress the processual nature of lifestyle migration and the fact that mobility remains important, even when resettled (see, Benson 2011b). Jan relocated to Dar es Salaam but is actually developing his new 'escape': the banana plantation he bought in a remote coastal area south of the city. His example illustrates how lifestyle migrants can move from one type (bohemian) to another (counter-urban), not unlike other migrants (Schuster 2005). Peter is living in Santiago but his dreams to start up a business in the Chilean countryside have not materialised so far. His original destination seems to have become his destiny. His story painfully shows how 'lifestyle migration is positioned as a quest for self-actualisation where the contradiction exists of seeking a better life through a pathway of risk in unknown landscapes of apparently limited opportunities, often resulting in the experience of a somewhat more difficult life' (Kargillis 2011: v).

In sum, lifestyle migrants such as Jan and Peter are a good illustration of how people are 'on the move' in multiple directions. Their journeys confirm the contemporary idea that 'movement is an intrinsic part of belonging' (Papastergiadis 2010: 355). Migrants turn into 'stayers' when their lifestyle destination starts feeling like 'home' or, in the case of Peter, because they have insufficient resources or opportunities to move on. As migration is not strictly about relocating but also hoping to transform the social space one inhabits (the utopian part of the endeavour), lifestyle migrants perhaps 'never arrive somewhere' (Papadopoulos et al. 2008: 210). Jan became conscious of this a long time ago. In his words, 'We are always on the move'...

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Notes

1. Lifestyle migrants usually belong to the middle classes of the societies from which they originate. In a global context, however, they are relatively rich, privileged and powerful.

2. Following Bourdieu's logic, mobilities such as lifestyle migration are driven by people, with their relatively fixed habitus, who both move between 'fields' (places of work, leisure, residence, etc.) and go to places within fields where they feel more comfortable.
3. The somewhat utopic idea(l) of subjects constantly in a state of 'becoming', in critical relation to existing social structures and mechanisms of power, became popular in the social sciences through the writings of philosopher Gilles Deleuze, who continues a line of thought that was earlier developed by Friedrich Nietzsche, Baruch Spinoza and Heraclitus of Ephesus. As a theory of process and change, Deleuze's perspective on subjectivity privileges metaphors and figures of mobility (cf. Deleuze and Guattari 1987).
4. According to some scholars, becoming is 'the inherent impetus of migration' (Papadopoulos et al. 2008: 216). Becoming is described as 'a political practice through which social actors escape normalising representations and reconstitute themselves in the course of participating and changing the conditions of their material corporeal existence' (Papadopoulos et al. 2008: 81).
5. For an overview of the intellectual history and contemporary uses of the imaginary in anthropology, see Strauss (2006) and Sneath et al. (2009).
6. Utopia, or the perfect or ideal society, can refer to both *eu-topos* (a good place) or *ou-topos* (a no-place); classically an island or at least a territory isolated from other societies. Thomas More (1478–1535) coined the term *utopia* for an ideal, imaginary island nation somewhere in the Atlantic Ocean, which he described in *On the Best State of a Republic and on the New Island of Utopia* (1516). More's book inspired many people to set up real intentional communities that attempted to create ideal societies.
7. I carried out ethnographic fieldwork in Belgium (November–December 2008), Tanzania (February–March 2009) and Chile (December 2009–January 2010), supplemented with data from previous visits to Chile (since 1998) and to Tanzania (since 2004).
8. See <http://www.viv.be/> and <http://www.ufbe.be/>
9. See http://www.rtbf.be/lapremiere/emissions#rnf_les-belges-du-bout-du-monde?id=1009, http://www.rtbf.be/tv/emission/detail_les-belges-du-bout-du-monde?id=393, <http://www.een.be/programmas/we-are-belgium>, and <http://www.een.be/programmas/made-in-belgium>
10. The profile of Jan is strikingly similar to the 'bohemians' in Paris described by Sam Scott: 'The bohemians were simply those who had gone to Paris, usually after university, or sometime during their 20s and 30s, and stayed. They were not motivated to move by any particular career path ... Social life ... tended to centre upon a small but established community of like-minded individuals drawn from a plethora of nations ... In fact some bohemians even expressed an ideological opposition to the concept of nationality, seeing it as insular and exclusionary' (Scott 2006: 1120).
11. *Pituto* is the Chilean slang for informal connections that come in handy in a variety of circumstances (including finding a job). In a country strongly marked by social classes and controlled by a handful of rich, aristocratic families, it is a core feature of the work and social system. It is hard to find a job in Chile without relationships and 'insider' status. It takes time and social skill for 'outsiders' to enter a *pituto* network, but close relationships with Chileans can facilitate things.

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7

Britons in Berlin: Imagined Cityscapes, Affective Encounters and the Cultivation of the Self

David Griffiths and Stella Maile

Introduction

In contrast to the overwhelming rural and coastal/regional bias in the lifestyle migration literature we are interested in the imaginative pull and attraction of one contemporary global city, Berlin. Since unification Berlin has become a magnet for an increasingly diverse European migrant middle class, fostered – as in other parts of Europe – by intra EU freedom of movement and the creation of a distinctive European migration space (Scott 2006; Verwiebe 2004). In keeping with the broader research on intra EU migration (Recchi 2008), it appears that a significant part of middle-class movement to Berlin is due to the cultural and lifestyle attractions of the city rather than the pull of employment (Verwiebe 2011: 14–15). Lifestyle migration to Berlin is nevertheless relatively unexplored in the literature, despite the increase in overall migrant numbers and the growth in tourism which the city has experienced in recent years.

This chapter draws upon ongoing research into Britons in Berlin conducted by the authors (Maile and Griffiths 2012). Focusing here on lifestyle migrants in the British population we argue that the social imaginary provides a useful tool for analysing the attractions of Berlin as an urban space. We outline a range of discursive figures or social imaginary significations associated with Berlin and illustrate the ways that these underpin both lifestyle migrants' place representations and their embodied encounters with the city. The broader theoretical questions posed by this case study relate to the status of the city or urban location as a destination for lifestyle migrants.

Within the lifestyle migration literature the city or urban location typically figures in terms of the cultural amenities or resources which it has to offer. The concept of the *bourgeois bohemian* as a type of lifestyle migrant for example (Benson and O'Reilly 2009: 611) refers to individuals attracted to the cultural and spiritual pull of particular locations, in contrast to those migrating to coastal regions, or the mountains and rural areas (Hoey 2005; King et al. 2000; O'Reilly 2000). An understanding of the attraction of urban spaces for lifestyle migrants nevertheless remains relatively undeveloped in the literature. There is a strong tendency in this context for the city to appear as an overwhelmingly impersonal, negative space, as something to be escaped from (Hoey 2005). Using a Durkheimian analysis based on the 'elementary forms of place', Smith has distinguished between mundane, profane, liminal and sacred places (Smith 1999). This provides the framework for Osbaldiston (2011) who uses it to describe the construction of myths and narratives around rural/regional and urban places in the context of amenity migration. Citing Simmel (1972) on the metropolis and Williams (1973) on the structures of feeling associated with the country and the city, Osbaldiston contrasts the rural/regional and the urban as essentially opposed ways of life. Drawing upon qualitative research he investigates how amenity locations are sacralised through discourses of authenticity and set up against the profane world of the city.

Although Osbaldiston's account is primarily concerned with socially constructed myths and narratives, for our purposes it is important to underline the complexity and ambivalence of attitudes towards the city. For Simmel, whose writing on the metropolis was largely based upon his experience of Berlin (Frisby 2001) modern city life is impersonal but it is also a positive enabler of individual freedom and intensified emotional experience. The very weight of 'objective culture' encountered in the city is counterbalanced by an emphasis upon individualism and the accentuation of individual idiosyncrasies (Simmel 1972: 18). Similarly Williams in his review of English country house literature and the English novel counterposes complex structures of feeling associated with the country and the city, viewing the city both as a symbol of worldliness and corruption and as a source of enlightenment, 'of possibility, of meeting and of movement' (Williams 1973: 6). More generally, the city as an imagined space, as a repository and enabler of fantasy and representation is a central theme across a range of disciplines and theoretical orientations (de Certeau 1988; Lefebvre 1991; Pile 2005). It is also a prominent topic in recent Anglophone writing on Berlin (Cochrane 2006; Colomb 2011; Till 2005).

It is these themes of complexity and ambivalence, the possibilities generated for individual self-development and the imaginative potential of city spaces which we argue are particularly pertinent in the case of Berlin. As we illustrate, the staging of the 'new Berlin' as an imagined, produced and represented space is itself a dominant theme in the recent literature on the branding and marketing of the city (Colomb 2011). The structure of the chapter is as follows: after a discussion of the social imaginary as a component of lifestyle migration we outline Berlin's dominant imaginary representations and the ways in which the signifiers associated with the city are utilised by lifestyle migrants in their construction of place. In our conclusion we discuss the theoretical implications of urban spaces as lifestyle destinations, the role of imagination in place representations and in the lived relation to the city, and the city as a platform for self-development.

The social imaginary and lifestyle migration

The collective and imagined character of lifestyle migrants' representations of place is generally acknowledged (Benson and O Reilly 2009a; Gervais-Aguer 2006). There are however several different conceptualisations of the social imaginary which can be drawn upon (Moran Taylor and Menjivar 2005; Taylor 1997: 23). The use of the term social imaginary in this chapter is anchored in the notion of the radical imagination as used by Castoriadis (1997). Challenging the notion of the imagination as a reflection of a pre-existing reality, Castoriadis argues that the imaginary is constituted by 'the ability to formulate what is not there, to perceive in just anything, what is not there' (Castoriadis 2007: 203). This is not a pre-determined capacity, or one that is fixed in its aims, but is rather characterised by spontaneity and flux. The imaginary in this sense is not a reflection of a pre-existing world but reality itself, in so far as the constitution and reproduction of society depends on active and creative imaginary representations. Language, symbol, myth and legend are the primary means by which the social imaginary both presents itself and constitutes the social world. The concept of the social imaginary helps explain socio-historical change, the emergence of the new, and the individual's capacity to 'create a world of (her) own' (Castoriadis 2007: 208).

Making clear that he has a sense of the importance of material processes Castoriadis differentiates between what he terms the *ensemble-mistic-identitary institution* of a society which enables it to function adequately in terms of adaptation and survival, 'its material and sexual

reproduction' (Castoriadis 2007: 230) and the *imaginary institution of society*. The latter is concerned with 'the creation of a world of meanings...which instaurate a social world proper to each society' (ibid. 2007: 230). The main attraction of Castoriadis for us therefore lies in his attempt to formulate a non-deterministic account of individual agency, which, as Elliott (2002: 167) argues, reinstates into social theory 'the irreducible creativity in the radical imagination of the individual'. A focus on the collective character of the imaginary is also particularly suited to the type of migration we are dealing with here (Benson 2011a: 156). For our purposes the sense in which social imaginary significations function both on the level of shared representations among parts or larger sections of societies and at the *individual level* is particularly important (Castoriadis 2007: 72–74; Mounthian 2009).

We are aware, however, of the continuing controversy within psycho-social theory on the merits of Castoriadis' concept of the imaginary, which embraces both the individual subject's unconscious and conscious imaginary representations and a society's form of self-representation (Elliott 2002). We take on board here Elliott's suggestion that Kleinian and post-Lacanian theory address some of the more problematic areas in Castoriadis, such as his theorisation of the relation between the 'psychic monad' and broader social relations. According to Elliott, there is a tendency in Castoriadis to underplay the role of embodied relations with others and the material environment in the formation of the psyche (Elliott 2002: 157–159).

As Benson underlines in her analysis of Britons in rural France, we are dealing not only with imaginary representations of the 'rural idyll' and landscape for example but with embodied encounters with particular places (2011b: 64). In her account this is posed in terms of a largely *pre-migration* imagining of place contrasted to and in interplay with *post-migration* embodiment and experience. Our focus here is the ways in which the social imaginary representations associated with Berlin – its collective self-representations – are implicated both in individuals' constructions of place and in their embodied encounters with the city. The latter approach stems from a critical dialogue with developments in social theory which emphasise the practical character of social life as *embodied practice* as opposed to discourse and representation (Wylie 2007), and as involving the interaction of human and non-human agents, including places (Anderson and Harrison 2010).

Developments within 'affective geography' (Anderson 2009: 78) are of particular relevance here. Conradson and Latham (2007) have referred to the *affective possibilities of place* to describe how migrants are attracted

by 'the opportunities that certain places offer, or are perceived to offer, for new modes of feeling and being', such as the 'speed', 'buzz', 'opportunity' and 'cosmopolitanism' associated with London, for example (2007: 235). The emphasis here is very much upon bodily affect, 'feeling and being' and the associated forms of action 'potential' which specific places offer or elicit (Duff 2010: 885). In line with 'non-representational' theory in general affect is regarded as separate from emotion, cognition and signification and as transpersonal in character, an interaction *between bodies* rather than rooted in the individual (Anderson 2009).

There are nevertheless ambiguities and difficulties in this general 'non-representational' framework, including the separation of bodily affect from emotion and consciousness and an 'opaque' conception of how the different levels are related (Pile 2010: 16–17). Wetherell in particular argues that affect is inextricably bound up with meaning-making, the semiotic (broadly defined) and the discursive (Wetherell 2012: 20). While registering this ongoing debate on affect, emotions and place our intentions here are more modest. For our purposes we would like to retain the emphasis on the *possibilities for action, for feeling and being* which certain locations offer, or are *perceived* to offer while underlining the primary role of the imagination in individuals' construction of place representations. As we argue, a significant part of Berlin's imaginative appeal for lifestyle migrants – reflected in its core social imaginary significations – is precisely that it appears to open up spaces for ways of 'feeling and being' that were ruled out at home.

In the next section we outline the dominant social imaginary significations associated with Berlin as an urban landscape or cityscape (Frisby 2001). Echoing the literature on landscape (Bender 1998; Massey 2006; Tilley 2006) we argue that Berlin is a contested space and the object of conflicting imaginary representations. Its identity, far from being fixed, is notoriously in a state of flux: a sense of change and the past is central to its self-image. The history of division and the absence of a recognised centre in Berlin, continue to render its identity problematic. Berlin, perhaps more than any other city in Germany, is constituted by unresolved narratives inherited from the past. It is an embodied locale that is both real and imagined.

Berlin's competing imaginaries

If there is one dominant figure associated with Berlin it is that of change (Ritchie 1998: xviii). From 1871 onwards Berlin experienced a sequence of fundamental social and political changes: five successive forms of

government, from Imperial Germany and the Weimar Republic to the Third Reich and a divided Germany, culminated in 1991 in the city regaining its status as capital of a united nation. This dominant trope of change is incorporated into historical and popular-cultural understandings of the city. Colomb (2011) following Marcuse (1998) has drawn attention to the role of construction sites in the late 1990s as physical markers and symbols of political and economic change. The city was presented as *in process* but also as an exhibition site for new forms of power.

Change is enmeshed with the figures of history, memory and the past. The 'haunting' or 'ghostly' quality of certain locales in Berlin is a staple of cultural and historical analysis (Ladd 1998; Pile 2005; Till 2005). The juxtaposition of architectural styles in particular areas of Berlin and the memorialising of urban spaces associated with the victims of state violence are perpetual reminders of Berlin's discontinuous and problematic history. The idea of the 'ghost as a social figure' (Gordon 2008: 25) is supported by Pile (2005: 131) who remarks with Berlin in mind that, 'By haunting, ghosts betray the significance of time and memory in the production of urban space'.

A related image is that of the void (Huyssen 1997). The void – it is only necessary to think of the war-time devastation of Berlin, the *Todesstreifen* or death strip lining the Wall and the post-*Wende*¹ reappearance of vacant spaces – is both a sign of loss and negativity, and also of potential and opportunity (Ritchie 1998: xvii). Stahl (2008) in his analysis of the use of public space in Berlin suggests that the *topos* of the void continues to be a central feature of the city's imaginative hold and power, although the euphemism of space is now preferred by Berlin's Tourist board and property developers. As Gerstenberger (2003) argues, the absence of a single recognisable centre in Berlin is an additional factor promoting a sense of the city as a 'blank urban space' and as a 'projective foil' for the imagination (Gerstenberger 2003: 270).

Beginning with Berlin's dependence upon migration from neighbouring Prussian provinces and from eastern Europe in the 1880s (Large 2000: 9), the city has consistently been associated with outsiders and 'disreputable elements'. In the 1920s Berlin was linked with cultural modernism, political radicalism and sexual emancipation (Weitz 2007: 305). Weitz's identification of the cultural and political achievements of the Weimar republic with Berlin (Weitz 2007: 41), was prefigured by Gay (1991), who had argued that political and cultural outsiders (many of them Jews) found a natural home in Berlin during the brief Weimar period. Subsequently, the Third Reich, warfare and post-war division

left their mark on the city (Huyssen 1997). In West Berlin the student, civil rights and political movements of the 1960s and 1970s provide the immediate backdrop to the mythology of *Kreuzberg* as a hotbed of bohemianism and political and sexual excess (Large 2000: 494).

Finally, the 'new Berlin' since unification symbolises an attempted reconfiguration of identities at national, regional and global levels (Cochrane and Passmore 2001). Although the city has made a habit of self-dramatisation and mythologisation throughout its history, a central factor since the *Wende* has been the deliberate staging of the new Berlin by planners and politicians (Colomb 2011). Despite attempts at boosterism in the 1990s it became clear in comparison with other large cities in Germany that Berlin remained economically undeveloped (Krätke 2004). According to Strom (2001) this helps explain the growing importance of culture in the marketing of Berlin. In effect, the symbolic, cultural terrain rather than economic regeneration was increasingly fostered from the late 1990s onwards.

While not a front ranking global city Berlin has nevertheless developed significant specialisms within the media and areas of scientific research (Krätke 2004), bolstering its status as an information-based, 'creative city' (Bodirsky 2012; Colomb 2011: 229; Krätke 2004). Drawing on the 'place images' associated with the city (Shields 1991) the presentation of Berlin as a 'city of change' (Tölle 2010: 356) and as a mode of experience is at the forefront of the marketing and branding of the city (Berlin Senats 2008). The city's official fostering of the values of 'diversity', 'creativity' and 'individuality' (Bodirsky 2012) are key features of Berlin's 'seemingly infinite web of self-representation' (Ward 2004: 246). Finally, Berlin's reputation as a city of 'open spaces' with its celebrated lakes, parks and green residential areas is routinely promoted by a number of the more upmarket property developers in the city and is also traded on by the Senate Department for Urban Development and Planning (2013).

Change, history, memory, the past, ghosts, voids and spaces, bohemianism and creativity, outsiders, reconfiguration... While the list could be extended, these appear to be some of the key figures defining Berlin's competing imaginaries.

Britons in Berlin: imagined cityscapes

The following sections draw upon broader research into Britons in Berlin conducted by the authors between 2007 and 2012. This was based upon semi-structured interviews, participant observation and techniques of

biographical reconstruction (Maile and Griffiths 2012). Following our interest in the social imaginary as a component of lifestyle migration we adopted a reflexive methodology sensitive to the importance of individual biography and psychic investment in Berlin's social imaginary significations. This required a collaborative approach to the in-depth analysis of interview material and the themes which developed from the research, checking on researcher reflexivity and our own relation to the issues which emerged during interviews.

While based upon this research our emphasis in this chapter is different. In the following sections we turn our attention to some of the key social imaginary significations or discursive figures deployed by individuals in their construction of Berlin: bohemianism and creativity, outsiders and spaces and voids. Discourse is understood here in the broadest sense as *language in use*. We are primarily interested in the uses to which these discursive figures are put in the production of place representations rather than an in-depth elucidation of biographical features. A second set of issues emerges in relation to the possibilities for action, 'feeling and being' that Berlin appears to offer lifestyle migrants. In this context we illustrate some of the more characteristic ways in which individuals put the city 'to use' (de Certeau 1988: xii) while at the same time emphasising the affective component of individuals' relations to place (Duff 2010: 884).

