

# Practising the Good Life



# Practising the Good Life

## *Lifestyle Migration in Practices*

Edited by

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Practising the Good Life: Lifestyle Migration in Practices

Edited by Kate Torkington, Inês David and João Sardinha

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## INTRODUCTION

INÊS DAVID AND KATE TORKINGTON

The idea for this book arose from a conference organised by the editors of the volume in Lisbon in October 2013. The conference brought together researchers from around the world and from a variety of disciplinary fields, including sociology, anthropology, geography and languages and linguistics, to present and discuss papers that focused on different forms of practice(s) in the context of lifestyle migration. Entitled “Practising the Good Life: The Good Life in Practices”, the conference aimed at advancing understandings of different aspects of privileged forms of lifestyle-related migration through empirically grounded explorations of what “living the good life” consists of.

Such mobilities have not only become increasingly evident in the past few decades but they are also attracting growing attention as an area of inquiry within social sciences research. Playing on the tensions and interactions between tourism and migration, these forms of movement—across regional, national and continental borders—accompanied by some degree of settlement have been variously theorised as “lifestyle migration”, “amenity migration”, “counter-urbanisation migration”, “international retirement migration” and “residential tourism”.

Notably, while the ways of perceiving this type of movement and reterritorialisation have many aspects in common, they also signal a striking diversity regarding the various actors involved (whether they be, for example, “expatriates”, “global nomads”, “counter-culture dropouts”, “highly skilled professionals”, “residential tourists” or “international retirees”) as well as the different types of experiences imagined and sought out (e.g. a bohemian lifestyle, a rural idyll, an “exclusive” beach setting, or simply a “place in the sun”). In short, the phenomenon seems to be at once clearly identified and loosely characterised. On the one hand, there seems to be a general consensus that the common defining feature is that these mobilities are driven by the pursuit of ideals loosely and subjectively defined as leading to a better quality of life (O’Reilly and Benson 2009) and that this quality of life is achievable through certain lifestyle practices. On the other hand, the motivations, circumstances, life trajectories,

expectations, outlooks and material conditions of individuals may vary widely, since these types of migratory projects are largely individualistic, designed on a voluntary basis and supported by sufficient resources to pursue a better “quality of life”, whatever that may entail.

Previous work explores multiple and disparate directions, ranging from the specificities of destination contexts, to the entanglements of privileged living conditions, infrastructures and policies geared to tourism and the second-home market as well as the negative impacts for local populations and their environments. This edited collection is aligned with previous efforts to bring together multidisciplinary approaches to the multifaceted phenomenon (e.g. Benson and O'Reilly 2009; Janoschka and Haas 2013; Benson and Osbaldiston 2014) and aims to build on the existing and growing body of literature. However, instead of further delving into the theoretical grounds anchoring the conceptualization of privileged forms of mobility in social theory and the international migrations arena, it adds to the field with empirically grounded explorations focused on practices involved in constructing, experiencing and, ultimately, living “the good life”. The deliberate focus on various modes of engagement with “good life” practices hopes to shed light on different ways in which the phenomenon unfolds on a routine basis, in an interplay between various (migrant and non-migrant) agents and structures at different scales.

In that sense, it converses with O'Reilly's (2012) call for telling “practice stories” of lifestyle migration. As O'Reilly suggests, practice theory is a meta-theoretical approach that aims to deepen an understanding of the social processes involved in the constitution of social life. She argues that a reading of existing literature through a lens centred on key elements for practice theory (e.g. external upper layer, proximate and conjuncturally specific structures, pre-established dispositions and experientially-based ideas, communities of practice) can be a productive way of studying contemporary forms of migration and accounting for why some people move and others do not,<sup>1</sup> while addressing dynamics that agents take for granted and exploring people's understandings of them. Additionally, O'Reilly calls for research which engages more directly with the aspects that inform how social life is constituted through everyday engagement - thereby discussing wide and encompassing tendencies (e.g. globalized movement and transnational lives), the more proximate structures that frame them and, along with more contextual forces, enable and/or constrain movement as well as shape individuals' predispositions to

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<sup>1</sup> O'Reilly (2012, 77) notes that not all people in similar (e.g. middle-class) conditions move whilst some people with different (e.g. fewer) resources may join in the flow.

relocate and explore specific modes of settlement. Without always resorting to the language and tools of a practice theory approach, the authors in this volume are concerned with elements central to it, as noted below.

