

LIFESTYLE MIGRATION: FROM THE STATE OF THE ART TO THE FUTURE OF THE FIELD

Michaela BENSON¹

COBISS 1.01

ABSTRACT

Lifestyle Migration: From the State of the Art to the Future of the Field

This introductory article provides an overview of the predominant themes that have been explored within the field of lifestyle migration research. In this way, it seeks to locate the contributions to this special section within a wider field, showcasing their innovation. It highlights longstanding interests in migrant subjectivities, cultural narratives of place and migration, alongside a consistent focus on understanding the structural conditions that promote and facilitate lifestyle migration. This overview introduces the field of research to a non-specialist audience and organizes existing theoretical and conceptual concerns within the field.

KEY WORDS: lifestyle migration, migrant subjectivities, cultural imaginaries, migration and social transformation

IZVLEČEK

Življenjsko-stilske migracije: od trenutnega stanja k prihodnosti področja raziskovanja

Uvodni članek prinaša pregled najpomembnejših tem, s katerimi se ukvarjajo raziskave življenjsko-stilskih migracij, in tako prispevke v pričujoči posebni številki umešča v širše področje in dokazuje njihovo inovativnost. Osvetljuje tudi dolgotrajno zanimanje za migrantske subjektivitete, kulturne naracije kraja in migracije, in to skupaj s konsistentnim fokusom na razumevanje strukturnih pogojev, ki promovirajo in olajšujejo življenjsko-stilsko migracijo. Pregled omenjene raziskave predstavlja nestrokovnemu bralstvu in organizira teoretska in konceptualna vprašanja, ki se ob tem pojavljajo.

KLJUČNE BESEDE: življenjsko-stilske migracije, migrantske subjektivitete, kulturni imaginariji, migracije in družbena transformacija

¹ PhD in Sociology and Social Anthropology, Senior Lecturer in Sociology, Goldsmiths, University of London, Lewisham Way, London SE14 6NW; Michaela.benson@gold.ac.uk

INTRODUCTION

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 imaginings of destinations and mobilities. (Benson and Osbaldiston 2014: 2-3; emphasis added)

To date, the central focus of the field of research into lifestyle migration has been in working through conceptual and theoretical framings, identifying lifestyle migration as a distinct social phenomenon made possible by particular structural and material conditions (Benson and O'Reilly 2009; O'Reilly and Benson 2009; Benson and Osbaldiston 2014). While this is undoubtedly an exercise that has helped to establish and develop the field, this introductory article argues that there is an urgent need to consider how lifestyle migration research might intersect with other areas of social science research. This is both necessary as an exercise in extending the relevance of the field, and developing the analytical purchase of the research conducted in this area. The articles in this special issue play an important role in opening up these conversations.

The articles all hold in common reflections on the cultural significance of place within lifestyle migration, innovating in relation to this well-established theme within lifestyle migration research in one of two ways: (1) their consideration of destinations that have not so readily been the focus of lifestyle migration research—urban (Zaban, this issue), rural locations in Northern Europe (Eimermann, this issue)—or (2) locating the cultural significance of these landscapes within the *longue durée* (Osbaldiston, this issue; Rogelja, this issue; Weidinger and Kordel, this issue). The cultural significance of place additionally serves as an anchor from which each contribution explores the intersections of lifestyle migration research alongside other social science concerns. Across several of the contributions, the relationship between lifestyle migration and social and economic restructuring within destinations is particularly prominent (Weidinger and Kordel, this issue; Eimermann, this issue; Zaban, this issue). Creating a firmer dialogue between lifestyle migration research and cultural sociology is the ambition of Osbaldiston's (this issue) contribution, while Rogelja (this issue) presents a methodological intervention that argues for biographical narrative methods in the study of lifestyle migration. These contributions represent the state of the art in lifestyle migration research, each uniquely challenging predominant themes and conceptualizations that have characterized the study in this area. Read together they lay down the gauntlet for future understandings of this social phenomenon.

In the article below, I provide a brief overview of recent theoretical and conceptual framings of lifestyle migration research. This is by no means comprehensive, but intends to highlight the key directions that research in this area has taken. In particular, it highlights longstanding interests in migrant subjectivities, cultural narratives of place and migration, alongside a consistent focus on understanding the structural conditions that promote and facilitate lifestyle migration. It is set up in this way to showcase the contributions of the articles in this special issue, laying the groundwork for their innovations. However, it also, at times, gives a sense of the possible lacunae in this field of research—the need for a more sustained focus on the impacts of these migration flows, for the recognition of its location within wider global processes of social and economic transformation—and its need to develop better intersections with other areas of research, namely, the broader literatures on migration and social transformation.