Despite the departure of British Forces in 1994 a small number of Britons remained in Berlin throughout the 1990s. In the period from 2000 to 2012 there was an increase in British and Irish registered residents in Berlin from 8,250 to 11,480 (Amt für Statistik Berlin Brandenburg 2009, 2013). The number of non-registered British residents is probably considerably higher. The British in Berlin are dispersed throughout the city although their concentration in particular areas tends to reflect generational divisions, length of time spent in the city, and other factors such as lifestyle, class and status.

All of the lifestyle migrants interviewed had graduate backgrounds with the exception of several unskilled interviewees and a retired entrepreneur, and lived mainly in the gentrified parts of the city, in *Kreuzberg*, *Mitte* and *Prenzlauer Berg*. The lure of relatively cheap property was certainly an important attraction for most individuals interviewed. This ranged from a second-home retirement flat in one case, to multiple 'buy to let' investments in *Prenzlauer Berg* and *Kreuzberg* and various forms of home ownership. This pattern is familiar among the broader category of lifestyle migrants (Benson and O'Reilly 2009a). Overall, the increased movement of Britons has been facilitated by a range of intermediary

institutions (airlines, estate agents, recruitment and rental agencies) and by word-of-mouth mechanisms, friendship networks and other forms of social capital, as individuals report back on the city and its attractions.

Bohemianism and creativity

The figure of bohemianism and creativity, one of the dominant tropes associated with the city, was articulated explicitly across a range of interviews. On being asked what they liked about the city, most respondents referred to the unleashing of creative potential which Berlin represented for them. On a general level, the cultural attractions of the city – its museums, music and arts – were standard features in most individuals' accounts. Owing to its bohemian reputation and the relative cheapness of rents and property, Berlin in contrast to London offered the possibility to work less and focus more on creative activities. 'Being creative' could take a number of different, practical forms. Several individuals we spoke with had graduated through a series of formal English-speaking channels such as the *English Theatre* in *Kreuzberg* and the *Embassy Players*, an amateur choir attached to the British Embassy. Others had opted for less mainstream outlets within German-speaking theatre, dance and music.

The club culture in Berlin was a special attraction for several respondents. Anikitou, a 46-year-old Londoner first visited Berlin after the Wall fell and was particularly drawn by the freedom he experienced in the clubs there (Rapp 2009). He recounted how he managed to find clubs where he didn't have to fit in with any dress codes, where he could dance barefoot and wasn't obliged to order drinks. After a period of visiting Berlin he finally decided to break with his life as a successful businessman and to move to Berlin. The main reasons he gave were the 'bohemian kind of influence' in Berlin and the possibility the city gave of 'trying things out', particularly in relation to theatre and dance. He represented Berlin therefore as a place in which experimentation, being creative and self-exploration could take place. Like his selection of clubs and dance venues, Anikitou's experience of theatre was explicitly related to self-exploration. He chose to act in Greek tragedies such as *Medea* as a way of 'getting in touch' with the 'darker' side of human nature and to improve his 'self-understanding'. According to Anikitou, he contributed to making Berlin what it was through the very process of self-development that the city had first made possible. He and the city were simply 'good for each other'.

As Benson and O'Reilly (2009a) and Hoey (2005) have suggested, for many lifestyle migrants the quest for the 'good life' entails a reassessment

of values and a rejection of what is seen as the conventions and limitations of life back home. A critical assessment of conventional career routes is an important theme in the interviews. Max, in her late thirties, had moved to Berlin from London after marrying her German partner. Finding work in a marketing agency in Berlin was very much a means to an end: creative self-employment and starting a family was the more significant part of the equation. For Max, Berlin was seen as a place in which it was possible to live a slower, less stressful kind of life:

Yeah, I came to Berlin to be able to do Yoga in the morning, go swimming in the morning, do yoga in the evening, sit out at a café, I don't know. Go to exhibitions...Just basically relax, get to know people, wander around shops. That's what I came to Berlin for – to experiment a bit in my life.

Cultural consumption of this sort is of course linked to broader processes of class distinction characteristic of much lifestyle migration (Benson 2011a). What her list of 'things to do' also describes is a particular way of being in the city associated with the cultivation and care of the body. Berlin, Max believed, would also enable her to combine creativity in work with becoming a mother and setting up her own family.

In the United Kingdom, this slipping into a slower tempo would have been much harder for Max, who associated opting out with moving away from London. As she remarked, 'And if you want to sort of, what's it called "aussteigen", if you want to shift out or down a gear or whatever you go somewhere else to do it'. This 'somewhere else' in her case was Berlin. Underlining the performative character of this change in lifestyle, the word *aussteigen* that Max uses to describe this process means to drop out, literally to disembark, as in getting off a train or bus, to exit, to get out or step out of something. The importance of 'dropping out', or 'stepping out', was a dominant theme in the other interviews, although this was articulated differently according to the specific characteristics of the individual concerned.

In this respect, it is important to emphasise that we are dealing less with a literal bohemianism – as many individuals continued to live conventional, affluent lives in Berlin – than a set of cultural signifiers which seemed to make otherwise impermissible acts and feelings possible. According to the characteristics of the individual involved 'stepping out' or 'opting out' had a range of meanings, and entailed a variety of activities, from re-emphasising the importance of relationships and family life to pursuing a diverse range of creative work and

play. For the individuals we interviewed, Berlin was represented as a space in which certain modes of feeling, being and action – typically those associated with creativity, experimentation, opting out and the cultivation of the self – could finally be realised.

Outsiders

The figure of Berlin as a city of outsiders was a significant strand in the narratives of the lifestyle migrants we interviewed. Although the figure of the outsider overlaps with creativity and bohemianism, it has a broader range of connotations. The meaning of being outside ‘mainstream society’ is variable but is typically associated with a dissenting relation to career structure, sexual norms and broader cultural constraints. In this respect, the positive comparison of Berlin with other cities in Germany was a regular theme in many interviews. Munich, Hamburg and Frankfurt were seen not only as more affluent and cleaner in comparison to Berlin but also as more conservative and offering fewer possibilities for self-development. Max in particular had deliberately chosen Berlin as a location precisely because it failed to offer the kind of closed, middle-class existence that she felt would be waiting for her in Munich. For Max, Berlin was a ‘creative city’ in which there were more possibilities for ‘going it alone’ and for self-employment.

Anikitou, as the son of Greek Cypriot migrants who had moved to London in the 1960s, remarked that he felt that he belonged neither to England nor Cyprus. A distinctive feature of his account was his sense of cultural displacement at home and his attempt to resolve this by moving to Berlin, the archetypal city of outsiders. During the course of the interview he had characterised himself as a *komischer Vögel*, an ‘odd bird’, explicitly marking himself as an outsider – a role which he consciously enacted in Berlin by choosing to live in a largely Tamil household in a run-down area in *Charlottenburg* and engaging in different types of ‘exotic’ dance in his spare time. This was also as he said a way of underlining the importance of his unique individuality.

The historical character of Berlin as a space or refuge for outsiders was further brought out by Anikitou when he underlined his reasons for living in the city:

When I think of anywhere else in Germany, it has to be Berlin again, because of its history. It was a place that people could come and avoid the army. It was a place that was also a sanctuary for Gay people. For people that didn’t basically fit into mainstream society.

He represented Berlin in general as a refuge for outsiders and those who didn't 'fit in'. Berlin is therefore a space in which he finally felt that he 'belonged'. As he indicated, 'I found enough people here. I found a lot of people like me... There was enough people like that, people that were here, individualists doing their own thing.'

While Anikitou made a direct connection between Berlin and his own marginal and ambiguous social position, enacting this in various ways, it was an important theme in other individuals who also drew on Berlin's reputation as a space beyond the mainstream. The issue of sexuality was an important theme in some of the other interviews we conducted. Several Gay couples had been attracted to living in Berlin by its history of tolerance and championing of Gay rights, as, for example, in its yearly Christopher Street Day parade. Again, the ability to openly express aspects of identity which had been veiled at home was a significant part of Berlin's attraction for several individuals.

A broader historical awareness of Berlin as a city of outsiders was evident in a range of interviews. Andy, like Max and Anikitou is in his thirties but in contrast to the other lifestyle migrants interviewed is an unskilled manual worker. An atypical lifestyle migrant in socio-economic terms (Benson and O'Reilly 2009: 609) Andy was born in Wales and with no prior experience of Berlin or of travel outside the United Kingdom, his main wish had been to travel to 'other places' with his terminally ill friend. Berlin, apart from a few odd preconceptions was largely chosen at random. At the time of interview he lived on benefits with his friend in an unfashionable area of *Ostkreuz*. Despite his marginal existence in Berlin – in relation to both Germans and the newer middle-class British arrivals – he knew what he liked about the city.

Of particular interest is the contrast Andy draws between Berlin and London as essentially opposed modes of experience. As he remarked:

London represents people being busy, people being rude, selfish, basically people not having enough space for each other really because although Berlin is busy there is always places, there is always space. If you lose that you will be boxed into little areas and it's to do with the fact you can basically live however you want to and if you lose that in Berlin, you have to live in a certain way, then that will destroy that really. It's always been a very, very rebellious city anyway during its history. It's always been a place for outsiders or people who don't fit in. If you lose all that then you'll basically lose a lot of the city.

For Andy Berlin's history and its reputation as a 'rebellious' city represented freedom from constraint and the ability 'to be who you are'.

During the course of the interview Andy related Berlin's 'rebellious' history and its image as a 'place for outsiders' to his own sense of individuality – marked as we have indicated by his actual social marginality – and his resistance to what he saw as the 'Yuppification' of Berlin by incoming Londoners. London, in this and other cases, was presented as the polar opposite of Berlin, a point we return to in our conclusion. More generally in the other interviews we conducted, a diffuse sense of the prevalence of history and change in Berlin was often linked to the possibility of personal development and the importance of individual self-identity.

Individuals' representations of Berlin and their modes of acting in the city tended to underline the importance of independence and the absence of constraint. Berlin was represented as a space, as several individuals remarked, for individuals who don't quite 'fit in'. To pick up on Max's earlier description of 'opting out', *der Aussteiger* is one who goes it alone and values independence. Yet Berlin was also represented as a space in which individuals could feel a sense of belonging. Berlin therefore appeared to offer the possibility both of independence *and* of belonging: the feeling, for some of those we interviewed, of the 'outsider as insider' (Gay 2001).

Spaces and voids

The ubiquity of references to the 'sense of space' in Berlin was the most striking feature of the interviews we conducted. As with the other signifiers, space was complex in meaning. In the first place, space was often presented in terms of *active movement* across the city, and in particular the freedom to cycle in Berlin in contrast to gridlocked London. When meeting individuals for interview outside their home for example, this would invariably involve them arriving by bike at a particular destination, usually a café. The enjoyment involved in being able to cycle across the city and Berlin's 'bike culture' was frequently remarked upon by the individuals we interviewed. More generally, the relative efficiency of the transport systems in Berlin may be a pragmatic consideration but it is also one that appeared to feed into individuals' sense of space and mobility in the city.

Space could also mean 'having space for' – 'people' (evident in Andy's condemnation of London and one of the more typical features of the counterurban lifestyle), 'being creative', 'sitting in cafes', and 'watching people pass by'. The pleasure of sitting in cafes and watching – features singled out by several individuals – describe a more relaxed feeling about Berlin which most respondents noted, a lack of pressure and rush compared to London. The sense of space in Berlin was also often linked

to freedom from constraint and convention and the feeling of independence (and belonging) that many individuals appeared to value. For Andy, a particular attraction of Berlin was the sense of discontinuity in the city, reflected in the breaks and gaps in Berlin's urban fabric and the fascination of its 'empty spaces' or 'voids' (Ladd 1998: 106). As he observed:

I find that Berlin is a very beautiful city in the sense that it is so different. There's so much history. And it's not all the same. For example you get a really, really old building next to a brand new building ... I do like Berlin but I like it because of its dirtiness. It's also the empty spaces which are so fascinating. Not everything is built up.

Far from negative, the void represented possibility and the spirit of independence – history made visible (Ritchie 1998: xvii).

In several interviews another sense of space was utilised by individuals. This focused on the value of open spaces and the rural qualities of the urban environment. To give our final example, Peter, a 50-year-old semi-retired businessman had moved to Berlin for what he termed a 'break in life'. Although he had bought a flat and several investment properties in *Prenzlauer Berg*, his personal relationship and change in lifestyle were his primary reasons for moving.

During our interview, Peter described a walk he had taken in *Prenzlauer Berg*. The associations of taking a walk in a city like Berlin are obviously very different from those characterising a rural setting. Ingold, for example, remarks that walking in the city is to 'skim the surface' of a world that is already built, rather than to contribute to its 'ongoing formation' (2004: 329). This however may be to underplay the role of imagination and practice in the formation of the cityscape. Far from being passively received the cityscape is the object of imaginary significations and forms of practice that can transform the 'geographical' contours of the city into a 'poetic and mythic experience of space' (de Certeau 1988: 93). In his narrative Peter recounted what were largely visual observations of the urban environment, yet what he focused on was the 'green spaces' and 'mud' which were there as he walked near his flat in the city, contrasting this directly to a 'frenetic' London:

...I like the pace in Berlin. It's got a buzz about it, seems positive and getting on with it. But in London it's just frenetic. And the streets in Berlin, because of the way it's designed, they're wide... There's a feeling of space... You turn around the corner and there's another

park, another green area which isn't manicured so much as maybe in the UK but it almost gives it a different sort of charm, you know there's weeds and long grass and there's mud here but it doesn't matter but its green, it's space, there's lots of space and that's nice...

His constant references to the 'feeling of space', to the mud, grass and the unkempt nature of the streets all suggested that the rural – the non-manicured natural order – was somehow being mapped onto the urban fabric of the city. London once more figures in this account as a symbol of artifice and the 'frenetic' global city. As Benson and O Reilly (2009: 615) argue, 'the interpretations and meanings of a place, refracted through a range of media, matter more to migrants than the actual qualities that can be objectively described'. Rurality in this sense does not have to correspond to the actual countryside but to a set of imagined values and representations.

We would like to underline here the polyvocal, complex and often indeterminate character of individuals' imaginary representations of Berlin. They are characterised, as we have illustrated, by a strong sense of flux and change. Rather than a consistent series of place images we find a shifting and volatile succession of representations that are subject to modification and change. What is particularly notable is the variety of ways in which space in the city was imagined by the individuals we interviewed: as mobility and freedom, as having space/time for people, as being creative and achieving a fuller individuality, but also as the open green spaces associated with a slower, more rural way of life.

What this brief overview suggests is that Berlin is constructed by those interviewed as a permissive space which allows individuals to opt out and focus on self-development, on being creative and living outside the mainstream. The possibilities for self-development were linked to a diffuse sense of change and possibility. We have, in addition, underlined the complex and intermeshed character of the signifiers associated with the city. As we have argued in detail elsewhere (Maile and Griffiths 2012) although these imaginary signifiers or 'place images' (Shields 1991) are in circulation they are used in very different ways according to individual biography, experience, psychic investment and fantasy, and social circumstances. We have also indicated some of the routine embodied encounters with the city and the affective possibilities and potential for action that Berlin appears to offer individuals. 'Being creative', relaxing and 'dropping out', the sense of individuality, independence and belonging, the experience of cycling and mobility in travelling across the city, the pleasures of walking, sitting and observing,

all appeared to bring Berlin into being as a performative space for the individuals we interviewed.

Conclusions

What are the broader implications of Berlin as a case study? Our first theme of complexity and ambivalence is central to this account as individuals contrasted London and Berlin, the urban and the rural within the city space. The polarisation of Berlin and London was a consistent feature in the interviews. The rural/urban dichotomy in the lifestyle migration literature with its theme of 'escape from the city' tended to be reproduced but in this case in the context of migration to Berlin! A basic ambivalence towards the idea of the city as both an enabler of independence and freedom *and* as a source of constraint and limitation was therefore common in most interviews. London represented the 'frenetic' global city for most of the lifestyle migrants we interviewed – whether or not an individual had actually lived there – while Berlin's empty spaces and dirt appeared to represent a slower, almost 'rural' way of life. At the same time Berlin was clearly valued as a major European city and centre of culture. The construction of Berlin as 'rural' is particularly paradoxical, given the city's reputation as the early twentieth-century exemplar of urban development and high modernity (Frisby 2001) and in particular considering the accelerating pace of gentrification and new building projects in the city (Scarenberg and Bader 2009). Nevertheless, in most of the interviews the 'greenery' and 'openness' of Berlin were seen as positive attributes and contrasted to the dirty, cramped condition of London.

Post-migration experience did of course often sit uneasily with representations of Berlin as an imagined place. We found clear evidence in several cases of continuing constraints (social, cultural and linguistic) faced by individuals living in the city, despite the expansion of imaginative and physical space in Berlin. In our experience, over a five-year period of contact in Berlin several individuals had returned to London – complaining of red tape and bureaucracy, problems over health insurance, social isolation and schooling and a fear of growing old in the city. In other cases, family ties to German partners prevented return but resulted in a kind of stalemate of living 'parallel lives' in Germany and the United Kingdom. This brings us back to the central theme of ambivalence identified by Benson (2011a) in discussing the British living in rural France; in our case this refers instead to an unresolved relationship with the city.

In this context, the importance of class habitus in determining both the ability to migrate and the meaning and outcome of migration needs to be underlined (Benson and O'Reilly 2009: 617). Many of our interviewees, for example, were graduates and tended to earn income from teleworking and renting out property in London. The existence of safety nets of this sort appeared to have a great deal to do with how congenial a space Berlin could be to live in. More generally, a closer examination of the differential stocks of social, cultural and economic capital at the disposal of individuals is central to a balanced understanding of lifestyle migration and in particular the relative success of individuals in adjusting to their new environments.

The second point we wish to underline is that Berlin was imagined and also experienced as a positive enabler of individuality and self-expression. What Conradson and Latham (2007) have termed the 'affective possibilities of place' is highly relevant to the perception of Berlin as a permissive space allowing self-development and encouraging particular ways of feeling, being and acting. There are nevertheless inconsistencies in their general approach. For example, Conradson and Latham acknowledge the importance of the 'realm of the imagination' (2007: 235) in mediating encounters between 'bodies and objects' but provide no explanation of this relationship! They also tend to separate out affect, emotion, consciousness and self-identity in their analysis (Conradson and Latham 2007: 251). While providing no hard-and-fast conclusions to this debate, our analysis suggests that individuals' affective responses to Berlin – the sense of space, independence, movement and change – appeared to be intimately related to how they *imagined* and *represented* the city. As we have illustrated, this was also bound up with broader discourses of self-development and authenticity, common motifs in the lifestyle migration literature.

In relation to Smith's 'elementary forms of place' Berlin might best be characterised as a blurred, liminal or marginal place, a space in which it appears that the self can be transformed in some way (Smith 1999: 20). For Shields (1991) places on the margins are maintained by socially constructed narratives or imaginaries, of license and excess for example, which encourage types of behaviour that in turn tend to reproduce the liminal/marginal place identity. Both Smith (1999: 16) and Taylor (1997) underline the 'special' character of the liminal, its opposition to everyday boundaries and rules. For Taylor in particular liminality is closely associated with liberation from convention and the unleashing of creativity (1997: 128). The sense of creativity, of change and flux, the enchantment of Berlin's 'dark' history and its ever-present ghosts and

empty spaces, Berlin as an unfinished space which lacks a clearly defined centre ... these liminal features seem to exert a powerful influence on the imagination of individual Britons living in the city, providing a platform for their continuing acts of self-exploration.