There has been a growing academic interest in practices cutting across many areas of social life. Yet although there might well have been a “practice turn” (Schatzki 2001) in the social sciences, there is no coherent or unified theory of practice and, in general, the term “practice” remains rather vague. Its meaning seems to range from simply referring to “what people do” to complex theoretical perspectives such as those set out by social and cultural theorists (e.g. Bourdieu (1977), de Certeau (1984), Foucault (1976; 1978; 1979), Lyotard (1984) and Giddens (1979; 1984)).<sup>2</sup> Following and drawing upon what some may call the corner stones established by their predecessors, since the mid-1990s a range of scholars such as Rob Stones (2005), Alan Warde (2005), Ted Schatzki (1996; 2001), Sherry Ortner (2006), Nick Couldry (2004), John Postill (2010), Tim Cresswell and Peter Merriman (2011) and Alistair Pennycook (2010) have advanced practice theory approaches in fields such as sociology, philosophy, anthropology, media studies, media anthropology, human geography and language. Although it is not the aim of this volume to contribute as such to “practice theory”, but rather to develop a broader, empirically based view of some of the practices of lifestyle migration by bringing together a variety of studies with differing socio-geographical contexts and approaches, we should at this point attempt to clarify what we understand by the concept.

Firstly, we should note that there is a distinction between the concepts of “practice” and “practices”. According to Reckwitz (2002, 249), the former, also referred to as *praxis*, represents “an emphatic term to describe the whole of human action (in contrast to ‘theory’)”. A practice (as a countable noun), on the other hand, is “a routinized type of behaviour” that can consist of several interconnected elements, including forms of bodily and mental activities, the use of objects, and, importantly, some kind of background knowledge in the form of “understanding, know-how, states of emotion and motivational knowledge”. Seen in this way, we emphasize that practices are not merely forms of coherently organised embodied actions, for they are also inextricably connected to mental activities even if the individual is not fully conscious of his/her ingrained dispositions when engaging in a practice. To be more specific, as Schatzki

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<sup>2</sup> For a detailed discussion of some of these theories of practice, and in particular how they can be related to a practice theory for international migration research, see O'Reilly (2012).

(1996) notes, practices are linked through nexuses of understandings. These understandings might relate to rules and principles, or simply to what other people do and say. Although imprinted in the body (in postures, attires, gestures, and so on), as Schatzki underlines, practices are not only “doings” but also “sayings”, and therefore refer not only to practical activity in itself but also to representations of such activity which can be discursively negotiated. Therefore, exploring the ways in which people *talk about* their practices, whether through the medium of a research interview (see, for example, the chapters by Åkerlund; Étrillard; Hayes; Kordel; Krit; Ribeiro; Sardinha; Torkington; Zunino and Žebrytė) or through digital social media such as forums, blogs, listservs (e.g. Betty and Hall; Clark-Barol, McHugh and Norum; Lawson, this volume)—all of which constitute social practices in their own right—is an important feature of this volume.

Also central to the notion of practices is the notion of *performance*—the carrying out or enactment of practices—which, when repeated and routinized, forms a pattern of activity and therefore (re)produces and sustains a particular practice/mode of engagement from situated social positions (Schatzki 1996; Reckwitz 2002). Thus, whilst practices require performance for their very existence and their reproduction, performance also presupposes the existence of a social practice - something which reflects Giddens’ (1984) theory of structuration. The chapters in this volume that deal explicitly with aspects of production and performance further expand on Giddens’ idea of a recursive relationship between structure and agency, which mutually (in)form and organize each other. David, Åkerlund and Eimermann, and Åkerlund in greater detail in her single-authored chapter, note how macro-level social structures are intertwined with micro-level individual actions and meso-level dynamics through a range of practices sustaining what can be called a lifestyle migration industry. Many of the other contributions also tease out the interrelated production/performance and macro-meso-micro levels of the lifestyle migration phenomenon (e.g. Étrillard; Krit; Lawson; Torkington; Zunino and Žebrytė, this volume).

The first part of the collection deals with seeking idealised lifestyles and the appropriation of places, in particular rural and “spiritual” locations that enable movers to live out “the good life” through situated everyday practices. The section begins with a much needed comparative analysis of lifestyle migration trajectories to rural destinations across five EU countries. Drawing on data from a larger survey of intra-European migration, Sofia Gaspar identifies trends in the socio-demographic profiles of those who choose to migrate to rural areas, which then allows her to

speculate on how these different trends suggest different kinds of practice. For instance, younger people moving to rural areas in northern Europe and also in Spain appear to be seeking job opportunities that are compatible with an overall better quality of life, whilst those who move to rural areas of France and Italy are relatively wealthier and are looking for a rural lifestyle based around leisure, cultural and environmental pursuits and practices.