UNDERSTANDING LIFESTYLE MIGRANTS

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. Ethnographic accounts especially have revealed a narrative of escape permeating migrants' accounts of the decision to migrate, further emphasised by their negative presentations of life before migration ... Lifestyle migration is thus a search, a project, rather than an act, and it encompasses diverse destinations, desires and dreams (Benson and O'Reilly 2009: 609–10)

The theoretical and conceptual framings of lifestyle migration research, such as that presented in the quotation above, have, for the large part, been derived through the analysis of ethnographic research. Often bound around the migrant experience, scholarship derived from these methodological framings has largely focussed on providing description and explanation of (lifestyle) migrant subjectivities (see for example O'Reilly 2000; Hoey 2005, 2006, 2014; Oliver 2008; Oliver and O'Reilly 2010; Benson 2011, 2013b; Korpela 2009, 2010; Osbaldiston 2012). In this respect, publications in this area of the field have been focussed on how the decision to migrate and the location selected reframes lives, with lives led within destinations often defined in contrast to the lives left behind. The lifestyles sought gain their significance through this opposition but are also intrinsic to the ways that social identities are (continually) remade following migration. Central to understanding these migrant subjectivities are the relationships between consumption and identity, privilege and precarity as I outline below.

Consumption and identity

The link between consumption and migration that lies at the core of conceptualisations of lifestyle migration (see for example Benson and O'Reilly 2009; Knowles and Harper 2009), leads to its common misrecognition as a form of tourism; in an era when most migration is presented as a form of production, phenomena which seem to be best characterised as consumption—with destinations (and imaginings thereof) consumed through the act of migration and everyday lives—do not fit the mould. This dualism between tourism and migration, consumption and production breaks down however, if it is acknowledged that migration often contains some elements of consumption and tourism, production (Bell and Ward 2000; Williams and Hall 2000, 2002).

In the case of lifestyle migrants, *the decision to migrate is predominantly presented and understood as a lifestyle choice* but one that is part of an ongoing lifestyle trajectory stretching from before migration and into settlement (Knowles and Harper 2009; Benson and O'Reilly 2009; Benson 2011). It thus reflects the sense of migrant subjectivities as *'in process, neither fixed nor straightforwardly transformed through migration'* (Benson and Osbaldiston 2014: 17; original italics; see also Halfacree and Boyle 1993). However, this image of linear progression is complicated somewhat by Rogelja's contribution to this issue. Her longitudinal ethnographic study of 'liveaboards', families living on board boats that traverse and moor in the Mediterranean, renders visible the possible turbulence of this process. Different sites and living conditions are devalued and reevaluated for what they can offer over the life course. At times, living aboard is not sustainable; while it once offered the promise of a better way of life, this imagining is ruptured in response to particular family circumstances. Indeed, what she reveals is how, while living aboard might once have represented lifestyle, people find themselves in a position where they might fall in and out of being a lifestyle migrant. Lifestyle migration thus denotes an ongoing process, in which consumption, migration and identity are thoroughly intertwined and in which nothing is fixed and which can also be disturbed or interrupted as personal circumstances and places change.

The relationship between consumption and identity within lifestyle migration has at times been interpreted as the quintessential project of the self (Hoey 2005, 2006) or exemplar of the individualism of late modernity:

Lifestyle migration is often described as an individual's search for a better way of 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. (Korpela 2014: 27)

Indeed, on the surface, and as the quotation above evokes, such understandings of lifestyle migration appear to resonate with theories of individualisation. However, as in other migration flows these choices and lives sought/led take place and are made possible by structural contexts—social, economic, political—operating at different scales—local, national, global, transnational (O'Reilly 2012). Getting below the surface of migrant accounts makes these structures visible, demonstrating the constraints on the migrants' agency. This recognition of the intersections of structure and agency is central to making sense of lifestyle migration (Benson and Osbaldiston 2014); among others, it helps to explain how different locations become destinations for lifestyle migration, the decision to migrate to particular locations, at specific points in time, the experience of life within the destination, the position taken by migrants in the local community but also their reception into and impact on this community and the destination more broadly.