This brings us to the broader question of the imaginative potential of city spaces for lifestyle migrants. The discursive figures or social imaginary significations we have outlined are highly place-specific. Berlin's historical development has brought about a unique set of discursive and imaginative configurations. As we have suggested, for the individuals we interviewed, the valorisation of creativity, independence and space are intimately linked to the goal of self-development which is a dominant motif throughout the lifestyle migration literature. In this case, urban spaces rather than natural or rural areas are the bearers of lifestyle migrants' search for individual development, creativity and authenticity (Osbaldiston 2011). The role of the imagination in lifestyle migration and its uneasy and negotiated relationship with the daily experience of 'living abroad' bears reiteration. The irony of unintended consequences – as once marginal places are absorbed by place branding and tourism (O'Reilly 2000) – is clearly apparent in the case of Berlin. In recent years, the city has experienced growing popularity as a tourist destination and as a magnet for incoming Germans, Europeans and Americans. Population growth, coupled with the Euro crisis and the search for investment 'safe havens', has led to a rental and property boom throughout most of Berlin. Affordable rents and property, one of the main draws of the city for the individuals we interviewed, are now in short supply. Local campaigns against 'Yuppie tourism' and encroaching gentrification are also commonplace, particularly in up-and-coming areas like *Neuköln*. How long Berlin retains its charm for individuals seeking a space in the city therefore remains to be seen.

Note

1. *Die Wende* refers to the changes brought about by the peaceful revolution of November 1989 and in particular the end of the post-war division of Germany.

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Part IV

Stillness and Sedentariness

8

Beyond Ahistoricity and Mobilities in Lifestyle Migration Research

Nick Osbaldiston

Introduction

Lifestyle migration is a complex phenomenon. There is no clear and precise theoretical model that is going to produce the sort of explanatory power that will help us understand all the facets of this modern-day movement. If we attempt to do so, such is the folly of macro social theory perhaps, we risk losing sight of the 'other parts' which O'Reilly (2012: 33) reminds us exist in most migration stories. As Favell (2008: 3) contests in his work on 'Eurostars', even concepts like freedom have distinct empirical flavours which different groups experience along the fractured social lines of norms, classes, statuses and other characteristics. In lifestyle migration, broad considerations of the movement usually couched as a middle-class quest for the better life, need to be mindful of the other end of the spectrum including gentrification of new areas (Moss 2006), consumer ethics and the visual appropriation of place (Van Auken 2010) and migration patterns of those low-paid 'service' workers who follow the wealthier for material and not lifestyle purposes (Nelson and Nelson 2011). Many of these faces of the movement are large enough to warrant not only their own research agendas but also their own theoretical footings.

Despite this, we can still recognise a need to develop an underpinning model of motivation that can lend itself to later understanding flow on effects of how people live out their dreams in their new locations. Benson (2011a, 2011b, 2012, this volume) has demonstrated this in her structure/agency approach to lifestyle migration developed via Pierre Bourdieu (see also, Benson and O'Reilly 2009a, 2009b; O'Reilly

2000, 2012; Oliver and O'Reilly 2010). Here motivation to migrate away from home is bound together with a quest for authenticity or practice of distinction (cf. Hoey 2010; Osbaldiston 2012). Therefore, behaviour of these migrants reflects a constant desire to authenticate oneself against other fake or 'inauthentic' groups. Similarly, Korpela (2010, this volume) further develops this line of enquiry by considering not simply the 'post-colonial imagination', but also the development of the 'type of self' that engages with practices such as lifestyle migration. Mostly enhanced by Rose's (1996) reading of Foucault, Korpela opens up new avenues for exploring the historical aspects of middle-class culture (in particular) to understand better why this technique for working on the self through migration has appeared.

Interestingly, these specific theoretical models are bound up with certain structures which guide and encourage specific behaviours. As Benson and O'Reilly (2009b: 618) argue elsewhere, lifestyle migration itself while seen as an individualised action, can also be described as an 'inevitable' outcrop of late modern middle-class behaviour. While increased levels of economic and social capital almost certainly play a role in the provision of freedom to move, for Benson and O'Reilly (2009b: 620) the 'increased levels of reflexivity' encouraged through contemporary middle-class culture results in a willingness to question lifestyles and seek out alternatives. Thus lifestyle migration is comparable to a number of other pursuits in the quest to authenticate oneself.¹

Within more recent accounts from Benson (2011a, 2012), however, lifestyle migration has attracted the attention of not just Bourdieusian but also tourism studies theories. This Salazar (2012: 377) has recently lauded claiming it a 'refreshing' outlook on migration. However, perhaps cautiously, Salazar (2012: 377) also criticises her work for not embracing 'burgeoning mobilities literature'. He writes:

This would have been useful to analyse the (im)permanence of the migrants' lifestyle choice... Given the stress on migration as a dynamic, ongoing process, I wonder whether the term 'post-migration' is appropriate. When exactly does migration end (or turn into something different?). (Salazar 2012: 377)

This is an important and timely question that begs consideration in lifestyle migration research. The notion of 'impermanence' cuts to the heart of what people might consider doing when they 'fail' in their quest for a 'better life' or when structures around them which facilitate movement collapse (such as the Global Financial Crisis, GFC in

the Eurozone) (Salazar, this volume).² Furthermore, understanding how 'mobile' people are can help conceptualise a small select population of wealthy elites who are able to own multiple homes across continents and even hemispheres (Muller 2004).

Thus these claims from Salazar have merit and deserve some consideration. However, what this chapter seeks initially to argue is that any investigation of lifestyle migration (or migration in general) which is derived through the mobilities paradigm will fundamentally miss some of the most important data we can derive through the now labelled 'sedentary' sociological/anthropological practices (Urry 2007). In particular, I question whether the theoretical platform which places emphasis on the *things which move* or those *things which facilitate movement* can allow for the type of empirical insights which have been discovered of late in lifestyle migration research. In order to capture the zeitgeist of the movement, I contend that we need not reinvent the wheel of sociological method or indeed theory. Mobilities offer just that, a radically new methodological toolkit which retrains the sociologist away, from the sociological into the metaphorical and chaotic (Favell 2001; Franquesa 2011; O'Dowd 2010). Once this occurs, the observer is bound to develop a particular style of inductive reasoning which neglects those social interactions, lived experiences and relationships which are central features of lifestyle migration.

However, this is not to suggest that we should not reconsider our theoretical approaches to lifestyle migration. In the second half of this chapter I return back to a fundamental concern in sociology identified by Inglis (2013) more recently as 'presentism'. Here it is proposed that an over-reliance on theories like 'reflexivity' or 'individualisation' tends to disable researchers to embed phenomena historically. In particular, fast theories which present ready-made historical analyses result initially in a denial of entry into the debates from the 'classics' (Turner 2003) while also convincing us that the world really has dramatically changed. What I wish to develop here is a more historically nuanced approach to lifestyle migration which appreciates that these things do not just simply appear from nowhere. Rather, there are threads of lifestyle migration woven into our contemporary history which appear to resonate with current urban escape practices.

Mobilities, the metropolis and freezing time

The general thrust of the Mobilities framework is that the world is now more mobile than previously. However, as noted by Urry (2007: 19), social

science has largely been 'a-mobile' in the past significantly because of its 'neglect of movement and communications and the forms in which they are economically, politically and socially organized'. For instance, culturally important forms of social action such as 'holidaymaking, walking, car driving, phoning, flying' and other movement or mobile-based activities according to Urry (2007: 19) have been largely ignored. As Sheller (2011: 1) more recently writes, the wide array of 'mobile devices' and 'smart environments' has led to an intensification of the 'convergence between physical movement of people, vehicles and things' creating new 'substantive issues for the social sciences' (see also, Urry 2007: 17–20). While the world is becoming increasingly complex and movement-orientated, social science (at least traditional methods) remains entrenched in 'sedentary' sociological reasoning which focuses on fixing people, objects and places in time for analysis (Urry 2007: 19).

The problem with such a 'freezing' of time is that it disregards the complex interplay of signs, symbols, capital and other objects which promote mobility or even disallow it (Sheller and Urry 2006). Mobilities research and theory therefore seeks to reinvest time into complexity and the 'unintentional causal processes' while admitting that 'causal mechanisms' are 'possibly beyond human control' (Sheller 2011: 4). However this is not to suggest that the world of mobilities is wholly given up to the non-human or the network analysis which is found in Science and Technology Studies (STS), though this is an important foundation for the theorem. Rather, the paradigm cuts across a host of disciplinary techniques from ethnography in the anthropological tradition, through to the politics of border studies and into the phenomenological and Foucauldian discourse analysis (Sheller 2011: 1–5). In doing so, it hopes to capture the essence of today's mobile systems which 'enable the movement of people, ideas and information from place to place, person to person, event to event' (Urry 2007: 12).

Theoretically the platform for mobilities interestingly is built around the classical theorist Georg Simmel, especially in Urry's (2007; Sheller and Urry 2006) rendering of the theory.³ As one who invested himself heavily in the analysis of fragments of modernity, according to Frisby (1987), his work appears as a 'prototype of mobilities' (Urry 2007: 26). Of importance here is the *Metropolis and Mental Life* which for Urry (2007: 20–26; Sheller and Urry 2006: 215) reflects Simmel's stark interest in the growth of urban culture and the impact it had upon sociations. Specifically, the 'tempo' of the modern city has accelerated beyond the norms of its premodern counterpart as signs, symbols, people and money rapidly appear and disappear in quick succession transforming

the person into a blasé and reserved social animal (Simmel 1997[1903]). The following passage illustrates this further:

The psychological basis of the metropolitan type of individuality consists in the intensification of nervous stimulation which results from the swift and uninterrupted change of outer and inner stimuli... Lasting impressions, impressions which differ slightly from one another, impressions which take a regular and habitual course and show regular and habitual contrasts – all these use up, so to speak, less consciousness than does the rapid crowding of changing images, the sharp discontinuity in the grasp of a single glance, and the unexpectedness of onrushing impressions. These are the psychological conditions which the metropolis creates. (Simmel 1997[1903]: 175)

So while the rural or country life is slow, even and simple, the city is teeming with 'economic, occupational and social' actions that are vast, fast and overwhelming. For Simmel this potentially is one of the problems of our modern condition, the inability to keep up with what he terms 'objective culture'. There is a constant 'bombardment of the senses with new or ever changing impressions' that inculcates within a desire to 'create a distance between ourselves and our social and physical environment' (Frisby 1987: 73). In order to avoid being completely overwhelmed, the person will establish what Frisby (1987: 73) describes as a 'neurasthenic personality', a combination of becoming blasé to things and a social reserve to other people.

However, how Simmel viewed the impact of the city on the personality is less of a concern for Urry (2007). Of more interest to the mobilities paradigm is the emphasis that Simmel apparently placed on the movement of things, people and money itself. The production of social encounters that occur almost accidentally, such as Simmel's (1997[1910]) *Adventure*, appear as exemplary instances of first a world increasingly mobilised, and second how the social sciences ought to deal with it (Urry 2007: 21, 24–25). How things like paths, bridges or even doors enable association or interaction also appear as worthy objects for study to not only Simmel but also within Urry's mobilities. As a consequence, I argue, mobilities tends to be grounded on a fairly narrow interpretation of where Simmel's focus lay. While I do not seek to underestimate how much he was interested in the fragmented nature of modernity, it would appear that the paradigm of mobilities neglect some of the important considerations on modernity that Simmel proposed.

One example might be his appreciation of the mental attitude of the metropolitan person who becomes blasé to the objective world, viewing everything with a 'matter-of-fact' attitude where objects appear as 'evenly flat and gray' (Simmel 1997[1903]: 178). Underpinning this is the manner in which the 'money economy' has removed the 'qualitative difference of things' through questions of 'how much?' (Simmel 1997[1903]: 178). In short, the more we become accustomed to the acquisition of things through money, the less likely we are to derive psychological stimulation from them (Frisby 1987: 74–75). However, as Simmel argued throughout his work, this psychological exhaustion also enables a desire for distinct physiological experiences. In an 1893 essay, he notes that those 'exhausted by the haste and worries of the day' appear more attracted to leisurely pursuits which are 'directly physiological... those to which the organism responds even when all the more refined sensibilities have become blunted' (Simmel 1997[1893]: 260). Later in *The Philosophy of Money* he postulates that the consequence of the blasé attitude is a vicious circle of stimulation:

Out of this emerges a craving today for excitement, for extreme impressions, for the greatest speed of its change – it is one of the typical attempts to meet the dangers of sufferings in a situation by the quantitative exaggeration of its content. The satisfaction of such cravings may bring about temporary relief, but soon the former conditions (the blasé attitude) will be re-established... A money culture signifies such an enslavement of life in its means, that release from its weariness is also evidently sought in a mere means which conceals its final significance – in the fact of 'stimulation' as such. (Simmel 2004: 257)

Read this way, Simmel's theories of the city provide some insight into the development of the metropolitan persona that leads to lifestyle migration. Here escape from the mundane is an inevitable outcome in modernity (cf. Benson and O'Reilly 2009b). The person, endlessly seeking new experiences to recover from the blasé world of the money economy, seeks new lands distinct and exciting in cultural form, landscapes and people (see, Griffiths and Maile, this volume for instance).

This sort of theoretical reasoning is neglected in an Urry-led mobilities platform which seeks only to focus on the things that move. However, it is evident as Frisby (1987: 51–55, 62) notes that a core methodological principle of Simmel's work is also at odds with mobilities. For the German, sociology could never provide detailed understanding of

the totality or macro through analysis of structure. Social life is mostly experienced in the inner sphere, exhibited from time to time in various forms of behaviour and interaction. Sociology, for Simmel, therefore aims to capture or 'freeze' those fragments of modernity which may include associations or experiences that are discovered almost fortuitously. Without this 'freezing' of these 'fragments of modern life', we would be left with the difficult problem of saying anything meaningful about the 'totality' at all (Frisby 1987: 62). Rather, Simmel suggests that the answer to this conundrum may lie in the acts where life is 'captured'. Frisby (1987: 62) further elaborates:

The first response is to look for those forms of human expression which can capture the fleeting nature of inner experiences in order that we can recognize them and temporarily at least hold them constant. The form of human expression which best performs this task is, for Simmel, the work of art.

Subsequently Simmel spends considerable time focusing on art to interpret the cultural malaise that has developed in modernity. This is not to suggest that we ought to begin using art to say something meaningful about lifestyle migration (or migration in general), although with the proliferation of landscape images and lifestyle magazines this would be a fascinating study (O'Reilly 2012). Rather, using this approach as a guiding principle methodologically, we are reminded that even Simmel believed that the social or cultural needed to be frozen somehow in order to capture and then say something meaningful for analysis and thus provide a glimpse towards the totality through the subjective.

This does not occur in Urry's (2007) mobilities. To freeze social objects or people for the purposes of analysis is to destroy them (Buscher et al. 2010: 1). As he writes his first rule in the new mobilities paradigm is to 'develop through appropriate metaphors a sociology that focuses upon movement, mobility and contingent ordering, rather than upon stasis, structuring and social order' (Urry 2001: 18). In other words, understanding something as complex as lifestyle migration requires being open to the fluidity of people, things and even capital. Yet, the things which stand still are highly important to understand in migration studies. Favell (2001: 391–392) highlights this in the following:

As any migration scholar knows, to assess really the extent or nature of the movement, or indeed even see it sometimes, you have in fact to spend a lot of time studying the things that stand still: the borders,

institutions and territories of nation-states; the sedimented 'home' cultures of people that do not move.

In a later particularly damning critique, Favell (2001: 393) asserts that the 'real future for sociology is surely still in the systematic construction of mid-range empirical theories' combined with a 'patient reassertion of the insights and methods of past classics' (cf. Turner 2003). Such emphasis on the sedentary social sciences is also apparent in border studies where 'metaphors' can be 'overextended' into analysis of complex issues that unfortunately accentuate problems of ahistoricism (O'Dowd 2010: 1038). On this subject I shall return later.

To their credit however, mobilities advocates have not forgotten these systematic processes that have underpinned migration and other studies in the past (see, Salazar and Rivoal 2013; Salazar and Smart 2011). As Sheller (2011: 6) argues, 'mobilities research in its broadest sense concerns not only physical movement, but also potential movement, blocked movement, immobilization and forms of dwelling and place-making'. The paradigm also calls for deep 'ethnographic and ethnomethodological studies of the daily experiences of (im)mobility for different groups of people' (Sheller 2011: 7).⁴ However if the paradigm calls for a multiplicity of theoretical and methodological angles which embrace all sides, then is it saying anything at all. Or more specifically, what and where is the innovation? The answer to this again lay in the emphasis on 'movement' which has led to multiple efforts at methodological boundary pushing in order to find 'empirical evidence pertinent to the study of mobilities' (Sheller 2011: 7). The rules of sociological method, in fact, need to be reconfigured to allow 'other' actors present in social settings to become visible (Urry 2007: 18). Consequently as Sheller (2011: 7; see also, Buscher et al. 2010) outlines, we have seen mass innovation in methods such as the development of cyberethnography, being-with participants as they move, following along with objects as they are transported, GPS tracking, visualisations and scenario building. All of these things hold as their object of analysis things that are 'on the move' signifying a serious break from the traditional approach of social scientific analysis (Sheller and Urry 2006; Urry 2007).⁵

My point in focusing this discussion on this is to suggest that in lifestyle migration, perhaps more broadly migration studies period, a fixation on those things which move and a denial of more traditional focuses of sociological and anthropological study will potentially miss vital information and knowledge that helps us frame the movement better. While mobilities would have us concentrate on those things

which either move or at least facilitate movement in ethnographical accounts, data such as that provided by Benson (2011a: 164), highlight further to us the value in holding to the 'sedentary' approach. Unlike what Buscher et al. (2010: 1) argue, maintaining this approach surely does not 'destroy them', rather it brings to life the rich and deep cultural narratives that feed into the phenomenon. Furthermore, it allows for the opportunity to revisit questions of structure and boundaries. An excerpt from Benson (2011a: 164, *italics added*) exemplifies this further:

The migrant's strategy for claiming authentication rested on their rhetoric of integration into local community life, demonstrating the continued influence of imagination on their actions and ambitions. In many ways, the reception given to them by their French neighbours *played a key role in determining their success at getting to a better way of life*. It was therefore common for migrants to *stress that members of the local community received them positively*.

Months of ethnography here are complimented by a Bourdieusian conceptualisation of social distinction and the inner workings of authenticity as status (cf. Hoey 2010; Korpela 2010; O'Reilly 2009). With a focus squarely on the elements of everyday life experienced by lifestyle migrants and with an inductive approach, Benson (2011a) is able to make a significant contribution to our understanding of the movement. In particular, like Hoey (2010) and Korpela (2010), the quest to authenticate the self has impact on lifestyles post-migration and is revealed as integral to the experience. In other words in lifestyle migration, it is how people frame and live their migration which is of most importance in conceptualising the phenomenon. One could say that in doing so, Benson (2011a) had 'frozen' her subjects both temporarily and also in context to get to the core nature of their inner experiences, as outlined by Simmel earlier.

Further illustration of the attractiveness and importance of the 'sedentary' practices of the social sciences in investigating lifestyle migration can be seen in boundary work. As O'Reilly (2007; see also, Favell 2008) demonstrates in her research, the ongoing role of cultural boundaries can have a crucial influence on lifestyles and experiences post-migration. Citing her investigations into British migration to Spain, she contends that 'permanent migrants are victims of a whole series of contradictions indicative of the tension inherent in a mobility-enclosure dialectic' (O'Reilly 2007: 284). Despite the theoretical intimations among broader social theory towards a freer and mobile world

where nation-state boundaries are dwindling in effect, participants in her study are 'unable to escape the fact that they remain members of a nation state, and the attempt to loosen these ties is leading to social exclusion' (O'Reilly 2007: 285). This social exclusion enacted through language, culture, local and state policy is exacerbated by the realisation that many of these migrants cannot, despite popular rhetoric, return home whenever they please due to hard economic/structural realities. Unlike some of Benson's (2011a) participants also, the British in Spain in O'Reilly's (2007) study are characterised as outsiders or 'residential tourists', thus remaining firmly characterised as 'strangers' in local culture.