João Sardinha's study of lifestyle migrants in inland areas of central Portugal shows how the rural context is a fundamental aspect of the practices of those who have opted to live in remote places, which become the stage for fulfilling personalised life projects by leaving the 'old' way of life back home for a simpler (and cheaper) lifestyle which allows them to embrace the "authentic" and, simultaneously, the "exotic". Since these rural areas have suffered for some decades from depopulation and deterioration, these migrants are also able to "give back" to the local community by buying up tracts of land to re-cultivate, restoring old farm properties and increasing the numbers of the dwindling and ageing populations. Besides being able to enjoy increased leisure time and therefore leisure-based activities, these migrants are also keen to emphasize how their daily lives also involve "alternative" practices and "volunteering" activities that support local causes and charities, thus enhancing community spirit and, ultimately, their level of commitment to their chosen place of settlement.

Alesya Krit's chapter also examines a community of British lifestyle migrants in an inland area of the Iberian Peninsula—this time in the province of Murcia in southern Spain. Her respondents are full-time migrants who have chosen to relocate to an area away from the more "touristy" coastal belt. Like Sardinha's respondents, many have taken advantage of the more accessible property prices in this area and bought and often restored old townhouses and farms, whilst others have opted to buy new builds in special suburban developments outside the towns and villages. Krit's focus is on the role of transnational home ownership practices of lifestyle migrants, and in particular on how closely notions of risk, security and family obligations are related to these practices. She investigates how migrants perceive their houses in the framework of security and family bonds, and how the structuring practices of distributed habitat (houses that were bought in the "home" country as well as extra guest rooms in houses in the new destination place) impacts upon transnational relationships. Her findings reveal how these structuring practices of distributed habitat can create a new spatiotemporal dimension for kinship relations.

In the final contribution of the section, Hugo Zunino and Ieva Žebrytė take us to northern Patagonia to explore a community of what they have termed “utopian lifestyle migrants” in Pucón, Chile. These authors argue that a reading of modern mobilities within a structure-agency dialectic with a focus on the concrete, situated practices—and the discourses they are based on—that frame the everyday lives of migrants allows us to understand how these individuals are able to carry out life projects and, at the same time, take advantage of the opportunities for social change in order to put in motion social transformative processes. By examining the relationship between place and practice, these authors reveal how “utopias” emerge through the symbolic appropriation of place entwined with concrete practices, and in particular non-conventional practices, such as alternative schooling methods and permaculture. These self-styled utopias become spaces where migrants’ daily practices converge into a lifestyle that disrupts the conventional social rules framing capitalism and accelerates the process of social transformation.

The second part of the volume consists of three chapters with the common theme of ageing. However, the focus of these studies is quite different. The first two chapters focus on the practices surrounding the decision of retired people to seek out a “place in the sun”. As both Ulrika Åkerlund and Stefan Kordel illustrate in their respective chapters, many retirees from northern Europe are able to choose a lifestyle wherein they can embrace their status as mobile citizens of Europe and choose the “best of both worlds” as they move between Sweden and Malta (Åkerlund), or Germany and southern Spain (Kordel).

Åkerlund focuses on how the practices of the “lifestyle movers” in her study are produced and performed. She illustrates how the opportunities and constraints produced by structural frameworks are navigated by these movers, and how a whole host of their everyday practices are shaped by these frameworks, including lifestyle, mobility, home-making and planning-for-the-future practices. Whilst Åkerlund shows how her movers engage in both home-making and mobility practices that require shifting place attachments in order to keep in line with structural requirements, Kordel illustrates how retired German migrants in the south of Spain embrace their status as both “tourist” and “resident”, constructing idealised and materialised homes by combining tourist experiences, highly mediated symbolic markers of the region and everyday social and leisure practices.

Although many retirees are able to choose a mobile lifestyle, moving happily to and from multiple locations, others are intent on staying put in their chosen destination-place. It has been noted elsewhere (e.g. O’Reilly

2000) how many ageing British lifestyle migrants in Spain have no intention whatsoever of returning to the UK. However, things do not always go to plan, and the chapter by Charles Betty and Kelly Hall focuses on the reasons why an increasing number of elderly British migrants living in the Costa del Sol are returning—or considering returning—to the UK. As Betty and Hall show, there are three main issues that are forcing many to reassess their lifeplan: health care, financial difficulties, and (lack of) social support. Furthermore, these authors raise the pertinent and pressing question of what type of institutional and organisational practices are available to support elderly people—often in the “fourth age”—who need to make the move back to the UK. In contrast to the contributions by David et al. and Åkerlund, this chapter reminds us that although structures can seem to constitute opportunities rather than constraints to lifestyle migrants, a temporal and fine-grained approach to the practical and emotional tasks of “getting by” abroad is necessary for a multi-dimensional and grounded description of lifestyle migration.