While the recognition of consumption within migration has been one of the unique contributions of lifestyle migration research to the broader field of migration studies, it is important not to overlook the possibility that consumption narratives might co-exist with or be made possible by production. This is most clear in Eimermann's contribution to this issue in his argument that the lifestyles sought are not only consumed but also produced by lifestyle migrants. He demonstrates how this needs to be understood within the context of wider patterns of rural development; in the lagging Swedish countryside, one solution has been to attract incomers to the area to diversify both the population but also the potential production of the Swedish countryside. Such incomers he presents as lifestyle migrants, and yet to live in the Swedish countryside requires that they have an income. Many turn towards rural tourism activities as a way of making a living, a considerable break from the lives and careers led before migration. In other words, in order to live in the Swedish countryside in the way that they imagine, they have to engage in production. Lifestyle might lie at the root of their decision to migrate, but they then have to find ways to maintain it within their everyday lives, with the result that their migrations also resemble forms of labour migration. It is also clear that they are crucial actors in the move towards the post-productivist countryside, aiding in the diversification of otherwise struggling rural economies. This case further complicates the presentation of lifestyle within migration, demonstrating that it is important to understand how this might intersect with other considerations within the migration decision.

For migration

The presentation of lifestyle alongside migration is a significant and important innovation within migration research; there are several reasons why lifestyle is paired with migration—as opposed to tourism or, as I relate below, mobilities. The first of these derives precisely from the way that research subjects often articulate their actions, adamantly stating the fact that they were not tourists and actively demonstrating the ways in which they differ from the, albeit idealised, image of the tourist (Waldren 1996; O'Reilly 2003). The second of these is the political point intended by the use of migration here; it serves a between as and way of naming privilege, which often goes unremarked and is depoliticised (Knowles 2006), and serves as a reminder of the breadth of contemporary global migrations and indeed, the inequalities that mark these flows. As Skeggs (2004) highlights, the pursuit of lifestyle is only available to the privileged. This is privilege, as I explain in more detail in the following section, understood both as the choice of how to live but also the migrants' ability to cross borders with ease, their privilege thus ren-

dered both through relative affluence (*vis-à-vis* that of those within the destination) and their citizenship of powerful nation-states (Benson and O'Reilly 2009; Croucher 2009, 2012; Benson 2013a).

Such privilege similarly lies at the core of the phenomena described as 'lifestyle mobilities', '... on-going semi-permanent moves of varying duration ... a lens into more complex forms of corporeal mobility and may involve multiple 'home', 'belongings' and sustained mobility throughout the life course' (Cohen, Duncan and Thulemark 2015: 159; see also Duncan, Cohen and Thulemark 2014). These authors innovate by demonstrating how for some privileged subjects, belonging and home are not tied to notions of residence and return, as they are in much of the migration literature, but are instead intrinsic to the meaning and significance of mobility in their lives. The choice to pursue mobility as a way of life destabilises the singularity that otherwise characterises concepts of home and belonging. Within the broader mobilities paradigm—which also recognises challenges to mobilities, and consequent immobilities (see for example Sheller 2011; Salazar and Smart 2011)—this approach privileges understanding the significance of mobility for identity-making.

In many ways, lifestyle mobilities is a complementary approach to lifestyle migration, as Cohen, Duncan and Thulemark (2015) acknowledge. The agenda focuses on understanding the intersections of lifestyle, mobilities and identity, an ambition not dissimilar to that of lifestyle migration. However, the inclusion of mobility within this framework does a lot of work in distinguishing the concept of lifestyle mobilities. Similarly, migration is not an empty signifier in the concept of lifestyle migration, although it is clear that the work this does should be better elaborated. Rather than a descriptive term that recounts the physical movement across borders, the use of migration carries a political point, bringing to attention migrant populations that are often treated as a case apart or are invisible in wider discourses about migration. Rather than an exercise in categorisation, which would aim to determine who is and who isn't a lifestyle migrant such conceptualisations aim to provide an explanatory framework, a tool to be used, but also developed and manipulated in future understandings of migrant subjectivities (Benson and O'Reilly 2009; Benson and Osbaldiston 2014).

Privilege (and precarity) in lifestyle migration

As I stated previously, another significant characteristic of lifestyle migrants is the recognition of the privilege that often underpins their migration (see also Benson 2013, 2014). To be clear, this recognition of privilege derives from documented research revealing cases of lifestyle migration and should not preclude the possibility of lifestyle as a component of migration being possible even in the perceived absence of privilege. The privilege presented here is relational, rather than absolute; it should always be understood as *relative privilege*. What this means is that migrants may indeed not be from a position of outright privilege in their country of origin; their privilege derives from the various structural conditions—notably global inequality and the geometries of power between sending and receiving contexts—that facilitate their movement in pursuit of particular lifestyles, that structure their position in social hierarchies within the destination (Croucher 2012; Benson 2013a; Hayes 2014a & b; see also Amit 2007) and through which, as Hayes reminds us, 'existing inequalities of caste and class' (2014b: 2) may be reproduced. It becomes clear that while relative privilege may facilitate migration, is between it and also a significant characteristic of these migrants' lives.