I have found similar boundary work in studies conducted within lifestyle migration areas in Australia. One participant in 2006 remarked in her new place of residence that she was treated with remarkable indifference when she first arrived in her new country location. She comments,

Yeah it was difficult. I had a very different concept of moving to the country, cause when we moved into the house and we've got neighbours, there are about 6 of us reasonably close, and I have access to their letter boxes and I, when we arrived I put Christmas cards in all their letter boxes and I thought that, they would all run over with casseroles and stuff. Never heard a thing.

This participant reflects a constant issue that emerges in the city/country dialectic, that of romanticism. While country people are 'imagined' to be friendly, warm and welcoming, her experience tells of an isolating journey into her lifestyle migration wherein the narratives of her expectations are unmet. In a similar circumstance, Dowling (2004: 80) tells the story of a man who moved to the regional Australia with his family:

I didn't expect the locals to greet us with a marching band when we came into town...but after five years you'd think they would have accepted us by now. The kids are fine, but [we] are still treated as though we don't quite belong. Everyone's friendly enough, although some of the men are pretty quick to tell me I don't know what I'm talking about if I offer my views on just about anything.

Such experiences demonstrate the power of not simply nation-state identities to limit the experience of the lifestyle migrant but also the reaffirming of structural boundaries within these rural landscapes.⁶

There are of course other structural issues that require the more traditional methods of social scientific analysis to uncover which have implications for lifestyle migrants. As Favell (2008: 206) demonstrates in his empirical work, these can be as mundane as the inability for 'pensions' to be mobile causing bureaucratic nightmares for those living outside their 'home' state.⁷ Similarly in a recent quantitative study of European skilled migration to Australia conducted by Khoo et al. (2011: 563), it was found that despite many reporting lifestyle to be their major reason for moving, material concerns such as employment and income were main driving motivations for leaving. Of course even the topic of skilled migration itself remains heavily embedded in political, social and cultural wrangling in public discussions at the national level. In Australia in particular where migrants are often confused with asylum seekers, questions of intentions and the at-times unfortunate experiences of racism within pockets of the country create difficulties for those looking to resettle. However, alongside these broader macrostructural issues are microeconomic or localised issues that demand our attention from housing stress (Gosnell and Abrams 2011; Osbaldiston and Picken 2013), employment difficulties (Khoo et al. 2011; O'Reilly 2007; Osbaldiston 2012), highly aged communities (Burnley and Murphy 2004; Mitchell 2004) and the diversity of wealth levels found in areas of high amenity (Shumway and Otterstrom 2001). Considered remarks on all these facets can be made through a serious examination of the structural which requires again 'freezing' of data for comparative purposes with other places or even historically within the same place (see later).

To simplify the argument being made here, it is proposed that retraining the sociological/anthropological eye towards a 'movement orientated social science' will inevitably miss vital points of interest in lifestyle and other forms of migration. Mentioned earlier are some of these, including what has become widely accepted as a major component of the motivation to migrate in the first instance, self-authenticity (Benson 2011a; Hoey 2010; Osbaldiston 2012). A serious examination, furthermore, of structural issues (housing stress, consumption, attitudes towards migrants, experiences of inequality, environmental degradation) are undoubtedly linked to questions of authenticity seeking and its flow on effects. These types of studies require, at times, statistics, surveys of attitudes and interviews with participants themselves in order to say something meaningful by using the data as comparative or by capturing the inner essence of the movement itself. While there is a place for exploring mundane features of landscape such as fences, roads and other non-humans; or even the things which disallow or allow movement

and pleasure/displeasure (e.g., see, Michael 2000), we cannot underestimate the power of the traditional social sciences to deliver meaningful data on phenomena like lifestyle migration. As Favell (2001) indicates earlier, perhaps the best way forward remains in the humble mid-range theoretical approach that seeks to consolidate inductive methods with established theoretical paradigms from the classics.⁸

Towards a more historically nuanced approach to lifestyle migration

What I have set out earlier is a defence for what Urry (2007) labels the sedentary social sciences. In this section, however, I seek to critique it also for accepting, at times uncritically, the ‘presentism’ that underpins the various social theories that are used to interpret data. This has been hinted at in our introduction to the volume. Furthermore, Korpela (2009, this volume) has demonstrated the need to be mindful of postcolonialism in tracing lifestyle migration. Specifically, the construction of pathways between countries from the Global North to the Global South and the ensuing migration of wealthy ‘westerners’ into developing nations should not escape our gaze. As Korpela (2009: 26) illustrates empirically, those who tend to ‘criticise the West’ in their escape from it are ‘actually not anti-Western’ but are seeking for a ‘different kind of (bohemian or alternative) Western’. Cultural narratives or the ‘habitus’ does not appear easy to loosen in the quest to reinvent oneself (cf. Benson and O’Reilly 2009b). Here the motif is the ‘West’ and the inability to break out of values, attitudes and ideals that are embodied and internalised demonstrate certain postcolonial attributes.

However, despite this it seems that often we adopt a position wherein lifestyle migration appears as a new practice within a new epoch where reflexivity, freedom and risk abound (Benson and O’Reilly 2009b; Moss 2006; Oliver and O’Reilly 2010; Osbaldiston 2010). Even within the structural hermeneutic mould which I have attempted to press the phenomenon into, there is some acceptance of more open choice and an emphasis on agency which trickles across social divides including class and status (Osbaldiston 2012). As Benson (2011a) concludes in her work, underestimating the power of class-based habitus is potentially mistaken. Yet, the strong cultural sociology programme of Alexander and Smith (2001) that I have utilised often in my own work provides some further food for thought in our theoretical contributions to lifestyle migration. In particular it rejects the ‘presentism’ of popular social

theory which has readily been used to make sense of our data in migration research.

It is evident for instance if we examine material from Hoey (this volume), that this form of migration needs to be placed better historically. While he concentrates more specifically in his piece on the relationship of the 'fifth migration' in the United States to previous periods of movement, this section will argue that we need better understandings of where to place lifestyle migration among the cultural forms in our society today. Is it the case that we are more reflexive than previously? Have structures that limited movement truly been broken down in new and tradition breaking ways? Is the lifestyle migrant a new form of persona? The answers to these questions I argue here remain relatively underdeveloped. What I chart out below will not fill the gaps, but will perhaps provide some interest in how we conceptualise and research the movement in the future.

As a foundation for my critique, I begin with Jeffrey Alexander's thoughts on Beck's (1992) popular reflexive modernisation thesis which has garnered significant attention across the social sciences. In response to idea that there has been a dramatic shift in the practices of social and institutional life, he writes:

The problem with Beck's risk society thesis is that, while it challenges Marx and Luhmann in substantive terms, it maintains much of the formal structure of their work. Broad tendential speculations are advanced about infrastructural and organizational processes that have little grounding in the actual processes of institutional and everyday life. For example, when has subparliamentary politics not played a primary role in the social life of industrial societies? Were consciousness and social action really focussed only on distributive and material issues before the environmental crises of the 1960s? Certainly fundamentalist religion, ethnic and racial movements, and nationalism were signal phenomena in the 19th and early 20th centuries! (Alexander 1996: 134–135)

Later he further challenges Giddens' notion of detraditionalisation by arguing that he 'ignores the dense rethinking of the relation between symbolic patterning and contingent, creative social action that in my view, has made the tradition/modernity dichotomy obsolete' (Alexander 1996: 136). To emphasise his point, Alexander (1996: 136) encourages us to consider anthropologists like Douglas and Geertz who conceptualised risk and reflexivity within cultural traditions and not 'outside of it'. It is

interesting to note further that among the champions of this culturally aware approach is Bourdieu, one of those used predominantly in Benson and O'Reilly's work (2009a; see also, Oliver and O'Reilly 2010).

Building on this critique throughout his career, Alexander returns back to the Durkheimian tradition (and in principle to Douglas, Geertz and others) to develop a structural hermeneutic approach to cultural sociology. Touted as the 'strong programme' of the sub-discipline, Alexander's attempt to firm up a more culturally nuanced sociology has resulted in a steady flow of critiques and discussions (Alexander and Smith 2010; Alexander and Reed 2009; Emirbayer 2004; Gartman 2007; McLennan 2004, 2005). However it has attracted a number of sociologists to reconsider issues as diverse as punishment (Smith 2008), institutions and economies (Tognato 2012), political assassinations (Eyerman 2011), tourist pilgrimage (Osbaldiston and Petray 2011; West 2010) and place-making (Smith 1999). Differentiated from what is deemed as 'weaker' programs in cultural sociology, Alexander's paradigm adopts a distinct methodological approach in favour of textual or narrative analysis in order to place culture at the forefront of analysis. In other words, culture is transformed into an independent variable rather than shifted and shaped according to institutional power, structural dynamics and political wrangling. What is most interesting however, for the purposes of this chapter, is the emphasis on building cases for comparative reasons as indicated in the following:

The appeal of this theory lies partially in its affinity for a textual understanding of social life. The emphasis on teleology carries with it some of the interpretive power of the classical hermeneutical model. This impulse towards reading culture as a text is complimented, in such narrative work, by an *interest in developing formal models that can be applied across different comparative and historical cases*. (Alexander and Smith 2001:146, *italics added*)

This type of 'formal model' building can be seen most illustratively in Smith's (1999) 'elementary forms of place' where Durkheim's (1995 [1912]) famous sacred and profane distinctions are used to trace places and their different cultural undertones. In his own exploration of *Place de la Bastille*, he systematically demonstrates how throughout history, sites of critical importance for national identity can traverse a number of norms and valuations. Paradoxically, sacred places can acquire profane or mundane attributes as historical narratives are interpreted and re-interpreted in diverse ways according to dominant collective views.

The underpinning message though in the 'strong programme' is that we ought to be more historically aware when we seek to conceptualise and research contemporary social phenomenon. This critique of modern theory is further exhibited in a recent article from Inglis (2013) in *Cultural Sociology*. While not adhering to the Alexander model, Inglis (2013) is heavily critical of British sociology and the preponderance of certain intellectual gatekeepers. He argues that in stark contrast to the modernists, late modern or postmodern theories fleetingly engage with detailed historical comparison in order to justify their claim to 'new' modernity. He writes:

Although the current ubiquity in both theoretical and empirical sociology of a range of periodizing constructs – risk society, globalization, late modernity, liquid modernity, network society, etc. – apparently indicates strong historical consciousness within the discipline, actually such concepts make possible, compel and *legitimate* disengagement with the serious study of historical processes. They provide pre-packaged, highly simplified accounts of complex historical forces, which save the majority of sociologists from really having to understand in profound ways the complexities of long-term historical dynamics. (Inglis 2013: 3)

In short, the 'intellectual entrepreneurs' (ibid. 2013: 15) of our day do our historicising for us. They provide accounts which are taken for granted, adopted and accepted into our own contributions to present day sociology – as has been the case in lifestyle migration in the past (see earlier). However, as Inglis (2013: 15–16) argues, we must retrain ourselves to become aware of 'long-term historical dynamics and also the reflexive understanding of the inevitably contested nature of those dynamics' (see also, Salazar 2013). Sociology, he furthers,

must operate with more sophisticated and self-reflexive understandings of the terms it uses than it currently does – especially the most vexed term of all 'modernity' – and what these might mean, in existential, ontological and epistemological registers. (Inglis 2013: 16)

This does not mean that we ought to become 'historical sociologists' overnight, but rather our theoretical contributions should be built on a foundation of historical fact. It requires a critical edge to assumptions that conditions like reflexivity or risk are 'wholly historically unprecedented' (ibid. 2013: 16). Research wise it involves a return to the

archives. Here we can situate our objects of study historically, comparing changes (if any) to the contemporary situation and then providing holistic and detailed accounts of its development. Doing so allows us to become savvy to context and mindful of the implications of past institutional or collective thinking. With this critique in mind, I wish to present two particular points of departure which we could adopt in future developments on lifestyle migration theory. These are by no means complete or definitive. However, they reflect a need to provide what I would term 'historically aware commentary' on the contemporary terrain of lifestyle migration.

First and as a foundation to our studies, we need to be mindful of the long-term historical patterns of migration *and* the cultural imagination that surrounds places (or even the notion of lifestyle migration as a romantic quest). As Favell relates, such an approach would overcome the difficulties of rational choice theory in migration as it accepts the

possibility that there might be established patterns between particular places: for example a cultural or historical 'special relationship' that would facilitate more migration between the two places. Individual choices can thus be structured by a more systematic aggregate pattern. (2008: 75)

In some respects we do this very well already. As O'Reilly (2012: 68–73) demonstrates in her examination of the 'external structures' that preempt migration to the Spanish Coastline (from the United Kingdom), historical precedents such as tourism, migration patterns and even economic conditions have all previously been well developed (King et al. 2000). Furthermore, counterurbanisation theorists repeatedly demonstrate to us patterns of migration that have seeped into the imaginations of those in the city (specifically) as a type of panacea to the ills of modernity (Benson 2011a: 11–13; Halfacree 2012; Mitchell 2004). Romanticising the countryside as peaceful, serene and slow has been a long established narrative from early modernity. Even in Australia, the pattern of migration and obsession with the coast has now been well documented historically linking Australian 'escapism' to the beach (Burnley and Murphy 2004).

For this reason, it might seem odd to claim that we need to return back to established patterns of migration for comparative reasons, though the mobilities paradigm might consider this outdated. However, despite our ability to reconcile historical patterns within the background stories of the places we have studied, this has led to little questioning on the

apparent 'newness' of lifestyle migration. Building on considerable case studies, some have linked the phenomenon to a 'quest for the authentic' characteristic of a tourist ethic. Yet, the same literature is also indicative of the problem that Inglis (2013) and Alexander (1996) highlight earlier. Benson and O'Reilly (2009b: 618–619) stake a claim, for instance, that the movement is symptomatic of late-modern reflexivity and concede that 'globalisation has a role to play in the rise of this form of migration'. Similarly, counterurbanisation theorist Halfacree (2012: 220, *italics added*) has argued:

This energised post-millennial migration is *not somehow 'the same' as migration in the past*, with the mobilities paradigm also suggesting that it cannot thus be studied in the same ways as before. Instead, migration has attained heightened existential and ontological significance, it has also become necessary to mobilise our own epistemological appreciation of it, notably through the deconstruction of previously relatively firm boundaries, such as stability versus movement, permanent versus temporary, and intranational versus international.

In approaching counterurbanisation like this, Halfacree (2012: 221) opens up the question of 'seeking the rural' as a 'profound, pervasive, and plural tendency' that underpins not only lifestyle migration but also second-home ownership. Such notions are certainly worth considering, given the theoretical collusions between second-home and lifestyle migration researchers. This is especially true when lifestyle migration returns back tourist studies to make sense of data.

However, this patterned escapism from the city is not new and the notion of ritualised escape is fundamental in various examples of early modern art, literature and transcendental philosophy. Thoreau's 1854 adventures in *Walden* are punctuated by a solitary retreat away from the stresses and strains of social obligation and intrusive technologies in the city. Similarly, Emerson's 1836 essay *Nature* where he lauds escaping into the woods as place of 'perpetual youth' where all 'egoism vanishes', provides us with some interesting historical data on the romanticisation of the countryside. Are things much different today in relation to the cultural manifestations of engaging with landscape? Even Simmel (1997[1895]: 221) demonstrates some awe over natural form when he considers the sea as producing 'soothing, a forgetting and a reverie' and the 'icy wilderness...sensation of desire for action, that feeling of joy and being beyond life'; although he also cynically remarks later that even this is a 'temporary delusion of aesthetic stimulation'. However,

as Jazbinsek (2003: 111–112) reminds us, we know that Simmel himself sought ‘out the solitude of the Swiss mountains with his family so that he could devote himself to writing in peace’.

What these short illustrations suggest is that once we have established patterns of migration which therefore structures individual choices, we must further establish if there is anything remarkably different to what has happened previously. As Inglis (2013: 15) wants us to remember, there are ‘long-term historical dynamics’ which are at play in lifestyle migration that I argue we have only begun to scratch the surface of. When we turn towards theory that flatters ‘its contemporaries with the pleasing illusion that they are somehow completely unique, and that their thoughts and actions are wholly historically unprecedented’ (Inglis 2013: 16) then we lose the ability to trace the rich complexity of historical processes that have developed into the patterns of migration we see today.

The second argument I seek to make here firmly relates to this and reflects the broader interpretation of lifestyle migration as a quest for a better life or some type of self-authenticity. While we have previously linked this again to established paradigms like tourism or the cultural imaginary (Benson 2011a; O’Reilly 2012; Osbaldiston 2012), we have yet to really witness a deeper historical location of the type of self that engages with this self-authenticating process. In the past I have tried to follow the established pattern of the ‘strong programme’ to show that the self has acquired a quasi-sacred property which pushes individuals into ritualised forms of protection against the everyday (or profane). However, on reflection it is evident that despite leaning on Durkheimian social theory in particular, my considerations were highly speculative. If the self is indeed sacred in our modern culture, evident perhaps in quests for authenticity like lifestyle migration, where has this emerged from?

What I did suggest at the end of my piece (Osbaldiston 2012: 133–142) is that there are two ways of approaching this conundrum. The first is to adopt the Alexander cultural sociological approach of historically investigating the self throughout cultural forms. The second is the Foucauldian, perhaps more rigorously adapted by Nik Rose (1996) and utilised by Korpela (this volume). In the latter, the modern-day obsession to authenticate the self is the result of a long historical process of *techne* by institutions from religion through to *psy*. The former considers culture as more autonomous, shifting according to dominant collective values and norms and adopting practices of institutions reflexively. In other words, on one hand cultural forms have shaped our collective

understandings of the self, whereas on the other institutional discourse and ethics produce a type of self (Rose 1996: 64). In the development of this further, it seems apparent that both styles are simply providing different angles from which to interpret the modern-day dilemma of a 'quest for a better life'. Neither is right or wrong but are perhaps more 'analytical possibilities rather than empirical reality' (Smith 2008: 180). However, I wish in these final remarks to suggest that we have good examples of what can be achieved both theoretically and empirically to concretise claims on the 'self' here.

In particular, it seems that Mauss' (1979[1938]) elaboration on the historical development of the self (*moi*) is appealing. As he comments in his introduction, there is a common misconception that the 'self' is 'natural, precise in the heart of his (*sic*) consciousness' but which is a 'naïve view of its history' causing him to seek out a 'more precise one' (Mauss 1979[1938: 59]). He furthers this by suggesting that 'there has never been a human being without the sense not only of his body, but also of his simultaneously mental and physical individuality' rejecting some of the more dominant paradigm shifting theories found predominantly in the psychological sciences of the time (Mauss 1979[1938: 61]). As a result, his aim and methodology, which is of more interest to us, is as follows:

Through the centuries, across many societies, how has, not the sense of 'self' but the notion, the concept that men of various times have created it, slowly been elaborated? What I want to show you is the *series of forms which this concept has taken on in the life of men in societies*, according to their laws, their religions, their customs, their social structures and their mentalities. (Mauss 1979 [1938: 61–62], *italics added*)

From here Mauss traces historical manifestations of the self in anthropological texts on the Pueblo, the Kwakiutl and Indigenous Australians through to more recent civilisations such as the early Christians and Greeks. He arrives finally at modern secularism and Kant making the claim that 'from a moral consciousness to a sacred being' the self has now been conceptualised in modernity as a 'fundamental form of thought and action' (Mauss 1979[1938: 90]).

Without elaborating further on Mauss' theoretical conclusions here,⁹ the development of his position (assisted by Durkheim's previous writings no doubt) which led him towards a serious engagement with the historical literature available is what I seek to highlight here. The strong

programme in cultural sociology has demonstrated a similar interest into the historical such as found in Smith's (2008) investigation of the polluted and profane selves in punishment. What I believe possible in our own interrogations of lifestyle migration is to adapt such a technique in our approaches. If the phenomenon is bound up in a quest for a better life or a more authentic existence, what historical traces can we link up to understand this better? What has been the cultural narrative past that promotes unity between nature, landscape or even excitement with self-authenticity? Are there early traces of individualist rejections of the city to be compared to our modern lifestyle migrants? In short, the self which potentially is at stake in lifestyle migration needs further unpacking. This is where I believe we can produce exceptional historically aware commentary that not only speaks to lifestyle migration but also the broader landscape of cultural forms of authenticity seeking in our current modernity.