The third and fourth sections also bring some rather new aspects to the study of lifestyle migration. The chapters in Part III are concerned with the mediation of lifestyle mobilities. Firstly, in an inter-connected discussion of studies of the flows of Dutch families to the Swedish countryside, retired Swedes to the island of Malta and northern Europeans, especially from the UK, to Portugal’s tourist hotspot the Algarve, Inês David, Marco Eimermann and Ulrika Åkerlund highlight how macro-level external structures—such as the innovations in communication and transportation technologies allowing relatively easy, cheap and quick physical or virtual travelling, in addition to the increase in expendable wealth and the importance of leisure, all noted elsewhere (e.g. Benson and O’Reilly 2009)—are complemented with more proximate but still “hard” structures that migrants can either take advantage of, skirt or otherwise endure. In the cases presented in this chapter, it is clear how the legal and economic mechanisms constructing a unified European space facilitate the possibility of relocation, whilst specific localised policies and schemes (often based on tax benefits) create further advantageous conditions for the engagement with residential tourism and lifestyle migration for certain groups of migrants. These migrants, moreover, are directly targeted, and constructed as “valuable” (as illustrated by the discourse of “high-net worth individuals” and “value added resident” for example), as they are seen to invest in residency. Resonating with Étrillard (this volume), who situates the British presence in rural Brittany (France) through a critical reading of global capitalist dynamics, these authors identify communities of practice in an array of fields (from real estate and financial counsellors

working across borders to municipal representatives, through to local media) composed of agents who make a living out of (re)producing a whole range of structures, relationships and images that sustain the very flow of lifestyle mobilities within Europe. Interestingly, although not always working in concerted fashion among themselves, they all seem to be impelled to sustain the practising of lifestyle mobilities, which, in turn, seem to spur a number of businesses capitalizing on the “ideals” of a lifestyle.

Such ways of living express a range of power relations and ideologies related to a relatively privileged social position. This prompts the kinds of negotiations among peers explored in online forums, listservs and/or private conversations in this volume. Molly Clark-Barol, Casey McHugh and Roger Norum explore how online mailing lists operate as virtual spaces that reflect offline lives and dilemmas among “expatriates” in developing contexts (specifically, Nepal and Liberia). If the very access to and participation in the listserv is limited for locals, and therefore telling of the position these westerners occupy, the evaluations of modes of engagement with locals (e.g. vetting for businesses, selling vs. giving away scarcely available material possessions when moving on to the next job in the global development business, accepting intermittent “problems” in infrastructures, etc.) trigger discussions about moral standards, adequate conduct and the validation of belonging. The contentious discussions spinning off from posts focused on the logistics of settling, dwelling and leaving reveal the constant tension among people who share similar positions in the country in addition to tastes and interests, as well as the need to resolve questions of social distance and proximity vis-à-vis locals, which, particularly in the case of Nepal and its growing middle-classes, are increasingly becoming peers.

In a similar vein, Michelle Lawson shows how apparently “flat” social spaces online—in her case forums animated by British migrants in a rural area of France—not only structure interactions according to context-specific rules (such as the moderation of a forum administrator) but also reproduce and reinforce offline social structures, distinguishing newcomers from longer-term residents. Nonetheless, in addition to exploring how the forum is an arena to explore and negotiate what is socially acceptable and required (for instance, the “duty” to integrate, along with the right to seek solace with like-minded peers), Lawson emphasizes how these communities of (discursive) practices are a means to construct identity in a foreign field, however imagined shared denominators may be.

At the core of online debates are the everyday practices performed by these migrants, and, particularly, an awareness of the relative privilege in



which such practices are embedded, vis-à-vis both the local “host” communities and other groups of migrants. This privilege is, in turn, inextricably meshed with broader global contexts. Resonating with the greater level of attention being given in recent work to the concept of “privilege” in lifestyle migration (e.g. Croucher 2012; Benson 2013), many of the chapters in this volume reiterate the notion that not only can lifestyle migration be theorised as a privileged form of migration but it is also *practised* as such.

The final section, which focuses on language and identity practices, clearly shows how linguistic and discursive practices are fundamental aspects of privilege. Aude Étrillard advocates a critical sociolinguistic-ethnographic approach to the study of specific geographical contexts of lifestyle migration in order to tease out the links between daily language practices, language ideologies and policies and the socio-economic climate in the region. In her case study of British migrants to rural areas of Central Brittany, she illustrates how language practices are symbolic and material resources which simultaneously emerge from and shape social hierarchy, community and identity.