It is also clear that such privilege may coexist with precarity in these migrants' lives. In one respect, such precarity may relate to the lives led within the country of origin. As Hayes' (2015) account of North American migration to Ecuador outlines, this precarity may be read through the economic motivations—what he refers to elsewhere as *geoarbitrage*, the strategic deployment of accumulated capitals, assets and resources to facilitate lifestyles in countries with lower daily expenses (Hayes 2014a)—particularly the drive to escape financial insecurity in their place of origin. In this way, he stresses the conditions of social and economic transformation in North America and how this has impacted on

those currently entering retirement. As their ambitions for retirement can no longer be met in their country of origin, retirement abroad becomes for some a response to these shifting circumstances. Economic forces thus play a significant role in structuring lifestyle migration.

Precarity may also be evident in the daily lives of these migrant populations and is highly context-specific. While the research on intra-European migration that has predominated lifestyle migration research rests on, *inter alia*, reciprocal welfare arrangements and freedom of movement, these conditions are not replicated in other locations. Indeed, even within the European Union these can be quite difficult to navigate, as has been documented time and again in lifestyle migration research (see for example O'Reilly 2007; Benson 2011; see also Ackers and Dwyer 2004). O'Reilly (2000) and Oliver's (2008) early work on the British in Spain, demonstrates this clearly as they reveal how precarity coincides with ageing, ailing bodies causing migrants to reevaluate their residence abroad and the lives they can lead. As the migrants experience healthcare provision, the distance from friends and family, and often economic difficulties, they find themselves in a doubly vulnerable and precarious position (see also Hall and Hardill forthcoming).

Beyond Europe, the structural conditions relating to border-crossing and residence, both as determined by the country of origin and the destination, bring as a replacement for the deleted as privilege and precarity are brought coevally into view. Botterill (forthcoming) highlights these intersections in the case of the British residents of Thailand. She highlights the multiple contexts in which precarity may be felt: finance, health and rights. Pension freezes and exchange rate changes bring about financial insecurity; a lack of affordable basic healthcare results in these migrants taking individual responsibility for their ageing bodies; and despite their elevated status—the result of particular postcolonial histories—these migrants have few rights within Thailand. This case clearly illustrates the need to be attentive the multiple modalities of precarity within lifestyle migration, but also how these intersect with privilege.

As these examples demonstrate, the recognition of privilege and/or precarity among such populations is revealing of the intersections of structure and agency within the decision to migrate, but also in the migrant experience. It also demonstrates the quality of privilege not just as an outward measure of wealth or affluence, but as a relational concept that captures its symbolic construction of privilege.

RE-EXAMINING CULTURAL NARRATIVES

The focus on lifestyle migrants has resulted in the development of theoretical and conceptual tools that explain the construction of migrant subjectivities in migration and settlement. However, as I demonstrate below, this cannot be viewed in isolation. A longstanding feature of this field of research has been the interest in cultural narratives or imaginings about particular locations and to a lesser degree, migration. These feature strongly in the decision to migrate, but also expectations of how to live following migration, inherently connected to how place and migration are understood and enacted. This focus of lifestyle migration research on the cultural significance of destinations and migration is unique within migration research more generally. Amenity migration, a correlate field of research, similarly highlights how perceptions of particular landscapes (mountains) and their populations interplay with migration: 'it is the migration to places that people perceive as having greater environmental quality and differentiated culture ...' (Moss 2006: 3; see also Gosnell and Abrams (2009) for a review of this body of literature). Yet, where these accounts differ is in the fact that their subject is often the destination—its advantages vis-à-vis life in other locales, the planned development of these, the impact on the local community and environment, the relationship between migration and rural restructuring—leading to the neglect of the wider significance of migration for social identities. In contrast, in the field of lifestyle migration the subject of research has often been the migrant population, their lives, migration stories and identities. This has led to questions about the cultural significance of destinations, but from the point of view of questioning what they mean to the migrants, what they do for them, and how they interplay with migrant identities.

The workings of cultural imaginings

Cultural narratives both of place and migration operate powerfully within accounts of the decision to migrate, presenting an explanation of migration that makes sense to a wider audience. The cultural construction of particular places as offering 'the good life' makes evident that this is not an intrinsic quality of certain landscapes. In our early accounts of lifestyle migration, Karen O'Reilly and I identified three representations of place that commonly featured in accounts of destinations: the rural idyll, the coastal retreat, and cultural or spiritual attractions (Benson and O'Reilly 2009; O'Reilly and Benson 2009). These are imaginaries, underpinned by collective imaginings.