Conclusion

Admittedly there is not enough room to tease more fully out what I have detailed in both sections of this chapter. The claims are broad and at best can be accused of straw-manning in certain places. However, the debate on how we best approach lifestyle migration in the future is one that we ought to consider both theoretically and methodologically. It would seem that migration and tourism studies in particular have acquired a taste for the 'mobilities' turn. There is no question that mobilities is useful in certain contexts. Concepts like 'motility' or 'moorings' for instance could prove highly useful in the development of a 'practice centred' approach to lifestyle migration (Kaufmann 2011). Interestingly this may well call for a structured analysis on the dimensions of class, global position, status or other 'out of vogue' concepts. Who is it that can move? Who is it that is forced to move? And most importantly, who does not move or rather, chooses not to move? And if people are not moving, why is that the case?

What I have tried to demonstrate though is that the 'sedentary' social sciences still have much to say about phenomena like lifestyle migration. Freezing in time populations or even participants allows us the opportunity, even if we use Simmel as a foundation, to say something meaningful not just about structure but internalised cultural narratives and coding. Focusing on 'things that move' or even things that allow/disallow movement will inevitably miss these important aspects which constantly provide exceptional data and insights into the foundations

of lifestyle migration. It has been my argument that to throw out the old 'rules for sociological method' could potentially miss the point of these movements completely.

Our modes of analysis are by no means without critique, however. What I have argued in the second half of this chapter is that as Alexander (1996) and Inglis (2013) suggest in their respective framings of cultural sociology, we need to avoid the trap of 'presentism'. This is endemic to sociology, according to Inglis (2013). The concern is that social theories of popularity have become 'black boxes', to use that Latourian term, which we utilise to make sense of issues like lifestyle migration without opening up their claims to newness for evaluation. In short, we need to ensure that we are not 'ahistorical' by interrogating historical forms of lifestyle migration and those who have participated in them. I have argued here that using this approach will help us say so much more about the phenomenon itself than what we might achieve through the mobilities paradigm.

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Notes

1. See for example Parkins and Craig (2006).
2. There are some poignant journalistic accounts in Dowling (2004) of Australians who have failed in their migration quests to find a better life. Interestingly, these urban-rural migrants also find it difficult to return back home to the city for structural reasons such as housing costs.
3. Sheller unlike Urry tends to base her theoretical discussions from people like Clifford. In this chapter I seek to critique mobilities from Urry's view as one of the founders arguably of mobilities in sociology.
4. For instance, see, Vannini's (2012) ethnography of people's use of Ferry Travel in Canada for an example of 'thick descriptions' of mobile practices.
5. It should be noted that despite this emphasis on things on the move, there is also significant interest in things that don't move or which facilitate movement and don't move necessarily such as airports, transport systems, mobile phone towers, computers, etc. Moorings is a concept that has developed serious interest in mobilities highlighting a dialectic between things which move and don't move. Further evidence of an interest in things which don't move can be seen in Bissell and Fuller's (2009) collection on 'stillness'. Underpinning all of these however is a primary interest in the 'world of movement' where things which don't move become focal points that stand aside from the mobile world.

6. See Osbaldiston (2012: 116) for another experience found online where migrants to Tasmania from mainland Australia express dismay at being treated as strangers to the point that they have 'given up on trying to be social' and have instead begun to integrate with other lifestyle migrants or seachangers forming their own internal groups.
7. The fact that one still has to 'choose' a home state or a state of citizenship in the European Union even demonstrates the power of the border still and the structural difficulties that can hinder movement or at least the decision to move.
8. This question of inductive versus deductive reasoning is one that deserves more attention in lifestyle migration research. In the past, I have applied what can be called a 'hypothetico-deductivist strategy' akin to Durkheimian sociology where conceptual frameworks for analysis as types of hypotheses are carried into the research field – but where established theoretical terrain is loosened to allow data to shape and mould the project's focus and also agenda. However, O'Reilly's (2012) call for a more practice-centred approach resonates with a more purely inductive reasoning which is highly appealing.
9. For more excellent commentary see Carrithers, Collins and Lukes' (1985) *The Category of the Person*.

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9

No Man Can Be an Island: Lifestyle Migration, Stillness, and the New Quietism

Phillip Vannini and Jonathan Taggart

Islands throughout the world are known to attract exurbanites (not unlike me¹; see, Vannini 2012) in search of a less hurried lifestyle. In part this is because they are generally inconvenient to reach and therefore provide residents with some remove from the rest of the world. And in part it is because they are places that give newcomers symbolic material for a fresh start: a clean slate of sorts (Baldacchino 2006; Peron 2004; Royle 2007). Situated on the Atlantic Coast of Canada, Prince Edward Island (PEI) is not known as a lifestyle migration Mecca, though it is not difficult to find many idyllic and secluded spaces there. Jon, Lindsay and I have found one for our fieldwork stay at an off-grid rental property near Goose River, on the northeastern end of the island.

Off-grid is an abused expression. Often, people use it to refer to any state – no matter how temporary – of disconnection or even simple remoteness. However, the more precise technical meaning of off-grid denotes disconnection from the electricity grid *and* natural gas network serving an area. In practice, households that are off those two infrastructures are also on their own for other typical domestic needs like water and sewage. It is also common for off-grid dwellers to grow some food, to be far removed from the highway grid, and to be selectively connected to the media of communication. To this unique lifestyle Jon and I have dedicated over two years of fieldwork, inclusive of 175 interviews and visits at 99 sites in all provinces and territories of Canada (see Figure 9.1).

Islands are a common destination for lifestyle migrants of both the on-grid and the off-grid variety, but, as we wish to discuss in this chapter, coming from far away is not a necessary condition of the migratory



Figure 9.1 A rather un-crowded beach, near our cabin. All photos by Jonathan Taggart

resettlement of lifestyle migrants. In other words, it is possible to be a lifestyle migrant without actually relocating very far at all. Going off the grid, in fact, may very well be a sufficiently powerful way of moving into a secluded lifestyle enclave – a metaphorical island of sorts – teeming with the amenities typically sought by most lifestyle migrants. The stillness offered by these metaphorical islands is – not unlike the actual stillness offered by physical islands – never pure or complete. The purpose of this chapter is to show what this means and how this happens in ethnographic detail, to highlight the challenges inherent in the off-grid lifestyle migration and the subsequent (im)mobilities, and to reflect on the theoretical implications of this phenomenon for our understanding of the idea of lifestyle migration.

Jim and Judy

We manage to reach West PEI on a long and frustrating drive from our side of the island. We have promised to bring dessert for lunch at Jim and Judy's, but once past the city of Summerside 'West Prince' soon forgets to cater to consumerist whims and we resort to showing up with

nothing but gratitude and apologies. ‘West Prince is like a third dimension’, Judy later tells us in half-jest, humming the famous movie tune.

We finally reach their farm after driving for a kilometre or so, on their unpaved road and then the long grassy driveway. As we step outside our rental car I spot Jim on a field nearby, mowing grass with his small tractor. Judy is inside waiting for us, he says, and he’ll soon join us too. Like us, Jim and Judy are from far away – we learn as we find a seat around their living room table, with the warm early afternoon sun shining on us through the large south-facing windows. They have migrated here to follow a dream. Jim and Judy are from Guelph, Ontario, near Toronto (see Figure 9.2). They escaped here shortly after 9/11, fed up with their ‘meaningless’ lives filled with Saturday afternoon car washes, military and then corporate careers and empty preoccupations with matching countertop colours and kitchen accessories. ‘I found my lifestyle in the suburbs too...’ Judy ponders pensively in search of the right word, made even righter-sounding by her polished English accent, ‘robotic; as if we were part of a cult, without wanting to be part of it’.

Jim quit his job on that fateful September day. His branch manager refused to listen to his request that employees be sent home to be with their families. That display of corporate insensitivity was the last straw.



Figure 9.2 Judy and two of her friendly goats

While Jim took a new temporary job as a groundskeeper, they painstakingly weighed their escape options together. One night, while Judy was fast asleep, Jim stumbled across a property for sale on West PEI. A former non-commissioned military officer – he is a man of few but deliberately chosen words and clear decisions – Jim briskly woke Judy from the bed, consulted with her and bid on the property.

Jim and Judy are what anthropologists, geographers and sociologists call lifestyle migrants (e.g., Benson 2011; Hoey 2005; Loeffler and Steinicke 2007; Moss 2006; O'Reilly 2000; O'Reilly and Benson 2009; Osbaldiston 2012; Scheiner and Kasper 2003). Lifestyle migrants move not out of economic necessity but out of choice for a different way of life, wishing to begin anew, to start over and to reinvent themselves (Benson 2010, 2011; Benson and O'Reilly 2009; Hoey 2005, 2006; Loeffler and Steinicke 2007; Osbaldiston 2012; Torkington 2012). These often highly educated and relatively well-off individuals are known to move to warmer and gentler places, often far and abroad, but the promise of a new lifestyle can be sought even in cold places found within one's own country (Hoey 2005, 2006, 2010; Jobs 2000; Loeffler and Steinicke 2007). The Canadian off-gridders we meet on our journey across the nation are invariably seeking the amenities that many of their on-grid counterparts seek elsewhere in the world: a slower pace of life in tune with natural rhythms, a more intimate communion with place and the natural environment, the opportunity to be one's own boss or enjoy retirement or semi-retirement, a more basic and 'simpler' form of living, and the time to downshift and dedicate oneself to one's hobbies and true passions (cf. Benson 2010, 2011; Hoey 2005, 2006, 2010; O'Reilly 2000; Osbaldiston 2012; Torkington 2012).

Such initial migration is then followed by other forms of everyday mobility and immobility similarly influenced by lifestyle choices typical of counterurban, back-to-the-land migrants (e.g., Gould 2005; Halfacree 1994, 2006, 2009). Like the latter, many of our informants choose to live off-grid to practice a more sustainable, environmentally friendly lifestyle. Others do it for the challenge of practicing a relatively self-sufficient way of living, one that is supposedly more resilient and freer from the ties of utilities, authorities and related expectations and regulations. But regardless of their different motives, most Canadian off-gridders have two things in common vis-à-vis their migration destination choices. First, they are off-grid because the place where they have decided to build a house is generally so far from the nearest electricity pole that hooking up to the electric utility would be prohibitively expensive. Second, they wanted to move so far because they ached for the peace

and quiet that their little disconnected safe-haven islands would provide them with. So in a sense, both their initial migration and the subsequent everyday mobilities such migration gives rise to are informed by a quest for relative immobility (Adey 2006) or, better yet, a sense of stillness (see, Bissell and Fuller 2010).

Stillness is a pause, a bracketing and a friction in the onflow of everyday life (Bissell and Fuller 2010). Bissell and Fuller (2010: 2) view stillness as ‘wilful unmoving’ that takes ‘a stand’ thus manifesting ‘the sedentary metaphysics of fixity – a staying in place – that... stands as a counterpoint to the nomadic metaphysics of flow’. But we must be careful not to lionise stillness as a form of resistance or idealise it as an absolute type of immobility. Stillness, like immobility (see, Adey 2006), is always relative and is always characterised by multiple flows, contradictions, compromises and tensions. The stillness of off-grid lifestyle migrants is thus never complete and therefore ‘is not just a gesture of refusal’ (Bissell and Fuller 2010: 3). This phenomenon has important consequences for the day-to-day experiences of lifestyle migrants, as we will see shortly.

Moving off the grid

If buying a house half a continent away without seeing it first seemed crazy, visiting the property for the first time felt even more surreal to Jim and Judy. ‘There was absolutely nothing here, just trees’, Judy smiles, ‘my dad – who was here with me – felt like we were in the Burmese jungle’. Soon enough they cleared space for a driveway and a lot for the house. The Internet taught them how to build their new home with wood from the trees they had to cut. A few conversations with local renewable energy suppliers gave them the additional knowledge needed to set up a small hybrid system – solar and wind – to power their domestic needs. Next thing you know their teenage daughter – literally pulled from a ‘normal’ suburban life filled with swimming pools and mall outings – was furnished with home-made snowshoes to make it to the end of their long driveway, and sent to school. She was all but impressed.

After scores of interviews anywhere from the Gulf Islands to the high Arctic and the Canadian Shield, we know that this is generally the point in the story when the off-grid interviewee *du jour* indulges in a big hearty laugh and kicks back on their sofa. Not this time. The coffee gurgling on the two-burner propane stove has been ready for a while, but Jim and Judy – seated on the edge of their chairs around the kitchen table – are in no mood to tell a typical ‘... and everyone lived happily off-the-grid ever

after' story. The stillness they sought through their new lifestyle plan, it turned out, had a serious kink. This is where we wish to pause on our narration and introduce a fellow islander of theirs, Walter.

Out of all the off-gridders we have managed to track down thus far, Walter is the only one without a telephone, a computer *and* an email account. While few off-gridders subscribe to cable or satellite television, almost all of them keep in regular touch with the world. As a matter of fact, several – like Jim and Judy – even have blogs or websites they use to chronicle their day-to-day lifestyle activities or to advertise a business. But not Walter. 'People don't mind their own business on that thing', he finds. As for television and other media, he's perfectly happy without them too. 'Too much grief', he says, 'I don't need it.' Though he has no phone, Walter regularly visits a provincial agency nearby his home to make calls when necessary. Thankfully for us, as this is how we found him (see Figure 9.3).

We arrive at his house at 11 o'clock, accompanied by Rob – a technician employed by the provincial agency. Rob thinks it's a good idea to accompany us to Walter's, despite the fact that his house is extremely easy to find, even without the most basic of directions. He just prefers to introduce us personally and hang out with us at Walter's place for a few



Figure 9.3 'Walter', as we have decided to call him

minutes. 'I'll leave shortly after if everything is ok', he says. He makes it a point of warning us that hygiene might not be a selling feature of Walter's home. 'It smells really bad', he cautions us, 'you might to chew on some gum.'

Rob's knock on Walter's front door is met by no answer. Nervous with anticipation, the few seconds of un-answering silence seem to drag on forever. Moments later Walter quietly appears from his shop door. We walk a few steps towards him, introducing ourselves and greeting him. He mumbles hello, with a confused look. I explain our reason for being there and immediately launch into the informed consent ritual. We generally make introductory contact with interviewees well in advance of showing up at their door, but in this case no such option is available. 'That's fine', he says, he has 'nothing to hide' and he doesn't mind visiting with people. The staff at the provincial agency had told him about our wish to meet him and he is equally keen to speak to us. He welcomes us into his workshop, and we walk up the three creaking wooden steps together.

As we step in, my eyes and nose are suddenly hijacked by the heaps of sawdust gathered everywhere on the floor. I briefly scan the large, dimly-lit building in search of the origin of all that fire hazard but the melee of old machinery, discarded TV sets, gardening tools, junk-filled containers and overcrowded tables makes it impossible to trace the precise root of the lumber-cutting. Equally impossible is to pay visual attention to all of that clutter and Walter's words at the same time. West Coast Canadian is my preferred language and Lindsay, Jon and I need to resort to tag-teaming in order to comprehend Walter's old-time island accent. We fire a few questions about what he is currently working on, just to get the conversation going, and we learn the tool he's fixing is a broken-down weed-wacker. More meaningful questions ensue, and with the subsequent help of our three audio recorders we re-piece the conversation together.

Although he was always off-grid, Walter currently has no electricity at all. A wind turbine he used to own recently broke down. He plans on fixing it, but it would cost a lot of money. Unbothered by the absence of electricity, he uses a kerosene lamp to make all the light that he needs in order to read at night. The rest is kept simple, 'real simple'. 'That's the way it used to be', he says, 'it was fine back in the day when there was no choice, so why wouldn't it be fine now?' Things get more and more complicated, cost more and more money, and then break down. And what's the point? He argues. The elegant simplicity of his argument reveals his thinking to be reflexive and informed. He is far from

the simpleton his living arrangement and unsophisticated accent would give him off to be.

Walter grew up in a farm with his family, less than ten miles away from where he lives now. It was a mixed farm – they grew a little bit of everything, unlike the potato-frenzied specialised crops of today's PEL. He moved to his current house 30 years ago. Back then you'd hardly see a car a day in these parts, he tells. It got busier and busier with time, with the growth of tourism and wind energy. He is quite in awe with the latter. The hum of the large turbines near his home doesn't bother him and he thinks highly of their effort to produce clean electricity. In fact, he says, it's much better to get power from the wind than rely on oil. With their powerful engines the boats that he sees from his house fishing around the cape digest gallons and gallons of diesel with every outing. While he doesn't think of himself as an environmentalist he has no gasoline generator and he is thinking on investing on a 1KW off-grid system – part wind and part solar.

Walter says he likes to stay away from gambling and to keep healthy. He drinks just a little bit of alcohol, and cooks himself fish, meat and potatoes. For that he uses a wood stove in the winter and a propane-based one in the summer. He has no refrigerator – an ice box does the job – so his food is always fresh as he needs to buy it twice a week. During the winter the ice box in which he keeps perishables sits outside in the cold. During the summer and spring he purchases ice twice a week. He doesn't mind this system too much, but if he ever gets around to installing solar panels or a wind turbine the first and only electrical treat he'll get will be a refrigerator – he says with a yearning smile. 'Anything else?' I ask. 'No, that's all I need', he answers firmly.

A really old-looking twin solar panel, unusually pointing straight east, sticks out of the side of his house, right underneath a strangely shaped moss-covered satellite dish. Neither works. If the solar panel did work it would only produce about 200 watts or so, he says. Currently out of order is also his piping, and because of this there is no running water in the house. The source of groundwater is otherwise a well, 60-feet deep. He just has to get around to solving the problem, as normally the water he gets would be enough for his needs. Water would be heated on his wood-stove and that's how he would wash himself. The 'laundryman' instead takes care of washing his clothes, in town. In the absence of running water Walter 'borrows' it from the nearby provincial agency, where he occasionally takes a shower too. Unperturbed about this, Walter says he has a million projects to complete in his garage, including restoring engines, fixing old TV sets, and taking apart other pieces of machinery

for scraps – like the two 1950 era metal panels sitting in his front yard. He receives a pension, but he can use some extra cash.

Walter has a car – a mid-to-late 2000 Chevrolet model he recently bought used. But he doesn't travel much at all. The last time he went off island was at least two years ago, when he went to Halifax to visit family. 'Too many strangers, too many dope peddlers, too many people you can't trust,' he says about the city. More trustworthy are his friends at the nearby provincial agency and one of his neighbours, who check up on him regularly. Without a phone to call for help he knows this friendship is crucial. Telephones can be useful but they are just too much trouble to own, he reflects. He used to have a telephone back in the day, when there were still party lines. People would stick their noses into his business, and that bothered him to no end. 'No privacy,' he says, 'you'd pick up the phone and you'd hear a click – someone else was getting on the line' for the sole purpose of eavesdropping. That turned him off the whole telephone business and he never felt the need to have one in his house again.

Homes, like all kinds of places, are not necessarily tied to location. Communication, information, energy, water and many other types of flows entangle domestic environments in far-reaching and powerful webs. A house can be understood as a 'membrane': 'a filter of exteriorities continually entering it and traversing it,' explains Massumi (2002: 85), 'awash in transitivity the home is a node in an indefinitely extended field of immanence, to which the technologies of transmission give body.' To sever those flows, as extensively as Walter has done, is seemingly a way of engaging in a reactionary 'politics of connectivity' (Amin 2004) in an attempt to anchor, indeed to shelter and to still, his house in his location. If migrating is a way of 'voting with one's feet', going off the grid is a way of voting with one's walls, locking one's domestic membrane from the flows and inputs of the broader society, sealing it away from the global exteriorities constantly traversing it.