Kate Torkington, in her study of the language practices of British lifestyle migrants in the tourist-belt of the Algarve, Portugal, reaches much the same conclusions. The migrants who form the population of this study create a kind of “self-marginalised existence” through their practice of *not* speaking the local language. This (non)practice is revealed to be a lifestyle choice—grounded in the privilege afforded by the powerful, global symbolic status of the English language and therefore the general consensus on the part of the local community that the practice of speaking English in daily life is an acceptable alternative to speaking Portuguese. On the other hand, for other groups of migrants, who are discursively (and socially) positioned as being “economic” migrants, there is evidently a great deal of social and cultural capital to be acquired from the learning and everyday practice of the “host” language. This point is taken up and clearly illustrated by Filipa Perdigão Ribeiro’s chapter on multilingual practices among different groups of migrants in the Algarve region. Although, as she points out, there are more similarities than are usually credited among the groups generally described as lifestyle migrants (i.e. from northern European origins) and economic migrants (from eastern Europe)—with both groups apparently settling in the Algarve because of the enhanced quality of life the region offers them—one of the striking differences in their everyday practices can be found in their language practices. For eastern Europeans, being able to stay and settle in the area depends on their multilingual abilities. Unlike their British counterparts,

they clearly do not have the privilege of being able to “ignore” other languages spoken around them; however they seem to embrace the opportunities for language learning and happily shift between different linguistic contexts in both public and private spheres.

Finally, Matthew Hayes’ contribution examines the discursive, and ultimately racialized, practices revolving around the negotiation of white privilege. In his study of North American lifestyle migrants in Cuenca, Ecuador, Hayes discusses the tensions around these migrants’ new identities as “gringos”, a term which is both imposed upon them by the receiving community and readily taken up by the migrants themselves. The author reveals how this apparent ethno-racial category is socially constructed and also variable in the Ecuadorian context, and how the North Americans themselves attach internalised values to what being a “gringo” means. Hayes then goes on to discuss the common practice among these migrants of “policing” the behaviour of other North Americans—on the one hand to distance themselves from the almost mythical “obnoxious gringo” and on the other hand in a bid to enhance their reception and possible integration as a community. However, as the author notes, this form of identity construction tends rather to reinforce racial thinking and underpin potentially racist discourses than to challenge and deconstruct them.

Insofar as the focus of all the papers in this collection are the elements informing the unfolding of lifestyle migration aspects in different contexts, and at the same time hinting at the implicit and explicit forces driving the moves as well as the modalities of incorporation and settlement, we hope that this volume acts as a contribution towards further arranging pieces of the puzzle and filling some of the research gaps concerning the highly contemporary phenomenon of lifestyle mobilities.

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## **PART I**

### **SEEKING IDEALIZED LIFESTYLES AND APPROPRIATING PLACE(S)**

# CHAPTER ONE

## IN SEARCH OF THE RURAL IDYLL: LIFESTYLE MIGRANTS ACROSS THE EUROPEAN UNION

SOFIA GASPAR

### **Introduction**

Lifestyle migration is an emerging form of spatial mobility where, temporarily or permanently, affluent citizens of all ages, with different family and working circumstances, move to meaningful places in search of a better quality of life (Benson and O'Reilly 2009; O'Reilly and Benson 2009). Unlike traditional migration flows, the rationale for migration is not economic but, rather, centred on subjective motivations linked to positively idealized views of the destination societies. Beyond the common dream of seeking a better way of life in a pleasant place, lifestyle migrants' narratives encapsulate self-realization ideals and personal projects. Stories and accounts of such movers reflect the drive for more relaxed and simpler lives, including the search for a better climate and improved health (Casado-Díaz et al. 2004), cheaper property, a lower cost of living, a better life for the children (O'Reilly 2007), the appeal of an exotic culture in the host country (Korpela 2009), the need to escape from or break with past life experiences, and the search for self-fulfilment and self-realization in a meaningful place where they can escape stress and, at times, the dangers associated with their places of origin.