As I have argued elsewhere (Benson 2012), these representations, emplaced onto diverse landscapes, are the product of particular cultural frameworks. Some locations become represented through tropes that might seem at odds with the physical and built environment; a prime example of this is Griffiths and Maile's (2014) research on Britons in Berlin. Prominent within their respondents' account was once again, '[T]he rural/urban dichotomy in the lifestyle migration literature with its theme of 'escape from the city' ... reproduced but in this case in the context of Berlin ... Berlin's empty spaces and dirt appeared to represent a slower, almost 'rural' way of life' (Griffiths and Maile 2014: 154). The mapping of this 'rural' imagining onto a European city, provides further strength to our understandings of cultural narratives of place and how they operate within lifestyle migration discourses. It illustrates that rather than being valued for their particular amenities, places become valued because of what they are perceived as offering to the migrants, and how the migrants envisage remaking their lives and identities within these imagined landscapes.

Central to these representations is their presentation as authentic and the possibilities that they allow for self-realization. This is most clearly articulated in Osbaldiston's works, where he spells out clearly the dichotomous relationship between the coast and the city and its role in promoting migration to the coast (2010), highlighting how the 'authenticity' of place is curated, preserved and promoted within the place-marketing of particular destinations (2011). Beyond this, however, he is also clear on how these cultural imaginings and valorisations of place intersect with subjective understandings of the self, allowing for the possibility of the transformation of self through and in particular locations (Osbaldiston 2012). This is made possible in part by the fact that these representations have long histories as cultural narratives (see for example Osbaldiston 2010, 2011, 2012).

To understand the work of these cultural narratives, we can turn towards theories concerning the social imaginary. The social imaginary has its structural origins in how we understand the world around us and our particular place within it (see Gaonkar 2002 for an overview of this literature), and thus reflects particular cultural and historical contexts (Castoriadis 1987; Taylor 2004). Through the social imaginary society and its moral order is reproduced, shaping the behaviours and actions of individuals (Castoriadis 1987; Taylor 2002, 2004). It is also clear however, that imagination has the capacity to do more than just reproduce social structure; as Appadurai (2002) argues, it inspires action, bringing with it the possibility of transforming the social structure of society (not only recreating it). In this rendering, imaginings become one site for the recognition of structure within lifestyle migration, both reproducing and innovating pre-existing structural conditions (Benson 2012); as action undertaken on the basis of imagination, lifestyle migration thus has the capacity both to reproduce and refract social structure, while also, because of the wider valuation of such imaginaries (and indeed, their *longue durée* as imaginings), legitimating the actions of the individual.

The *longue durée* of cultural imaginings

While representations invariably engage well-known themes of urban escape and rural retreat, rarely do we ask where these imaginings come from, let alone locate them within wider historical and

philosophical narratives (Osaldiston 2014). This is one area where the contributions to this special issue innovate. Cultural narratives about the destination feature powerfully within each of the papers, from the Jewish homecoming to Israel (Zaban, this issue)—a nationalist imagining that underpins privileged migration to Jerusalem—to the lagging Swedish countryside, marketed as a rural idyll (Eimermann, this issue). Although they approach this theme quite differently, Osaldiston, Rogelja and Weidinger and Kordel's contributions to this issue highlight the value of thinking about the *longue durée* of cultural imaginings. Rogelja's (this issue) unique focus on the sea as a destination draws on literary and historical accounts to position the contemporary imaginaries of the sea through which 'liveaboards' narrate their decisions about how to live. Weidinger and Kordel (this issue), in their account of retirement to German spa towns, revisit the idea of place as therapeutic and how this might feature in lifestyle migration research (see also Hoey 2009). Osaldiston (this issue), through his account of what a cultural sociology approach might contribute to understandings of lifestyle migration, reminds us that the 'good life' is a cultural text, part of a longstanding trend towards self-authenticity inspired by disenchantment in modern life. The significance of these locations is therefore presented not as unique, but as part of wider cultural trends in the valuation of place.