Walter is unlike Jim and Judy in many ways. In fact, he is quite unusual compared to all the off-gridders we have met. Neither highly educated, nor from afar in any sense of the word, or exactly affluent or even financially secure enough to make many lifestyle choices, he doesn't easily fit into the lifestyle migration discourse either, but the more I struggle to comprehend his speech the more I realise that my inability relate to him and peg him into a category is merely lexical. Walter is as interested in peace and quiet, in stillness, and in lifestyle simplicity as all other off-gridders are.

To boot, both Walter and Jim and Judy have managed to do the very same thing with their domestic lifestyle choices: to produce little

metaphorical islands of their own on this larger physical island space. By moving off the grid – as Jim and Judy did – and by refusing to move onto the grid as it stretched farther and farther across old PEI – as Walter did – the three of them have stepped aside the late-modern world. Through both their initial move and through their subsequent mobilities and immobilities they have separated their homes from the networks that bind the rest of us together, from the bundles of lines that knot single homes and households into communities and interdependent global societies. By going off the grid in their different ways Walter, Jim, and Judy have practiced a unique migratory strategy that has allowed them to shape a distinct lifestyle as driven by personal authenticity as that of migrants who have sought a personal sea change across the globe (cf. Benson 2011; Osbaldiston 2012).

Non-users and lifestyle (im)mobilities

In their different ways, Walter, Jim and Judy, and all other off-gridders are what students of technology have come to know as ‘non-users’ (e.g., Kline 2005; Wyatt 2005). Non-users are non-adopters of a particular technology: people who choose not to own or utilise a consumer object or service. Non-users are a diverse group. For some the non-adoption of a particular technology is driven by lack of interest and perceived advantage (Selwyn et al. 2005; Tufekci 2008; Wyatt 2005). For others non-adoption is the result of historical patterns of social and individual difference (Kline 2005). For other people it is part of a motivated counter-cultural stance. Cyclists who refuse to operate a car, for example, do so in order to reduce their carbon footprint and as a way of protesting against the dominance of the automobile and environmental degradation (e.g., Aldred 2010). Then there are other non-users whose non-adoption of a particular technology originates in lack of skills or knowledge. Research on internet use, for instance, has found that several individuals who have never been on the web perceive themselves to be insufficiently proficient with computer technology (e.g., see, Chia 2006).

Walter, Jim and Judy are non-users of centrally generated and distantly -managed electricity, as well as other technologies which these days have been widely domesticated into the typical Western home, such as the television, the telephone,² and in Walter’s case the internet-connected personal computer as well. These choices against the adoption of tools which almost all of us take for granted have dramatic effects on their lifestyle. In a society dominated by the logic of light, speed, power (Thrift 1996) and the virtual mobility afforded by connectivity (Elliot

and Urry 2010) to be 'unplugged' constitutes all but a revolutionary move. And a 'move' the act of unplugging indeed is. The move away from the grid, we argue, works as a significant kind of lifestyle migration at first, then a unique ongoing practice of everyday stillness.

While diverse, the reasons why off-gridders opt against using some technologies, and choose to use others instead, are rather intricate and often full of compromises, but they always pertain to conscious lifestyle preferences and a wish to 'get away from it all'. Off-gridders find that by non-using centrally supplied electricity and by selectively using other technologies they manage to form peripheral, stilled spaces where they can enjoy their preferred way of life.

Our grid-connected homes are intertwined to one another through extensive lines. Not only do these lines transmit energy, communication and fuels to our homes, but they also rid us from unwanted stuff like solid and liquid waste and common household garbage. These lines take care of us: they bind us to one another and make our everyday existence rather comfortable and convenient. But these lines also make us quite dependent on the operation of distant infrastructures whose complex functioning escapes our comprehension and control. It is this complexity, this anonymous un-involvement, and this (costly) dependence that off-gridders reject. By severing these ties off-gridders de-territorialise and thus re-localise their homes, moving away from these broad networks, and constituting in their place de facto safe-haven 'islands' where they can start afresh on a lifestyle of stillness of their own choosing.

But islands are never truly, utterly disconnected. Islands are spaces whose access is limited and restricted, but still guaranteed on ad hoc basis. It is a mistake to view islands as spaces governed by a clear-cut separation from the outside world. Islandness, like stillness, is never an absolute opposition to its counterpart. Many islanders all over the world thrive in a carefully arranged mix of isolation and insulation, convenience and inconvenience, and a dialectic of strategically chosen constellations of connection and separation that allow for their islands to function on rules, rhythms, speeds, conventions, rituals and practices of their very own (e.g., see, Vannini 2012).

Like islands, off-grid households are stilled places materially and symbolically removed and kept distinct from the rest of the world, though neither separate, nor fully immobile. Like other lifestyle migration destinations off-grid homes are spaces carved out of strategic patterns of everyday mobility and immobility: arrested or disconnected mobilities and negotiated immobilities that shut off the rest of the world but keep an open door to it at the same time.

Off-gridders are obviously a unique type of lifestyle migrants. The literature on lifestyle migration is rather abundant about the motivations behind migratory moves, about the consequences of migration on local social and ecological environments, and about aspects of migrants' day-to-day lives and mobilities. We also know a good deal about how lifestyle migrants have been able to 'colonise' progressively distant rural and exurban spaces, thanks to constantly improving telecommunication links that make it possible to work by telecommuting or to keep in touch with friends and family 'back home' via broadband-powered Voice Over Internet Protocol (VOIP) and similar connections (e.g., see, Moss 2006). Yet, we still understand little about the dialectics of what it means to be simultaneously far away from, and close at hand to, the places, cultures and societies a lifestyle migrant has willingly left behind. Jim, Judy and Walter's experiences and more broadly all off-gridders' vicissitudes with moulding idyllic lifestyle safe-havens thus warrant a deeper examination, potentially revealing of wider trends.

The New Quietism

Although they articulate it in different ways, Walter and Jim and Judy share a common aspiration for a better way of life. Walter's quest is for a simple way of living unencumbered by unnecessary technologies and complicated material possessions, and undisturbed by the 'grief' carried by communication media. Jim and Judy's hunt is instead for a more sophisticated practice of healthy and sustainable living mixed with a do-it-yourself ethic and a countercultural stance towards consumerism and corporate greed. The three PEI off-gridders are not unusual: the elements of their quest are common among Canadian off-gridders. Just like them, other people move off the grid to get away from a post-modern culture and neo-liberal society that spreads its tentacles farther and farther into private homes and personal lives through its seductive images of the good – but arguably superficial, commodified, unsustainable – life. Like for many lifestyle migrants their initial move and subsequent mobilities thus become escapes in search of an alternative, autonomous and protected zone: a stilled place not unlike a refuge from the dromophilia of the outer world (see, Bissell and Fuller 2010), an oasis and a safe-haven of personal authenticity. Similar to the 'hippie' generation who 'dropped out' of mainstream society in the late 1960s and early 1970s and sought a better life by getting back-to-the-land (see, Young 1973), today's off-gridders disconnect from 'the grid'³ and all 'it' stands for in a quietist attempt to take care of their personal lives.

'Quietism' – the label Young (1973) applied to back-to-the-landers who sought personal peace in rural refuges and who abdicated their former activist commitments to social change – is an old doctrine. Within both Christianity and Islam Quietism refers to a retreatist withdrawal from political affairs motivated by disinterest and/or scepticism in one's ability to affect change. Instead of open rebellion towards heresy and sin and instead of militantly pushing for collective amelioration, religious Quietists generally sought personal serenity by way of contemplative stillness and communion with God. In the case of non-religious back-to-the-landers Godly devotion was generally substituted by variably intense pantheist forms of mysticism. In their diverse ways off-gridders have obvious Quietist-like tendencies. Disenchanted with mainstream living, neo-liberalism, consumerism, large institutions, the power of the state to affect change, and even many of the available political counter-hegemonies, off-gridders seek personal contentment by migrating 'to the bushes', where they set up a relatively self-reliant home in a typically idyllic setting. In these spaces they first and foremost take care of their own existence by cultivating peace and quiet, and by rarely engaging in direct, collective struggles.

To differentiate their contemporary quest for peace and quiet from the older religious and hippie pursuits, we label it New Quietism. In contrast to Quietist godly devotion and mysticism New Quietists draw great sensual enjoyment from the secular pleasures of life. Off-gridders may in fact deny the value of some technologies, infrastructures and material possessions but do not at all dispossess themselves of sources of comfort and convenience. Indeed the asceticism of Quietism is replaced by a rather hedonist orientation in the off-grid quest for a better way of life.

An insightful parallel can actually be drawn between New Quietism and alternative hedonism. Alternative hedonism is the name of a philosophy championed by British cultural theorist Kate Soper (2007, 2009). Alternative hedonists pursue the enjoyment of life's pleasures, but do so in a distinctly reflexive and socially and environmentally conscious way (Soper, Ryle and Thomas 2009). Their hedonism is an alternative to mass-consumerism but also to the gloomy defeatism of much of the environmental movement. As Soper (2009: 3) explains:

Whereas predictions of environmental disaster encourage a *carpe diem* fatalism, alternative hedonism is premised on the idea that even if consumerism were indefinitely sustainable it would not enhance human happiness and well-being (not, at any rate, beyond a point

that we in the rich world have already passed). And it points to new forms of desire, rather than fears of ecological disaster, as the most likely motivating force in any shift towards a more sustainable economic order.

Like alternative hedonism (Soper 2009: 3–4) the New Quietist quest is both negative and affirmative. On one hand it negates the mode of unchecked consumption typical of Euro-American society and culture, and criticises the pursuit of an ‘unpleasurable and self-denying’ (Soper 2009: 3) standard of living that forces a person to work more in order to spend more. At the same time, New Quietism affirms the value of comfort and convenience and the gratification drawn from the simple pleasures of life. This affirmation deeply values an ‘erotics of consumption’ (Soper 2009: 4) of alternative sources of pleasure that are as sustainable and as local as possible – sources that have been wrestled away from the production and distribution networks of global capitalism.

But of course the New Quietists we encountered throughout our fieldwork care about an erotics of production and small-scale distribution as much as about consumption. Generating clean electricity, creating heat through renewable resources, growing organic food, harvesting water and localising energy distribution are just some of the many ways in which they draw gratification from their lifestyle. Thus here their quest for lifestyle amenities becomes not only a personal solution, but also a more widely encompassing moral answer to global problems generated by short-sighted hypermobility. Stillness ‘as a capacity to do things’, to borrow from Bissell and Fuller (2010: 6), becomes here ‘a solution to the problems of consumption, movement, and activity...and becomes enrolled as a powerful trope for environmental, economic and ethical sustainability.’

New Quietism is not a subculture (cf. Young 1973). No off-gridder we have met has ever defined herself as a member of ‘the New Quietist movement’ (as if there were such a thing) and it is not in our interest to assign them to this phenotype by fiat. New Quietism is a synthesis we have created ourselves: a creative, compendious name for the numerous and diverse aspects of off-gridders’ quest for a better way of life. A quest of this kind is not a systematic ideology but a series of practical ‘tactics’ (de Certeau 1984). Through these tactics off-gridders reshape relations with distant exteriorities, chipping away at the dominant infrastructures of consumption without challenging them head-on. Through their artful ways of ‘making do’ (de Certeau 1984) they create spaces where they enjoy their removal from ties ‘organized by the law of a foreign power’

(de Certeau 1984: 37). Within their safe-havens off-gridders take some control of power – exercising a relative degree of autonomy from state utilities and private communication corporations. And by deploying these autonomist tactics off-gridders rebuild alternative spheres of production and consumption in which they can seek personal fulfilment by their own rules in the pursuit of ‘anti-power’ (Holloway 2002). But the New Quietist quest for stillness has its shortcomings, disillusion, risks and challenges too. To understand and conclude our argument these let us go back to the kink in Jim and Judy’s plan.

No man is an island

With a small military pension to serve as a steady cash flow, all Jim and Judy had to worry about was generating a small but significant income from their off-grid eco-tourism business. One cabin was built to accommodate visitors interested in a bucolic and energy-independent getaway, and an educational and health program – including horse-assisted therapy and organic agricultural teachings – were put in place. A website and a thorough marketing plan were launched. But this is West PEI, not exactly the kind of place you stumble upon on your way to Disneyworld. As it turned out, the world they ran away from never bothered to drive up to their doorstep. At least not in sufficient numbers. The people who did come were touched and perhaps forever changed, especially the children, Judy explains, but it wasn’t enough. Soon both Jim and Judy had to take up full-time jobs in town.

This is where the irony – in its most bitter of flavours – set in. One may very well try and seek pure stillness and immobility, but just like true island life the off-grid life can never be lived in complete disconnection and autonomy. One, alone, can never grow more than a modest amount of one’s daily calories need, or extract propane from the ground, or forge metal to make tools. The ideal – the very aspiration – of immobility and stillness is powerful and that’s why most off-gridders generally elect to live ‘out in the bush’, away from the rat race, removed from the chaos of commercial fanfare and high-speed thoroughfares. But as it turns out, in its absolute form that is a mere ideal. The ironic reality is, in fact, that by moving farther and farther away from people one simply needs them more. Although refusal and rejection may inspire it, stilling in practice cannot be an act of utter separation, of severing, or of complete disconnection. From a relational theoretical perspective in practice stilling always ‘institutes a connection’ (Bissell and Fuller 2010: 10) and simply re-creates the condition for newer, different relations and mobilities.

In practical, empirical terms, the co-existence of stillness and mobility is a mixed bag of amenity and discontent. Off-gridders all over Canada have plenty of reasons to be enamoured with their idyllic metaphorical islands of peace and quiet. But by disconnecting from central providers of power and heat off-grid households essentially sign up for a great deal of domestic work that on-grid households need not tackle. This work includes securing supplies of heat, like wood, maintaining occasionally fickle technologies in stable working conditions, tending to repairs and regular maintenance, monitoring reserves of water and other vital necessities and exercising patience when things are not available, not working, or not affordable. And by disconnecting from common media of communication one ends up exposing oneself to the great risk of isolation in case of emergencies.

So, despite the quest for a more self-sufficient and simpler way of living, it is not uncommon for off-gridders to experience a great deal of mundane complications they cannot always solve alone. While these complications are generally met with unwavering resolve and often even embraced as a necessary part of life, it is clear that off-grid living is laborious, dependent on others for the fulfilment of key needs, and time-consuming. Many of the domestic technologies currently available in Western homes were in fact introduced and marketed as time-saving devices, and while their effectiveness in this regard is mixed (Schwartz Cowan 1985) it is clear that holding full-time jobs outside of the home makes it very difficult for a dual-earning couple to have the time to enjoy living off-grid. And conversely, by holding no job at all and by surviving on a limited fixed income – as is the case with Walter – one regularly exposes oneself to a good degree of discomfort and inconvenience.

Other lifestyle migrants face problems too. Jobses (2000) for example details how people who moved to Montana in search of the rural idyll of the American West often found their new communities to be less welcoming than they had thought and their new lifestyles to be more challenging than they had hoped. Many of the problems these lifestyle migrants had to face also originated in economic difficulties, as their relocation destination offered fewer job opportunities than expected (Jobses 2000). The research by O'Reilly (2000) and Benson (2010, 2011) also shows that some British migrants to Spain and France had difficulties becoming integrated into local interpersonal networks, finding work, and thus achieving financial security. For some of them connecting with and working for other British expats became the only available option. And that too was certainly an irony similar to that experienced

by off-gridders: the very people a migrant had left behind became the key to social and economic survival.

Jim and Judi's troubles can be attributed to the very destination of their lifestyle migration. Despite its beauty, West PEI is not a prime tourist site. Because of its limited development and thus limited appeal to sizeable tourist flows Jim and Judi could never sufficiently benefit, monetarily, from the place where they sought escape. One might be tempted to say that they just went too far. Walter might have gone too far too. His non-use of electricity and communication media has obviously caused him some degree of inconvenience (e.g., the lack of the refrigerator that he laments) and also created a somewhat uncomfortable level of isolation, which is particularly risky at his age in case of a health emergency (see Figure 9.4).

As the rooster continues to chant outside, Judy excuses herself to finally fill her cup of coffee. The laborious two-burner propane stove is but one of many inconveniences they are no longer tolerant enough to endure. Coping with the many infant-like demands of an off-grid homestead is demanding at best when one has time to spare, but simply unfathomable when one is working full-time for the man. Off-grid living demands attention, care, patience and mindfulness. So as Jim and Judy



Figure 9.4 Jim shows how he monitors his water use

began their shift work jobs to make extra money, life changed for them, quickly and for the worse, and the farm has been put up for sale.

It is almost time for lunch and we reassure our hosts that we are in no rush. They have a long story they want us to document, they say. It is a story filled with prohibitive \$2,000 bills and \$2,000 upgrade estimates, sobering realisations and broken promises of domestic comfort and convenience. Like the solar hot water collector which never worked and caused Judy to take 'bird baths' with water heated on the stove and Jim to shower at work. Like refrigeration, which proved to be complex with only a cooler at first and without a freezer later. Or like the fleeting promise of heat, which at first meant having to wake up to an alarm call in the middle of the night to refuel the small wood stove, and later meant having to rely more on propane and on purchased ready-cut firewood. Not to mention the challenge of pumping out water and monitoring its conservation like a hawk. 'It's just too much', Judy confides, 'we came here for a simpler life, and what's simpler about this? Absolutely nothing.'

Jim and Judy's and Walter's vicissitudes teach us important lessons about lifestyle migration. They show us that – without necessarily moving very far – off-grid lifestyle migrants are able to carve island-like safe havens by choosing to not adopt certain technologies and by strategically adopting New Quietist tactics. Through these tactics off-gridders achieve various degrees of the peace, quiet, stillness, harmony with place, contentment, the downshifted rhythms and many of the life's simple pleasures and serenity they aspire to. But the island-like safe havens they move to, and constantly shape through their lifestyle mobilities and immobilities, are never fully separate from the outside world they leave behind, nor immune to its forces. Off-gridders' quest for stillness – just like many lifestyle migrants' quest for a sea change – inevitably comes at a price because no act of disconnection, no remove, no escape can ever be complete. No island can afford to be fully separate from the rest of the world, and no human can afford to live like an island of that kind.

So, what has been learned here? What are the theoretical implications of off-gridders' lifestyle practices for the study of amenity migration? The lesson is threefold. First, by moving off the grid one can actually engage in a type of lifestyle migration, a migration that is as radically consequential as a move across the world can be. In this sense, practices of non-use of certain technologies which result in disconnecting and unbundling oneself from dominant socio-technical networks can be understood as migratory acts with obvious revelatory consequences

for our understanding of place and mobility. Second, the New Quietist tendencies of off-gridders reveal that the hedonism implicit in their amenity migration is an alternative one: one not so much keen on conspicuous consumption and the performance of taste and identity (a phenomenon transparent in the way of life of many other lifestyle migrants), but one more concerned with alternative regimes of production and distribution of renewable resources, and thus with ethical consumption of amenities. Third, the stillness and relative immobility practiced by so many off-gridders is neither pure nor – in its most ideal form – achievable. Like other lifestyle migrants, off-gridders always run the risk of isolation, marginalisation, and, to put it simply, a level of complication that detracts from the enjoyment of the amenities they have sought.

As I corner Jim by the fence we both shoot an eager glance at the ocean. It's a beautiful spring day and the aroma of low-tide is in the air. Their farm is not a space I'd easily tear myself away from. 'You know Jim', I throw a hail-Mary pass, 'you could always upgrade your system and bring it up to a couple of Kilowatts and make things a bit easier on yourselves...' but even I very well know that the outcome will be \$2,000 bills upon \$2,000 bills. Jim shakes his head silently, and that's all the answer I can bear to hear.

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Notes

1. Use of the first-person singular refers to the first author.
2. While they do not have a landline telephone Jim and Judy have a mobile phone each. Their mobile phone, however, is unable to reliably pick up a signal from their home.
3. While there are many grids, the expression 'the grid' is used to subsume them all as one homogenous expression symbolic of centralised power.