This chapter will explore certain avenues in the study of lifestyle migration that have been insufficiently addressed. First of all, research on this phenomenon has largely focused on retirement migration (Casado-Díaz 2009; Casado-Díaz et al. 2004; Gustafson 2009; King et al. 1998; Williams et al. 2000), while research centred on younger and mid-life migrants has hitherto been fairly rare (Benson 2011; 2009; O'Reilly 2007; 2000; Korpela 2009). A second issue concerns the fact that most of the studies on lifestyle migration so far have been centred on metropolitan

areas or coastal tourist resorts, where retired or pre-retirement migrants have mostly settled. However, flows of lifestyle movers to rural location have been increasingly reported in the literature (Benson 2012; 2011; 2009; Buller and Hoggart 1994; Drake and Collard 2008; Hoggart and Buller 1995), extending the scope of this geographical trend beyond tourist enclaves. Thirdly, earlier studies have used qualitative data obtained through ethnographic research, helping, on one hand, to uncover and illuminate subjective and personal views of lifestyle migrants' trajectories, but leaving unaddressed the quantification of this phenomenon (Howard 2008). Finally, most investigations have not taken a comparative approach to lifestyle migration flows in different host societies. A comparative approach should yield new insights into the singularities and commonalities across various destinations.<sup>1</sup>

This chapter aims to highlight and expand knowledge on the issues raised above, by identifying and comparing different types of lifestyle migration paths to rural areas across five European Union (EU) countries: France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy and Spain. The data used is quantitative in nature and includes an original survey of 514 intra-EU migrants (*European Internal Movers Social Survey*), from all age groups, who moved to non-metropolitan localities between 1974 and 2004. The chapter begins by reviewing a developing body of literature on intra-European lifestyle migration in order, subsequently, to place the topic within counterurbanisation discourses and the new quest for rural lifestyles. The sections that follow describe the research methodology, along with the types and profiles of rural lifestyle migrants drawn from the data. A threefold typology of EU rural lifestyle migrants emerged—*retired migrants*, *professional migrants* and *mid-life migrants*—depending on the country the migrants settled in. The chapter concludes by discussing how these country-specific dynamics in rural settings can be understood as part of broader migration patterns within the EU.

## **Rural lifestyle migration in the context of the EU**

Freedom of movement was one of the most far-reaching legitimising tools enacted by the EU for its social integration project. The political rights granted in the Maastricht Treaty (1992) to those entitled to European citizenship (to move to and reside, vote, work and settle in any member state) represent an important trigger for intra-mobility and the creation of a distinctive social space in which EU movers can forge

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<sup>1</sup> For an exception, see Santacreu et al. (2009).

innovative and dynamic strategies in re-creating their life paths. With such legal and formal barriers removed, these European free movers, or Eurostars, in Adrian Favell's usage (2008), are expected to experience EU territory as a large internal region, which encourages them to venture on a personal journey in a different member state. European citizens can thus exercise their mobility rights within an institutional EU-policy framework, since their status as workers, students, pensioners or tourists is legally protected and positively perceived in their host societies, in contrast to that of non-EU nationals.<sup>2</sup>

Cross-state mobility is nowadays not entirely dependent on economic motives, but also subjective factors (family, love, quality of life, study) (Santacreu et al. 2009).<sup>3</sup> In addition, intra-EU migration can vary according to specific destinations: work-driven rationales are generally found among citizens moving to Germany and the UK; personal and subjective reasons are most frequent among migrants who have settled in Italy; and quality of life mobility is particularly common among movers living in Spain and France (Braun and Arsene 2009; Santacreu et al. 2009).

For this reason, quality of life migration can be understood as a consequence of the freedom of geographical and political movement within EU borders. It has also been partly motivated by lower property prices facilitating second-home acquisitions, the decreasing costs of international travel, the unprecedented incomes of the middle-classes, and the new ways of perceiving culture, travel and tourism.<sup>4</sup>

Benson and O'Reilly (2009) describe different types of lifestyle migrants in Europe according to the specificity of the choice of destination. One of these types is the *rural idyll migrant* who is driven by the search for a simpler and authentic rural life in which he/she can sense a

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<sup>2</sup> It is important to bear in mind that intra-EU mobility is not only confined to highly qualified free movers. Concomitant flows of poorly educated migrants (e.g. the waves of Portuguese emigrants to France and Germany in recent decades) continue to map and structure EU geography. However, when the accent is laid on movers seeking better lifestyle conditions, the corresponding socio-economic profile is pretty much similar to that found among highly skilled Eurostars.

<sup>3</sup> These findings are consistent with those of a previous study assessing the intentions of intra-EU mobility (Hadler 2006).