The exercise in historicism reinvigorates the relationship between place, movement and identity. To demonstrate this, I want to return briefly to the discussion of Osaldiston's contribution. Osaldiston positions lifestyle migration within a wider cultural trend responding to the disenchantment of modern life, as people seek authentic lives and selves (see also Osaldiston 2012; Benson 2011, 2013b). What this presentation makes clear is *the value of moving to particular places in search of (self-)authenticity*, once again making clear that the relationship between migration and identity is also central to understanding lifestyle migration. Other studies demonstrate clearly how lifestyle migration offers a blank slate through which to renegotiate identities (Oliver and O'Reilly 2010), focused on, for example, positive ageing (Oliver 2008). In such accounts, the relationship between migration, place and identity is paramount: *migration to a particular place offers the possibility of remaking the self*. Understanding this relationship between migration, place and identity within lifestyle is another way of intervening in wider discussions within migration studies, where home, belonging and social identities have been recurrent and powerful themes.

This exercise in historicism may also lay the foundations for a considered account of how to analyse lifestyle migration, and the tools that we can put to work to do this. Recognising the *longue durée* of the cultural narratives so readily adopted by lifestyle migrants adds another dimension to our analyses. Indeed, understood in one light, the recognition of the history of these narratives links contemporary cases of lifestyle migration to earlier phenomena where, disenchanted with modern life, people seek the sublime (Osaldiston, this issue; see also Osaldiston 2012). Repositioning the cultural narratives behind lifestyle migration might open up the discussion about whether it is a phenomenon distinct to late-/liquid modernity, or whether there are precedents that might throw these interpretations into sharp relief. What this demonstrates clearly is that by recognising the *longue durée* of these imaginings, predominant analytical framings are called into question, opening up the dialogue once again about how to understand and interpret this contemporary phenomenon (see also Benson and Osaldiston 2014).

One of the problems within the foci on imaginings of place and movement can be that it displaces attention from the structures, in particular the privileges, that bring about migration. In other words, the cultural valuation of particular geographies does not in itself explain how migration is brought about. Rather, to understand this fully we need to be attentive to how these are placed within the context of people's lives, experiences, and capabilities, alongside wider historical and material conditions (Benson and O'Reilly 2009) accounting for the processes by which people are able to act on the basis of imagination, to recognize the various contingencies that bring about migration (Benson 2012). Rather than lifestyle migration being a phenomenon specific to late-/liquid modernity, certain historical and material contingencies are in play that mean that through migration, certain populations—those

with the appropriate levels of relative capital (social, economic and cultural)—may attempt to seek ‘the good life’, a narrative which has deep, historical roots. It may then be seen as one current articulation of a longer-standing cultural narrative.

LIFESTYLE MIGRATION, SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC RESTRUCTURING

Relative economic privilege and ease of movement are undoubtedly part of the wider structural context that makes lifestyle migration possible (Benson and O’Reilly 2009: 618; see also O’Reilly and Benson 2009; Benson 2012). Featured prominently in the literature on International Retirement Migration (King et al. 2000; Casado-Díaz et al. 2004), the baby boomer is the figurative representation of such economic privilege. There is a danger, however, that this figuration does not fully convey the changing social and economic conditions following the post-war reconstruction of many Western and European nation-states that led to the increased affluence of the baby boomer generation, in particular their peak levels of expendable wealth and the significant assets accumulated through property ownership. Undoubtedly, these contexts form part of the backdrop to how trends such as lifestyle migration have become possible. However, what I want to highlight here is that recognizing the wider context is the first step in demonstrating how lifestyle migration might be linked to social and economic restructuring. While the example of the baby boomers emphasizes a long-term social and economic restructuring in the place of origin and how this plays a role within lifestyle migration, more immediate experiences of restructuring might shape the decision to migrate, so too social and economic transformation taking place within the destination. Finally, the scale of these transformations—whether these are local, national, global—is important to bear in mind.

Migration as a response to economic and social transformation

Migration as a response to restructuring—what I present above as immediate experiences of restructuring—is not uncommon. Indeed, this is often articulated in migrants’ own accounts of their migration as they present the wider context in which they chose to leave their country of origin. Among some of my interlocutors in rural France, changing social, economic and political contexts in Britain in the late 1980s and early 1990s had provided the conditions for their migration, in particular their experiences of being made redundant from public sector jobs. Expressed as watershed moments or turning points (Benson 2011; see also Hoey 2005, 2006), these experiences are foundational to the presentation of their migrations as transformative; in this way, they become integrated into the identity-making projects of which these migration stories are a fundamental part.