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Part V

Looking Onwards and Outwards

10

The Role of the Social Imaginary in Lifestyle Migration: Employing the Ontology of Practice Theory

Karen O'Reilly

Introduction

Academics in recent decades are developing diverse sets of concepts as part of the endeavour to understand, illustrate and systematically account for the interaction of structure and agency in the ongoing production of social life. The concept of the social imaginary, discussed by many of the authors in this volume, is one such concept. It is an attempt to grapple with the creative, individual and ever-changing nature of the imagination, with the socially shaped ways in which a place or lifestyle can be imagined, and with the social outcomes of people acting on their imagination in terms of both their own lives and the shaping of places (and new imaginaries). We have seen in this volume how the social imaginary is of central importance to lifestyle migration – a migration seeped in imaginings and romanticism. But ‘the social imaginary’ is an ambitious concept with an ambitious project, and it has the tendency to become what Billig (2013) has termed a ‘noun phrase’: imprecise jargon that reifies complexes of things, while discounting people and actions. I argue that scholars employing the concept would benefit from thinking through its various elements (and actions) more systematically. It is useful to examine the grand ideas, distant structures, sweeping changes, discourses and significations, that pre-exist given agents, and then to relate these to an examination of the level of the daily practices of agents, their tactics and negotiations, in the context of cultural communities. In turn, the concept of the social

imaginary can be employed to understand the shaping of new material and social structures and significations, through the ongoing interaction of structure and agency.

I argue here that the concept of the social imaginary would benefit from being underpinned by the ontology of practice theory. Practice theory, as I suggest later, provides an ontological basis for understanding both structure and agency (separately conceived) and their interaction in the processes of social life. I have referred elsewhere to social scientists' attempts to interpret a phenomenon in terms of its underlying social processes as the telling of practice stories, and following Stones (2005), I have suggested some analytical concepts through which we can think through more systematically the various steps in a cycle of structuration (O'Reilly 2012). Crucially these involve separating out structure and agency at the conceptual level (albeit always understanding them as co-created over time); identifying the given agents in focus and in context for a given problematic (Stones 2005); and always retaining a notion of time and process, of the unfolding of events. Here I unpack the role of the social imaginary in lifestyle migration, examining it in terms of the elements of active agency; external structures; internalised structures; practices and outcomes that have been discussed but not elucidated by other authors, especially in this volume.

The concept of the social imaginary

As others in this volume have recognised, socially shaped imaginaries shape what people desire and how, the ways in which they relate to different environments, and eventually the environment itself (Benson 2012). Social imaginaries thus influence outcomes and are central to structuration processes. As Griffiths and Maile (this volume) pointed out, the concept of the social imaginary is complex with different conceptualisations, but broadly speaking, the imaginary is not (necessarily) a reflection of reality, and not necessarily a figment of the imagination, but acknowledges that places come to have shared, collective meanings, mediated through language, symbols and other significations, and that these meanings have the power to shape reality through the actions of individuals and groups (see especially Appadurai 1996 and Castoriadis 1997). Imaginaries are social because they are shared, socially constructed, and have social (and material) impacts. Earlier work on the social construction of space remains a useful way to illustrate how the imaginary is an element in structuration processes. Rob Shields' notion of spatialisation, for example, spoke of:

...the ongoing social construction of the spatial at the level of the imaginary (collective mythologies, presuppositions) as well as interventions in the landscape (for example, the built environment). This term allows us to name an object of study which encompasses both the cultural logic of the spatial and its expression and elaboration in language and more concrete actions, constructions and institutional arrangements. (1991: 31)

Imaginaries are also individual and creative, something people do, but always in negotiation with the field of possibilities (Appadurai 1996). In the language of practice theory, imaginaries are both actions and structures, shaped by and shaping of agency, and are central to understanding lifestyle migration as an ongoing process. The concept acknowledges both the creative aspects of agency and the role of collective representations in the practice of daily life. Therefore, it involves not only being concerned with how places are imagined before migration, but also embodied and enacted post-migration experiences (Benson 2011). The concept of the social imaginary helps explain both socio-historical change, the emergence of the new, and the individual's capacity to 'create a world of (her) own' (Castoriadis 2007: 208 cited in Griffiths and Maile this volume).

Nevertheless, the term social imaginary is what Billig has termed a noun phrase – a clump of nouns that has the power to sound official but that in its avoidance of verbs 'transforms people and their doings into things' (Billig 2013). The use of a noun phrase tends to reify actions and combine complex structures into abstract theoretical constructs, and leads to imprecision. In her work on British migration to France, Benson (2012: 1682–3) argues that 'in order to understand how imagination is translated into action, there is a need to focus on the *embodied interplay* of biographies, individual circumstances, structural preconditions, privileges and constraints, as well as culturally significant imaginings'. The concept of social imaginaries does some of this work, but social imaginaries have a role in the structuration processes in lifestyle migration in different ways, and it is useful to separate out the level of grand ideas, and sweeping historical changes from daily practices of different agents. We also need to retain a notion of time and process. While still recognising that all social structures, including imaginaries, are constituted by and are constitutive of actors, it may well not be *these* actors at *this* time that directly formed *these* sets of ideas that inform *this* lifestyle migration. I contend that the work of practice theorists can provide us with some of the conceptual work and terminology with which to

better understand social imagining as a verb and social imaginaries as a complex of ideas.

Practice stories

One of the most profound shifts in social science in recent years has been the shift towards practice or structuration theory as a foundational premise on which research design and understandings are based. This can be quite overt, where academics announce that they are using structuration or practice theory (usually drawing on the work of Anthony Giddens, Pierre Bourdieu, Michel de Certeau and others). Or, in many cases, it is more covert, revealed in the desire to integrate understandings of macro- and micro-processes, to view motivations in their wider context, or to understand how discourses and significations become embodied and enacted (see, Hoey, Osbaldiston, Griffiths and Maile this volume). Benson (this volume), for example, acknowledges that privilege is both structural condition and reproduced through active agency because of the way it is internalised and has shaped the local social (and even physical) environment; and Vannini and Taggart (this volume) use de Certeau to talk about how the 'new Quietism', in which spirituality is sought by getting 'back to the land', takes shape through the daily practice of tactics that shape distant structures rather than confront them head on.

The shape practice theory takes in empirical work varies with authors, disciplines and even generations (Postill 2010: 6) but the desire to produce narrative, or story-like, accounts that illustrate the interaction of structure and agency over time and space is the same. Academics are increasingly acknowledging that a rigid distinction between structures as external and determining and agency as unfettered free will is no longer tenable. Practice theory thus proceeds out of the common sense idea that:

all social life is generated in and through social *praxis*; where social *praxis* is defined to include the nature, conditions and consequences of historically and spatio-temporally situated activities and interactions produced through the agency of social actors. (Cohen 1989: 2)

It is the attempt to explicate the ontological and analytical implications of this idea (with a history at least as far back as Aristotle in the Western tradition (Calhoun and Sennett 2007: 7)) that has been the work of structuration and practice theorists in recent decades, not least because

of the past tendency to overlook the centrality of *praxis* (Cohen 1989). In my own work (O'Reilly 2012), in which I have argued for the application of practice theory for migration studies, I draw from the work of Anthony Giddens, Pierre Bourdieu, Rob Stones, and here I will briefly remind readers of the role these authors play in my own elaboration of practice theory.

Anthony Giddens' structuration theory 'provides a set of ontological resources for the formulation of empirically oriented theory and research' (Cohen 1989: 2). Spanning a wide range of publications (e.g., Giddens 1976, 1979, 1984), the key argument is that social structures limit what people can and cannot do, and even what they try or wish to do; but agents continue to have some free will, and the very social structures that enable or constrain in some situations are made and remade by individuals in the process of acting on agency. For Giddens, we therefore cannot even think of agency and structure as ontologically distinct; they are a duality – always interdependent and interrelated. This involves a focus on the *praxis* of daily life, in which agency and activities are always understood, ontologically, as being located in the context of the nature and consequences of actions. Cohen (1989: 47) refers to this as the 'decentering' of the subject.

Bourdieu's work (1977, 1984, 1985, 1990) also understands social life as made and remade through the everyday, embodied practice of agents, in the context of internalised structural constraints. Crucially, what is often overlooked is that Bourdieu's theory of practice is a general, ontological theory of how social life is shaped through process; it is not meant to be directed towards the analysis of daily practices divorced from their wider context. For Bourdieu, although individuals have the capacity for innovation and creativity, nevertheless the desires shared, the tastes expressed, the choices made and the actions taken, are always shaped by and shaping of the wider historical and structural context. Individuals and groups are always in practical relations to the world and, therefore, actions are reasonable, sensible and plausible adjustments to the future, that take into account what is possible and what is not, rather than, as some social scientists understand them, rational calculations or the product of identifiable plans. Furthermore, the constraints and opportunities faced by different groups can become so taken for granted that they become internalised as tastes and preferences, embodied as habits and routines, and even shape what is physically possible. The concept of habitus is a central one for the theory of practice, referring to these dispositions, habits, ways of doing things, ways of thinking and ways of seeing the world that individuals acquire, singly and in groups, as

they travel through life (Bourdieu, 1990). Habitus (single and plural) are therefore internalised structures, made and remade through the practice of daily life; they constrain what is possible by the fact of their internalisation rather than by their externality, as is the case with structures more traditionally conceived. Practice thus includes things done habitually, without reflection, but also innovative, critical actions that lead eventually to social change.

Rob Stones (2005) has developed a stronger version of structuration theory that builds on and develops the work of Giddens. Giddens is not always clear how structures might be empirically defined since they are so tied up with agency (Stones 2005) and his work tends to favour voluntaristic interpretations. Stones especially proposes the conceptual separation of structures and agency (an analytical dualism, but an ontological duality) in order that empirical work can proceed with a specific 'agent in focus' at given stages of the structuration cycle. He thus elaborates Giddens's notion of the concept of the cycle of structuration and identifies four elements for use in empirical studies: external structures, internal structures (both general-dispositional and conjuncturally specific), active agency and outcomes of action (Stones 2005: 189). General-dispositional internal structures can be conceived in much the same way as Bourdieu's habitus. Conjuncturally specific internal structures acknowledge the element of change, process and creativity that is an aspect of agency. They are the norms, rules and expectations of those around us internalised as we learn how to go on and get by in given circumstances.¹

In my elaboration of a meta-theoretical framework to guide the telling of migration 'practice stories' (O'Reilly 2012), I also draw on the concepts of 'communities of practice' and 'situated learning'. Communities of practice (or perhaps cultural communities is a better term) are social groupings (family, virtual community, work mates, social club, a partnership, one's neighbours) where individuals come together and need to work out how to get on together (Wenger 1998). The concept especially helps us understand the social space at the ontological meso-level, in-between laws and rules on the one hand, and free choice on the other hand. In communities of practice individuals learn the rules of 'the game', in Bourdieu's terms, and how malleable these may be. It is from people with whom we engage in this 'situated learning' (Lave and Wenger 1991) that we get ideas about how things might be different, and who has the power to change what. Drawing on these themes and theories we are able to identify the following key analytical concepts that can inform empirical research (Stones 2005; O'Reilly 2012: 23–32):

- External structures are constraints and opportunities that confront a given agent at a given time. They can be separated conceptually into upper level, more distant structures (such as technological advances, broad policy agendas and ideological frames) and more proximate level structures (like laws, rules and organisational arrangements). External structures are also more or less malleable, depending on the power and knowledge of the agent.
- Internal structures can be separated into habitus and conjuncturally specific internal structures, that become relevant as one learns how to go on in given contexts.
- The practice of daily life takes place within communities of practice (or cultural communities), and here the agent confronts the habitus and conjuncturally specific internal structures of the other individuals in the context.
- Active agency is then unpredictable but shaped by habitus, and by learning how to go on in specific circumstances. It is also informed by desires and projections, but constrained by external structures.
- The outcome of practice is the reproduction and transformation of social life into newly (re)shaped external and internal structures, dreams and desires.

These concepts each enable a more complex understanding of the role of the social imaginary and the imagination in migration.

The ability to imagine: an element of agency

It is to the elements of active agency that I first turn in more depth. Structuration and practice theories are so concerned to emphasise the interaction of structure and agency in the ongoing constitution of society that they tend to overlook, and to provide us with fewer tools with which to understand, the more imaginative and creative aspects of agency (Cohen 1989). Yet, stories about lifestyle migration are rife with imaginings. Lifestyle migrants, the authors in this volume continually tell us, are motivated to move by their ability to imagine a different way of life. Lifestyle migration is marked by choice rather than lack of it; lifestyle migrants are agents of migration. Korpela (2009) argues that Westerners in Varanasi are in a position to imagine and 'act out' authentic India; British in Spain imagine reinventing the self, leaving their classed backgrounds behind them and creating new lives (Oliver and O'Reilly 2010). Global nomads emphasise their own agency, freed from the constraints of their past lives (D'Andrea 2007: 188–9). These migrants tend to seek

a fresh start in life or new beginnings, and to imagine a place where this is possible; imaginings are therefore often romantic, heavily laden with meanings, or nostalgic. They also have specific flavours associated with types of good life. British in France imagine a slower pace of life in rural tranquility (Benson 2011). 'Exurbanites' like Phillip Vannini (this volume) seek 'what they imagine to be a less conventional, less hurried lifestyle', though they sometimes discover that it is not so easily found. Islands, Vannini and Taggart argue, 'give newcomers symbolic material for a fresh start: a clean slate, as it were', and other authors have ascribed this to other liminal spaces, whereas Griffiths and Maile (this volume) introduce to the lifestyle migration literature the idea of 'the imaginative potential of city spaces'.

Many authors have thus discussed what drives lifestyle-oriented moves and what sorts of things lifestyle migrants seek. They acknowledge that these imaginings should not be simply understood as push factors that motivate rational actors, but often fail to elaborate theoretically the ontological basis of the process. As agency is so central in discussions of lifestyle migration, it is worth spending some time thinking about what it is: how agents imagine and act on the imagination. The recognition of agency as 'the capacity of human beings to shape the circumstances in which they live' emerged through the work of John Locke, Adam Smith, Jeremy Bentham and other Enlightenment thinkers, but became associated with the pursuit of rational self-interest (Emirbayer and Mische 1998: 965). Kant later posited the notion of a moral and normative aspect to agency, which idea was taken up through the work of later sociological thinkers, such as Schutz, Garfinkel and Goffman. Here, the rational actor was replaced with an individual who responds unthinkingly to social norms, with an emphasis on conformity. More recently, Giddens and Bourdieu, among others, accept that social life adapts and changes, and that agents have the power to effect change (some more than others) but they do not develop the tools that enable us to research agency empirically. Stones (2005: 336) acknowledges that agents are creative: active agency includes 'a range of aspects, such as creativity, improvisation and innovation, involved when actors draw upon internal structures in producing practical action'. For him, following Giddens, agents need the power or capability to change things, knowledge about what would happen if they do change things, and enough reflective distance from their current situation to start to think about alternative options. But these authors tend to neglect desire and imagination. Imagination resides in the individual: images can evoke, suggest imaginary futures, portray things, help the imagination

in its work, but the imagination itself and the desire this creates are individual.

For Emirbayer and Mische, agency has three elements: the iterational (which is similar to Bourdieu's habitus); the practical-evaluative (which is similar to Stones's conjuncturely specific internal structures, discussed earlier); and the projective. This final aspect is what lifestyle migration causes us to reflect on so well: 'Projectivity encompasses *the imaginative generation by actors of possible future trajectories of action, in which received structures of thought and action may be creatively reconfigured in relation to actors' hopes, fears, and desires for the future*' (1998: 971, emphasis in original). Thus we begin to understand the 'interpretive processes whereby choices are imagined, evaluated, and contingently reconstructed by actors in ongoing dialogue with unfolding situations' (Emirbayer and Mische 1998: 966). The imagination is part of agency, and is essential to understanding human creativity and actions.

Understanding this ontological basis to imagination and desires, and how they lead to active agency, illuminate the role of the trigger factors or watershed events that so many authors have discussed in relation to lifestyle migration (see, Benson 2012; Benson and O'Reilly 2009a; Hoey 2005; Korpela and Salazar this volume). When agents experience some distance from the habitual, during times of change, upheaval, or instability, there is more space for the imagination and the projective to come into play (Emirbayer and Mische 1998). As I found in my earlier study, migration to Spain had a sense of continuity – people had often visited the area as tourists, or knew of it from family or friends, or from tourist representations – but 'making the move more permanent tended to signify a break in continuity, often marked by an event in Britain' (O'Reilly 2000: 24). Many migrants cited events that triggered their motivation, such as a failed business, being made redundant, reaching retirement age, deciding to declare their sexuality, a divorce, or the death of a loved one. As Amit (2007) noted, periods of life-cycle transition, such as retirement or completing compulsory education are times when one's cultural capital is threatened, and also often trigger migration. These 'fateful moments', where people reach a crossroads in their lives, can create the space for agency but in turn the decisions made at these times can become fateful moments themselves (see, Korpela this volume). Therefore, trigger factors, like the role of socially shaped imaginings, do not function as simple push factors, rather they are an element in the process of structuration that creates space for creativity, that in turn draws on the imagination and projects possible future scenarios. Agency, Emirbayer and Mische suggest, engages more or less

intensely and harmoniously with the contextual environment (cultural communities and other external factors) depending on the what, whom, where and how of the context. Being separated from or having conflicting contexts leads to more reflective phases; but the reflection itself is also an act towards other, imagined, contexts. In changing times, some people seek more stability by returning to tradition while others seek alternative futures. It is the content of these alternative futures to which I now turn.

The social imaginary as social structure

Separating the elements of practice allows us to examine, systematically, where some of the imaginaries that shape lifestyle migration may have come from. There are certain identifiable forms: the search for self-realisation, for escape and freedom from prior constraints is a central theme; there is a desire to find rurality, a slow pace of life and quality of life; and sun, sea and relaxation feature quite highly on the list of desirable attributes associated with some geographical destinations (see, Benson and O'Reilly 2009b). As more authors describe other lifestyle migrations, so do new themes emerge. Benson and O'Reilly (2009a) identified residential tourism, rural idyll and bourgeois bohemian forms. In my own current research project we are discovering that Hong Kong lifestyle migrants seek a Westernised lifestyle while British in Malaysia imagined exotic cultures and natural surroundings. Griffiths and Maile (this volume) identify the imaginative pull of city or urban life. These 'forms' of social imaginary are best conceptualised *analytically* as social structures; they are autonomous of the specific agent prior to migration, and have causal influence on actions, both enabling and constraining. This is neither to reify them, nor to award them stability or consistency, rather to establish their role at a given juncture. They are perhaps not forms the agent himself or herself will express as such, rather she will personalise them. They are identified as relevant in what the agent does and says, but are recognised by researchers using more distant and abstract-level analysis of patterns or shifts, and theories and concepts.

As Korpela (this volume) acknowledges, it is easy to locate the individualism and reflexivity, and the search for both freedom and self-realisation, that feature in many lifestyle moves, in the theories of Anthony Giddens, Zygmunt Bauman, Ulrich Beck and Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim. According to these theorists, 'our current societies are individualised, the self has become responsible for his/her own life and individuals have internalised the responsibility to choose their own life courses and to

narrate their individualised biographies' (Korpela this volume). Bauman (2005), for example, contends that contemporary lifestyles are marked by freedom from the constraints of work and family life. We move in and out of jobs and relationships, seeking short-term gratification for ourselves rather than making any attempt to change society itself for the better. Modern utopias are therefore individualised and changeable. Indeed, in liquid modernity we are 'individuals by decree', and have no choice but to seek out, or hunt, our own personal, privatised 'good life', perhaps through migration to spaces which offer the 'goods' we seek (see, O'Reilly 2009).