<sup>4</sup> While most of the research undertaken is Europe-based (Benson 2012; 2011; 2009; Casado-Díaz 2009; Casado-Díaz et al. 2004; Drake and Collard 2008; Eimermann et al. 2012; Gustafson 2009; 2008; King et al. 1998; Müller 2002; O'Reilly 2007; 2000; Williams et al. 2000), the global scope of this migratory trend has also been studied in other world regions, particularly Latin America (Jackiewicz and Craine 2010; Sunil et al. 2007), Asia (Howard 2008; Korpela 2009; Ono 2009) and Africa (Wishitemi et al. 2009).



community spirit and experience a life project in union with the natural environment (Benson 2012).<sup>5</sup> Though this phenomenon has been and still is relatively overlooked within the literature, previous accounts of Britons living in the French countryside (Benson, 2012; 2011; 2010; 2009; Buller and Hoggart 1994; Drake and Collard 2008; Hoggart and Buller 1995) and Dutch (Eimermann et al. 2012) and German families in rural Sweden (Müller 2002), reveal the creation of innovative forms of international rural scenarios, whereby a constant interchange of different national identities and cultures flourishes and gives rise to new routines and daily practices inside and outside the groups involved.

Research on quality of life migration to rural areas has been mainly conceptualized under a counter-urbanisation discourse (Benson and O'Reilly 2009). This trend relates to the geographical movement of people from metropolitan areas to rural locations, whether inside or outside their national boundaries. The reasons behind such moves include retirement, escape from the rat-race in the cities, an attractive housing market in the countryside, and, mostly, the search for the rural idyll. The idealisation of the countryside as an alternative way of life is an important motivator to explain counterurbanisation as an emerging phenomenon in recent decades; this idealized vision of rurality can provide an important source of identity and also encapsulate the ethic of a more peaceful and relaxed life, and the sense of a closer community, a space far from pollution and stress, and a safe environment for children (Buller and Hoggart 1994). By placing the rural idyll at the centre of the decision to move, individuals reveal a clear distinction between a hurried and distressed life before migration and the life sought after migration, with the promise of a liberating future away from the daily constraints of urbanisation. Nevertheless, while the dominant image in people's decisions to migrate to the countryside is the myth of the rural idyll (Buller and Hoggart 1994), life after migration turns out to be a complex and contradictory experience, where the migrants' relationship with the environment is mapped out not only on their imaginings of rurality but also their daily experiences and encounters within the rural community. Experience and social practices can sometimes entail tension with the individual's prior perceptions of the countryside, leading to constant negotiation, which may or may not modify the pre-migration expectations (Benson 2011).

Intra-EU migration to rural settings has been marked by this counterurbanizing trend, in which amenity factors such as the

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<sup>5</sup> The other types of lifestyle migrants identified by Benson and O'Reilly are the "bourgeois bohemian" and the "residential tourist". For further information, see Benson and O'Reilly (2009).

attractiveness of the landscape and climate determine migration decisions within EU borders. Also, the housing and land markets in deprived rural areas of some European countries are found to be an appealing factor for migration since property prices are lower than in metropolitan settings (Buller and Hoggart 1994; Hoggart and Buller 1995). One country that has shown a considerable increase in immigration flows to rural spaces is France. A growing body of literature on lifestyle migration has documented continuous flows of middle-class Britons to the French countryside. It focuses on their intentions, motivations and expectations in migrating and the way in which these may be determined by socio-demographic factors such as sex, age and profession (Benson 2010; Drake and Collard 2008; Hoggart and Buller 1995).

Benson has drawn a threefold typology characterising British migrants into the French department of the *Lot* (2010), according to their position in the life course and family situation at the time of migration.<sup>6</sup> Thus, *family migrants* included middle-aged individuals with children of school age who, discontent with their previous lives in Britain, had moved to the French countryside seeking to settle into a tranquil and healthier place with greater freedom for their offspring; *retired migrants* were Britons who, after holidaying there, had retired to the *Lot* with good pensions and earnings, attracted by better leisure conditions and perceptions that the elderly were treated more favourably in France than in England; finally, *mid-life migrants* were young, childless professionals who, driven by the wish to settle in a gentler environment, had left their jobs in Britain in search of a better place to start their own businesses.

This relationship between expanding entrepreneurship and lifestyle migrants among mid-life individuals has also been examined by Stone and Stubbs (2007) in rural France. According to the authors, European migrants' characteristics in these areas have succeeded in establishing private enterprises and self-employment within the local structures offered, as they are highly educated individuals, with language and cultural skills highly suited to international environments that host diversified and innovative services both to expatriate and local communities.

