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' (Osbaldeston 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 lifestyle 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 (Osbaldeston 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 Schaeghe 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 Thiebaut 2008) and *Out of Belgium: Stemmen van Belgen uit het Buitenland* (Roggeman and Van der Schaeghe 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 social abilities. 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.viwb.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.