Tourism discourses and materially shaped tourism places are also external structures for a given migrant. Tourism discourses conjure in the imagination the possibility of escaping the routine and mundane aspects of daily life (Graburn 1989), often in liminal spaces such as beaches and mountains. Or they insinuate the search for authenticity, expected to be discovered in places untouched by modernity and often created or staged to demand (MacCannell 1999). Tourism also seeks out the adventure, excitement and anonymity of the city; and there are class-based, collective and romantic ways of experiencing the tourist encounter that serve to distinguish travellers and mass tourists (Crick 1989; Urry 2002). Other theorists (e.g., Urry 2007) have observed the ubiquity of mobility as opposed to stasis, and the various material structures (facilities, institutions, technologies, infrastructures and built environments) that facilitate and shape this.

Similarly, counterurbanisation literature (as Benson and O'Reilly 2009a have discussed), understands the concept of the rural idyll as a motivational force behind, and factor shaping the imagination of, migration. It is also possible to see the search for rurality and the middle-class aspiration to get back-to-nature in broader discourses and activities linked to growing awareness of the changing environment, the finite nature of natural resources and human responsibility. Interestingly, responses, as suggested by the first set of big ideas discussed earlier, tend to be individualised and self-gratifying rather than blueprints for a better society. More work could be done on where these ideas come from and how they shape actions and imaginations (but see, Mantecón 2008). The point is to recognise how lifestyle migrants' emphasis on individual choice, freedom, agency and self-realisation is shaped by social structures external to them at some points in time.

Social imaginaries also take shape in more proximate social structures that provide opportunities and constraints for migration in ways that are directly relevant to the context of interest. The ideas, discourses and

general cultural shifts discussed earlier are acted on by agents to attract visitors and (perhaps) migrants and thus the various ways the environment is shaped, marketed and sold may not be the result of the actions of the agents in focus (the migrants). Social imaginaries are enacted by diverse agents and have agency through the marketing of places, through brochures, web pages, signs and symbols. They take shape in the material and built environments, with developers and town planners having a central role. Local and national governments, too, have their role in the granting or not of passports and visas. Griffiths and Maile (this volume) talk of the relationship between the 'ghostly' or 'haunting' quality of Berlin (which can be understood as a broad, upper level structure) and 'the memorializing of urban spaces associated with the victims of state violence' (proximate structures, quite clearly enacted by those who made the memorials).

Tourism is another good example. With the knowledge that some people seek escape, adventure, tranquility and a return to the past when they travel, governments and tourism agents (and property developers in some cases) have been all too ready to market destinations in ways that will attract tourists and, in turn, lifestyle migrants (see, Mantecón 2008 and Mantecón and Huete 2008). However, it is also important to remember that proximate social structures depend on the material environment and on historical conditions. One could not imagine or try to create a peaceful retreat in a bustling city (see, Griffiths and Maile this volume) and the materiality of the Lot clearly has some bearing on how that region is imagined (Benson this volume and 2012).

Social imaginaries and the habitus

Social imaginaries are thus understood as the individual capacity to imagine, the socially shaped lifestyles that are imagined, and the possibilities for enacting on those imaginations. As several authors have recognised, these imaginings are also internalised into the habitus; they become somewhat taken for granted and unquestioned. Individuals rarely acknowledge that the possibilities offered by a destination and the new lives they seek are socially shaped; the habitus is something understood by social scientists, at the ontological level. But habitus can be observed in the things people say and do and in the ways people act. Researchers have thus witnessed through observations and interviews how the abstract themes and discourses discussed earlier inform people's habitus and thus their actions. Caroline Oliver (2007: 128), for example, examines explicitly how 'age-old mythologies of tourism and travel

around the scope and possibility for renewal and reinvention feed into migrant narratives' and infuse their stories of new beginnings, blank slates, and being who you want to be when moving to Spain (see also, O'Reilly 2000). And Korpela (this volume) talks of the ways in which, for Westerners in Goa and Varanasi, individualism is internalised into an ethos of freedom, revealed in their descriptions of the destinations they seek as well as in the ways they understand and enact their new lifestyles.

People aspire to different sets of imaginings for reasons we may never understand; but why people act on some imaginaries and not others is to do with their own personal histories. Remember, individuals have the capacity for future planning but the form the imagination takes is shaped externally (and differently for different people). Each individual has had a personal life history, and unique experiences, and each has internalised different sets of institutional and relational structures in different ways. In this way, the habitus is unique. But, it is also possible to identify group forms of the habitus, elements that have been shaped in certain ways as a result of being a member of a given cultural community. This explains how it is possible to find class-based social imaginaries (noun), and people moving to destinations and expecting, embodying and enacting (verbs) certain things of that destination that can be associated with their social class. As Benson (2011) explains British lifestyle migrants' taste for rural France and the way of life imagined to be available there is a feature of British middle-class culture. As such, their ideas of how to live in rural France, the grounds on which these middle-class actors distinguish themselves from one another, take as their starting point the valorization of rural living.

It is not altogether clear why rurality is important for the British middle classes, or how these ideas have become embodied, how they have shaped the habitus or where they came from. Certainly environmental arguments have been growing over recent decades and with that, even subconsciously, there is a search for quality, purity and getting back to nature that has been embraced more by middle-class than working-class groups (perhaps because the former can more readily afford to be choosy). Apparently, it is not the back-breaking work of farm labourers, and the hardships associated with production from the land that migrants seek, but a more gentele and leisured notion of life in rural areas (Benson 2011), perhaps associated historically with owning the land, the labour and produce. This is an interesting area for further research and theoretical work. Similarly, Griffiths and Maile (this volume) have noticed that there are city-inspired imaginaries that

particularly appeal to the habitus of the young, aspirational classes. Here rapidly changing cities with emotive histories, such as Berlin, offer the potential for creativity, self-realisation and a modern bohemianism. We also know tourism destinations appeal (both literally and figuratively) in different ways to different types, different classes and even different sexualities (Franklin 2003).

So, we begin to understand the sorts of social imaginaries people seek as being linked to diverse group habitus. But we should remember that where people seek what things will be either enabled or not by many others sets of conditions, such as the natural environment, laws and policies relating to migration, transport links and the built environment, and numerous other material and social structures. The social imaginary never works alone. Even individual choice has become a social norm, and the ability to act on it depends on the power an agent has.

Power

We have now located both the imagination and trigger factors in an ontology of practice, and have separated out the social imaginary as an external structure shaped for a migrant prior to migration, and imaginings as internalised structures, shaped by migrants and incorporated into the habitus. However, no practice story is complete without an analysis of power. Lifestyle migrants are powerful groups. First, they are *relatively* affluent. They may not be affluent relative to the economies of their home countries, or may not remain affluent having moved (see, O'Reilly 2007) – privilege itself is a relative concept problematised by travel (Amit 2007) – but lifestyle migration tends towards destinations where the cost of living is lower, such as British to Spain or rural France (Benson 2011; O'Reilly 2000), Westerners to Varanasi (Korpela 2009) and to South Sinai (Karkabi 2013), and global nomads in Ibiza and in Goa (D'Andrea 2007). Similarly, much lifestyle migration follows the trails of earlier colonisations (Benson and O'Reilly 2009b). As Benson suggests (this volume), it is 'migration made possible by the position of privilege occupied by the migrants in relation to local populations within destinations'.

Postcolonial theory (see, Fechter and Walsh 2010) is a useful way to think about the material and conceptual traces and the continuities of the colonial period into the present; the ways in which internal and external structures have been shaped by these old relationships; and the ways these are perpetuated and resisted in daily practices. In the case of Europeans and North Americans moving to developing countries or to former colonies, as with my own recent work with British lifestyle

migrants in Malaysia, their privilege can be witnessed in the ways locals relate to them as well as in their relative wealth and health. Privilege is structured in terms of their ranks as corporate expatriates or the ranks of their expatriate associates if they have retired to former colonies (Fechter 2007; Knowles 2005). Similarly, employing again the concepts and understandings developed earlier from versions of structuration theory, places have, over time, acquired differential positions in structural hierarchies and this positioning is thus a hard structure, appearing to the agent as external and non-malleable. An individual migrant cannot change the fact some countries are financially more secure than others, for example, or that he/she has more ready access to travel visas than people from other countries. Furthermore, the individuals in these places have differential access to resources. Power is thus a macro concept, a broadly conceived set of social structures historically shaped. It is institutionalised in external structures including passport and visa requirements. To give one example, drawing on my own research, in recent decades the Malaysian government has actively encouraged wealthy older people to go there to live (or for long stays) in retirement as a conscious development strategy. They have a visa, the Malaysia My Second Home Visa, especially designed to encourage long-term visitors and individual investment. The visa is promoted on the Ministry of Tourism website using blatant appeals to the tourist imagination, with mention of good weather, mixed cultures and language, diverse activities and a rich natural environment. However, the Malaysian government continually manages who takes advantage of this opportunity by monitoring and regularly altering the visa requirements to ensure only the relatively wealthy can apply. Over time this has produced diverse external structures and some unforeseen outcomes: specialist visas have drawn wealthy retirees from around the globe who can demonstrate they have sufficient economic capital; property development has occurred on a grand scale, and led to high price rises in some areas; and the private care industry has developed and targets specific groups (see, Ono 2009). These changes shape the Malaysia, and contribute to the social imaginary that attracts, but also the way it is played out by, the British lifestyle migrants in my research.

Power also takes form in the possession of different types of capital (as in the work of Bourdieu) or knowledge and resources (as in the work of Giddens), or the ability to make a difference, to change things or bring about some desired end, as internal structures. Therefore, no matter what aspect of the social imaginary we are referring to, some people have the resources to move to some places and some people do not. Power is also

structured within communities of practice (or cultural communities) as a norm towards agency and free will in Western societies, for example. Learning how to go on in diverse sets of circumstances involves thinking about future options and being constrained (or given opportunities) by those around us. Power thus shapes the ability to migrate, to act on the imagination and the experiences and actions post-migration, and the ability to match expectations and imagination.

Social imaginaries, practices and outcomes

The concept of social imaginaries recognises the habitus alone does not shape how people expect to, and eventually will, relate to a place. As Noel Salazar argues (this volume) migration is ongoing, a practice and process not a single act, and dominant imaginaries can be appropriated or contested, and certainly reshaped. Here we see the important role of what Rob Stones (2005) calls the conjuncturally specific internal structures, or the ways in which people internalise how to get on, reconciling their own power and resources, and external and proximate structures in the shape of opportunities and constraints, within diverse sets of cultural community – not forgetting that meaningful communities post-migration may well include visiting friends and family, virtual communications (and communities), as well as local face-to-face interactions. As Keith Halfacree has so eloquently put it (this volume): ‘obtaining a way of “fitting” seems... no more likely to come from deliberate choice than from accepting a degree of drift, from tacking with events, going with the flow’.

Several studies of lifestyle migration have drawn attention, at least implicitly, to the practice, or the enacting and shaping, of the social imaginary. Caroline Oliver’s (2007) older people in Spain don’t just talk about being different, they live different lives, making friends quickly, volunteering, taking up new hobbies and living a slow, relaxed life. In my study (O’Reilly 2009), we saw British migrants in the Costa del Sol refusing to be rushed, and refusing to be miserable, as they make tourism a way of life. I have shown how tourism, as an imaginary form, takes shape in practice (O’Reilly 2003). Tourists form part of the cultural communities of the migrants in Spain, as visiting friends and family, as customers in the shared bars and restaurants and on the beach and in other public places. Tourism also shapes the environment they live in, via the provision of services, the infrastructure, the availability of goods and even in the way that Spanish people relate to the British as if they are no more than tourists who stayed longer (see, Huete 2009).

Andreas Huber and I (Huber and O'Reilly 2004) have shown that older Swiss and British migrants in Spain can find *heimat* (that elusive sense of home, belonging and community) without integrating into the Spanish way of life, and without even learning the language, because in their cultural communities (both local and transnational) they work to create what they sought, the caring, security and satisfying social relations they believe modern life has lost. Griffiths and Maile (this volume) talk of: 'the ways in which the social imaginary representations associated with Berlin – its collective self-representations – are implicated both in individuals' constructions of place and in their embodied encounters with the city'. They show how the city and its social imaginary offer '*possibilities for action, for feeling and being*' – more time to spend on creative and cultural activities, or the opportunity to correct the work–life balance. They describe the ways in which the lifestyle migrants have come to see themselves, through moving and living in Berlin, how they learn to get on there and how what I am here calling the conjuncturally specific internal structures mediate between habitus (prior to migration) and experiences (post migration). Similarly, Vered Amit has discussed how much of these 'escapee' forms of migration (retirement migration, gap year travel and so on):

involves moving through circuits of movements that are increasingly institutionalized and organized to attract and service Western youths.... This kind of movement therefore offers the possibility of change and self-development, but it encapsulates this potential within a structural bubble of people in similar circumstances. (Amit 2007: 7)

Once again, we are drawn to think about the communities of practice and the proximate structures that frame the lives after migration for the agent in focus. Using the terminology from practice stories (O'Reilly 2012) helps to draw these out more overtly.

Of course, as Cohen and Taylor (1992) warned years ago, escape attempts are often doomed to failure because they get packaged, marketed and sold back to us for consumption, for profit. This has certainly happened in the case of Spanish 'residential tourism'. Mantecón and Huete (2008) draw our attention back to the fact that is not only the migrants that take social imaginaries and shape them. While what *we* think of as lifestyle migrants to Spain have been shown in numerous studies to seek peace, tranquility and unspoiled landscapes, property developers and government agents have been far too keen to allow rampant development in

their rush to attract what *they* think of as no more than 'residential tourists'. If the goals and imaginaries of the would-be migrants had been harnessed rather than exploited, they suggest, then development and migration could have become a practice that evolved to the benefit of all parties, as well as the natural environment.

Here we begin to consider some of the unintended consequences of the enacting out of social imaginaries. The various forms of lifestyle migration identified by researchers (the bohemianism, the new quietism, slowness, tranquillity, self-realisation, the desire to be more in tune with the natural world and so on) have the potential to effect a better world. But as Caroline Oliver (2007: 129) noted, there is a 'contradiction at the heart of the aspirational migration process in the Western world, between the freedom, sociability, and egalitarian possibilities imagined as emerging out of liminal travel and the strong individualism espoused by those engaging in exactly that practice'. Bauman (2005) has identified similar contradictions in the modern hunt for individualised utopia: individual utopias are attempts to change the individual not the world, nor even the society. It seems the power of the lifestyle migrants to effect change, even in their own personal lives, is limited (despite the apparent power and resources enabling the migration in the first place). And so, we see some of the authors in this book referring to the failed goals of lifestyle migration. Hoey suggests that though lifestyle migrants look for places that they imagine as meaningful, this may or may not have much bearing in reality. Noel Salazar notes that they risk failure in their abilities to match imagination and reality: 'in fact, they act within clearly defined fields of possibilities (cf. Bourdieu 1984)'. Vannini and Taggart illustrate how 'off-gridders' Jim and Judy, who have escaped to a small island off Canada's West coast, fail to be as independent as they imagined they might be, living off local natural resources and remaining off-grid. They end up getting jobs, and rely quite heavily on the internet and diverse advanced technologies in their attempts to create communities. Indeed, many lifestyle migrants cherry-pick the best of advanced societies in their search for escape, and we must remember there is often a supportive system they can return to, and which they profited from enough in the first place to give them the relative wealth to act on their imaginations, as with the British in Malaysia in my own research. Lifestyle migrants rarely have to work the land, or experience all the hardships locals have to bear: Griffiths and Maile's Brits in Berlin continue to enjoy fairly conventional and affluent lives much of the time.

It is thus important to remember that desire and imagination, creativity and socially structured imaginary, themselves take shape with a

wider context of other social structural and material conditions. Korpela (this volume) suggests that what is apparently dropping out, ironically produces the flexible individuals, who shape their own futures and blame themselves rather than the system for their failures that neoliberal societies require. Lifestyle migration, she suggests, suits the neoliberal agenda. In many cases, old hierarchies are simply reproduced (Benson this volume). There are broader structural outcomes – shifts in who lives where and therefore economic effects, population shifts, increases in housing costs – and perhaps a new kind of colonialism based on individual self-realisation. Further study of the structural, institutional and creative outcomes of the social imaginary aspect of lifestyle migration will yield interesting findings.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have shown that the concept of the social imaginary is one that attempts to make sense of agency and structure in interaction: imaginaries are shown in many of the discussions in this volume to be both actions and structures, shaped by and shaping of agency, and central to understanding lifestyle migration as an ongoing process. But as a noun phrase, ‘the social imaginary’ is sometimes used rather loosely, to combine many elements of the migration process, over time and space, as structures and actions, as constraints and agency, without sufficient precision. I have shown how the social imaginary (and the role of the imagination and consequent actions) can be better explicated using the ontology behind a theory of practice. This involves conceptualising structures and actions separately, as a heuristic device, while also always understanding them as interacting in practice. I have thus drawn on the distinction between external structures, internalised structures, practices, communities of practice, active agency and outcomes as a way of bringing more precision to our understanding of the role of the imagination and to both the social structural and the creative aspects of imagining.

Lifestyle migration is rife with stories about imaginings, and social imaginaries take shape through different elements of its practice. But it is important to remember that to imagine is a verb, it is something individuals have the capacity for, act on and shape. Both, the work being done on the field of social imaginaries and the work being done in understanding social life as practiced, could benefit from concepts that have been developed to draw attention to this creative and projective aspect of agency. So, within the concept of social imaginaries we need

an understanding of individuals who have creative imaginations, the ability to think about and plan for the future, and to act on their ideas. As I have shown, the trigger factors and watershed events described as a motivation in so many studies of migration are then located in a broader sense as creating space for the individual to imagine alternatives. The conditions that shape the imagination, and the extent to which actors have the ability to act on it, remain fascinating areas for further study.

I have drawn attention to the ways in which social imaginaries also take the form of social structures, which shape, constrain and enable actions. These have been witnessed through discourses, traditions and customs that pre-exist (given) social actors. Scholars have recognised them in overarching themes like individualism, reflexivity and self-realisation. But, of course, they are also enacted by human agents, and interact with the material environment. So, for example, tourism as an idea motivates an individual to seek freedom and escape, tourism as an industry interacts with amenable natural surroundings and tourism as an outcome provides proximate structures in the shape of transport links, restaurants and other social institutional amenities.

Social imaginaries are thus richly understood as the individual capacity to imagine, the socially shaped lifestyles that are imagined, and the possibilities for enacting on those imaginations. I have also discussed how the concept of the habitus enables us to link social structures at both the distant and more proximate levels to the actions of individuals, in the context of their personal histories. Here, more than anywhere, we become aware of social imaginaries as something people do (a verb, people acting based on how they have been shaped by their class background, for example) as well as something that exists externally (a class-based social imaginary, for example). An understanding of social imaginaries as practice also needs to take account of the role of power. Power exists as structures pre-existing the migration, for example, relationships shaped through colonisation have led to some countries being relatively wealthy while others are imagined as exotic and desirable. Power is an individual or group attribute, for example, there are variable amounts of the power to decide to move and the capital with which to resource it. Power also confronts agents as proximate structures, through the ongoing management of the local area, of visas and permits for example.

Finally, social imaginaries are enacted by agents. Migration is not an act but ongoing practice (something people do) and in the process dominant imaginaries are appropriated, contested and shaped. Lifestyle migrants live out the lives their imaginations had led them to expect;

they work to create what they sought, using the act of migration to fuse their self-perception with their lived experiences. But, of course, this is all attempted within the context of social structural conditions and material constraints, including the norms and expectations of diverse cultural communities. The enacting of social imaginaries and the various forms of lifestyle migration we have witnessed in our diverse studies, may have unintended consequences (which, as Benson and Osbaldiston remind us in the introduction to this volume, we have yet to fully examine). The search for slowness, tranquillity, authenticity, return to nature, escape from modernity and self-realisation (and return to true human nature), identified as essential to so many of the imaginaries we have identified, has the potential to effect changes that might improve the world we live in. But social imaginaries are enacted and shaped by other actors than just migrants, and in the end even migrants' power to shape their own lives according to the imagined potentials appears to be limited.

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Note

1. Chan et al. (2010) is an excellent example of ethnographic work on childhood obesity that employs Stones' strong structuration theory.

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