However, what I want to draw attention to here is how migration, even when presented in these personalized narratives, is a response to wider structural transformation (Benson 2010; Benson and O’Reilly 2009). It is perhaps more tangible when expressed, as in the case of Hayes’ (2014, 2015) participants, in outright economic terms—the erosion in the value of pensions, stagnation of housing assets—and the impact of these on financial security. These, as Hayes (2015) explicitly states, are the consequences of widespread social and economic transformation. But there is a need to be attentive to other hidden clues that might reveal wider structural changes in the place of origin and how these might interplay with migration. Indeed, it is precisely the retreat to lifestyle and consumption that can, at times, mask the role of such structural change (and individual responses to and experience of) within migration; as individuals present their decision to migrate as innovative, brave, adventurous and pioneering, structure is neglected.

Destinations as a product of social and economic restructuring

Social and economic restructuring might also account for how and when new destinations are promoted and established to receive lifestyle migrant populations. Place marketing and the construction and maintenance of place myths (Shields 1991), particularly as these are targeted towards international property investment, are an important part of the landscape through which destinations are made into attractive to potential lifestyle migrants. Promotional materials reproduce representations of place that emphasize authenticity (Osbaldiston 2012) and its therapeutic qualities (Hoey 2009; see also Weidinger and Kordel, this issue), all representations that imply the 'better way of life' can be led there. This has been noted time and again in the case of lifestyle migration research in Latin America, first in Panama and Belize (McWatters 2009; Jackiewicz and Crane 2010) and most recently in Ecuador (Hayes 2015). In Panama, the case with which I am most familiar from my own work, the promotion of certain locations coincided with significant neoliberal land reform in Panama (Horton 2006; Velasquez Runk 2012) and the perceived need for rural development. The recognition of the role played by this place-marketing helps to explain the decision to migrate to a particular destination, but leaves lots of other questions unanswered. In this case, what are the conditions under which any destination might suddenly ascend into the international property investment market? This question challenges us to rethink destinations in terms of social and economic restructuring; in other words, *how are destinations made through structural transformation?*

This question lies at the core of both Weidinger and Kordel's contribution on German Spa towns as a lifestyle migration destination and Eimermann's paper on Dutch migration to the Swedish countryside. In both cases, there is a resonance with the wider shift to understanding rural landscapes through a post-productivist lens and policy change aimed at planning for rural development beyond agriculture. As both papers demonstrate, encouraging the in-migration of these more affluent populations is an element of strategies aimed at diversifying rural economies. Establishing a firmer link between lifestyle migration research, and amenity migration which has examined rural transformation in considerable detail (Gosnell and Abrams 2009) might furnish the literature on lifestyle migration with conceptual models that are more attuned to capturing these structural changes that create particular destinations for property investment and lifestyle migration (see for example Zoomers 2010; Barrantes-Reynolds 2011).

In particular, as Weidinger and Kordel (this issue) make particularly clear, the turn towards this literature might also facilitate the integration of migrants' and locals perspectives on lifestyle migration, displacing the focus on individual migrants that is a regular feature of this research. As they demonstrate, although markets have been established to encourage further tourism interest in the area—with correlate services—the unplanned in-migration of retirees seeking permanent dwellings has brought demographic change which local services are not equipped for, and has also had an impact on the availability of permanent dwellings within the area. This demonstrates that although tourism and indeed some migration may be sought as a way of diversifying and sustaining local and regional economies, this may also come with unanticipated consequences, in this case the lack of family homes.

Zaban's contribution gives a somewhat different entry point into the consideration of the relationship between lifestyle migration and structural transformation. Her account of how incoming English- and French-speaking Jewish populations have brought about gentrification in Jerusalem shows a perhaps unusual state intervention that has deep nationalist motivations. The state encourages and facilitates the migration of high-status immigrants to the country, demonstrating a state intervention focused on immigration that shares some of the traits of contemporary state-led gentrification elsewhere—particularly in the encouragement of 'foreign' property investment—but which, in the context of wider spatial politics in the area, has quite significant political consequences. This contribution is thus unique within this collection of articles, as it focuses on the complex intersections of migration policies and ongoing gentrification in a particularly fraught political and territorial context. In relation

to the literature on lifestyle migration, it also demonstrates how homecoming, spiritual and religious life might be part of the 'better way of life' sought by these high-status Jewish migrants.

As I have outlined above, the articles in this issue go some way towards addressing the relationship between such privileged migration and wider structural issues; indeed, this is most clear in Zaban's contribution, with its focus on 'the spatial politics of privileged migration and its impact on cities, neighbourhoods and housing markets ... This case-study is also special in the sense that this is an ethnic (as well as ideological and religious) migration which is interconnected with class habits'. This contribution carefully addresses the different scales in which lifestyle migration is caught up and the consequences of this; she artfully draws on other bodies of literature that might shed light on her particular case, illustrating the value and importance of considering how these issues have been addressed elsewhere. I argue here that in establishing these points of dialogue, lifestyle migration research might be coaxed out of its silo but, beyond this, it might demonstrate the wider value of research in this area for understanding projects of urban (and rural) development, as this is evidently a part of this wider landscape. What these brief examples make clear is that the destinations that lifestyle migrants seek are often framed and shaped by wider structural transformations. An approach focused on the impacts of lifestyle migration on destinations suggests a rather one-directional frame for understanding. I argue instead that there is a need to consider both how lifestyle migration is structured through social and economic transformation at different spatial and temporal scales and locations, while also recognizing that lifestyle migration might be part of the way that different locales are restructured. This approach recognizes that lifestyle migration might be part of quite complicated contexts, part of the landscape undergoing structural transformation that might be quite easily overlooked if simply reduced to their impacts on places and populations.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this brief introduction has been to demonstrate both how the contributions to this volume move the discussion about lifestyle migration forward, but also to highlight points of dialogue with other literatures and fields of research. In (re)presenting the conceptual and theoretical framing of lifestyle migration, it has sought to demonstrate that while this is a trend that is underpinned by consumption and identity, the labelling of this phenomenon as migration is both a deliberate and political point that positions it within migration as a whole. In other words, it is important that these relatively privileged subjects are recognized as migrants rather than rendered invisible in discussions about migration. Beyond this however, through the re-examination of the cultural narratives underpinning these migrations, the contributions to this collection throw into sharp relief the need to reconsider the theoretical framing of lifestyle migration as a product of late-/liquid modernity, by demonstrating the deep historical precedents of the quest for a better way of life. Similarly, the consideration of the relationships between lifestyle migration and wider social and economic transformations demonstrates the need to consider how lifestyle migration contributes to and is framed by wider social and economic transformations on a range of geographical and temporal scales.

The conceptualization of these population movements as lifestyle migration has really taken root within a relatively short period of time; it is undoubtedly a framework that scholars find valuable in terms of making sense of the populations that they study. However, the broader ambitions of these conceptualizations for dialogue need to be made more explicit, particularly in relation to migration studies and research on urban and rural development.

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POVZETEK

ŽIVLJENJSKO-STILSKE MIGRACIJE: OD TRENUTNEGA STANJA K PRIHODNOSTI PODROČJA RAZISKOVANJA

Michaela BENSON

Uvodni članek prinaša pregled najpomembnejših tem, s katerimi se ukvarjajo raziskave življenjsko-stilskih migracij in s tem prispevke v pričujočem tematskem sklopu umešča v širši kontekst in poudarja njihovo inovativnost. S poudarkom na razumevanju strukturnih pogojev, ki promovirajo in lajšajo življenjsko-stilsko migracijo, osvetljuje tudi dolgoletno zanimanje za subjektivitete migrantov, kulturne naracije kraja in migracije. Pregled tovrstnih raziskav namenja laičnim bralcem in organizira teoretska in konceptualna vprašanja. Osrednji cilj članka je promovirati potrebo po strokovnem preučevanju prekrivanja raziskovanja življenjsko-stilskih migracij z raziskovanjem drugih družbenih ved. Raziskave so nujne tako za širjenje relevantnosti polja kot tudi za razvoj analitičnega dometa raziskav. Članki v tem sklopu osvetljujejo dve področji (migracijske študije in razvoj podeželja) in prikazujejo, kako lahko upoštevanje njunih prekrivanj pripomore k razvoju področja, hkrati pa prispeva k prenovi razumevanja omenjenih širših področij.

V povezavi s študijami migracij članek v ospredje postavlja potrebo po razumevanju subjektivitete migrantov, prepoznavanju kompleksnih ciklov potrošnje in proizvodnje, v katerih se znajdejo migranti in s pomočjo katerih se (re)konstruirajo njihove identitete. Članek prispeva tudi k prepoznavanju migrantov kot privilegiranih subjektov in širitvi pokrajine migracij, s čimer izziva nekatere od dominantnih okvirov migracij. Razprava o razvoju podeželja osvetljuje potrebo po upoštevanju različnih načinov prestrukturiranja družbene in ekonomske transformacije na različnih prostorskih in časovnih lestvicah in lokacijah, pri čemer hkrati upošteva, da je življenjsko-stilska migracija lahko del načina prestrukturiranja različnih krajev. Potreba po raziskovanju življenjsko-stilskih migracij se pokaže prav pri ustvarjanju teh točk dialoga.