Intra-EU migration to the Italian rural areas of Tuscany and Umbria also indicates counter-urbanizing characteristics similar to those in the French countryside: migrants have been attracted by the beauty of the landscape, the erudite culture of the region, and the "Italian way of life" (King and Patterson 1998). The paper just cited also highlighted the

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<sup>6</sup> The *Lot* is a rural department in the southwest France.

historical presence of well-off Britons in Tuscany since the Grand Tour, stressing its specificity in relation to other trends in international retirement migration more likely to be found in other southern European countries. Despite the heterogeneous migration processes and life-paths of the pension-age or early retired British who have settled in rural Florence, a common portrait of these migrants is their highly-educated background, considerable wealth resulting from a high socio-occupational status beforehand, history of international mobility before retirement, previous work contacts within the region, fluency in the native language, and knowledge of Italian culture (Casado-Díaz et al. 2004; King and Patterson 1998; King et al. 1998; Williams et al. 2000). They are also a social group that exhibits a high prevalence of bi-national marriages, which can also be a sign of their higher level of social integration (Casado-Díaz et al. 2004; King et al. 1998; King and Patterson 1998).

The distinctive character of French and Italian rural lifestyle migration contrasts with the sun-seeking model of the Spanish coastal resorts. As one of the main EU destinations for tourism and international retirement migration (Casado-Díaz 2006), it is not surprising that a substantial part of the academic literature focusing on relatively affluent EU movers to Spain has generally been dominated by research on migration paths to coastal Mediterranean regions (Casado-Díaz 2009; 2006; Gustafson 2009, 2008; King et al. 1998; O'Reilly 2000). However, investigations on lifestyle movers who have settled beyond the edges of the big hubs and tourist towns have also registered increasing numbers of retired EU15 movers living in smaller municipalities or rural localities (Bayona-i-Carrasco and Gil-Alonso 2012; Morén-Alegret and Solana 2004). Oliva (2010) indicates that among Spanish rural municipalities with less than 10,000 inhabitants, 18.7 per cent of the foreigner residents come from wealthy EU nations (UK, Germany, France and Italy). One of the few investigations related to European migration to Spanish rural destinations is that of Stone and Stubbs (2007), mentioned above, which focuses on entrepreneurship in lifestyle migration. According to the authors, localities like the Comunidad Valencia and Axarquía seem to offer the basic resources for business startups based on ethnic niches and services to be consumed by the expatriate community. However, in contrast with the movers to rural France, the characteristics of the migrants in these locations exhibit lower occupational status and educational levels, as well as a more limited ability to speak Spanish, which limits their opportunities to start a business and connect socially with the local community.

In parallel with the north-to-south migration flows that have dominated lifestyle mobilities in Europe, a north-to-north pattern has also been

identified in other research. Seasonal home-ownership (Müller 2002) and permanent relocation (Eimermann et al. 2012) in Swedish rural settings appears to be increasing among other north European communities. This movement can be included in an EU counterurbanization phenomenon, with migrants moving from urbanized areas in the Netherlands or Germany to the Swedish countryside to seek specific environmental and cultural amenities. Lifestyle migrants moving to Sweden also present distinctive features when compared to the groups of northern retirees traditionally found in southern countries.<sup>7</sup> Thus, Dutch movers belong to the middle classes, were mostly born in the 1960s or 1970s, live in households with children under 18, are highly educated, and are primarily running small businesses (Eimermann et al. 2012). Similarly, German middle-class families purchasing second-homes in the Swedish countryside also exhibit an affluent standard of living (Müller 2002). The reasons for their decision to move reveal a desire for a relaxed lifestyle in idyllic places away from the routine of metropolitan settings.

For all countries except Spain, the studies mentioned above, as a whole, reveal a common pattern in the socio-characteristics of their European migrants. They indicate a highly educated background among the citizens who have chosen an international rural setting to turn their idealized visions of rural life into reality and reinvent their personal and family lifestyles according to a counter-urban ideology. However, a wider comparative cross-national perspective on migrants' socio-economic conditions can provide a deeper insight into the profiles and patterns of these affluent Europeans in different rural locations. This is precisely what the remainder of the chapter will examine.

## The study

The data has been drawn from the PIONEUR Project—*Pioneers of European Integration 'from below': Mobility and the Emergence of European Identity among National and Foreign Citizens in the EU*—which was funded by the European Commission through the Fifth Framework Programme, between 2003 and 2006. The original character of the research lay in the collection of information from French, German, British, Italian and Spanish migrants who fulfilled certain selection criteria: they

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<sup>7</sup> It is important to state here that there is a clear distinction between lifestyle migrants moving to Sweden and those moving to southern Europe: while the existing studies focusing on north-to-north migration point to middle-aged, highly educated family migrants, southern Europe mostly receives retirees with lower levels of education and no children.

had migrated between 1974 and 2003 to any of the other four European countries, were 18 or older at the time of migration and had lived in the host country for a year at the time of the research. The data gathered aimed to provide analytical and systematic comparability with surveys of non-movers such as the *European Social Survey* (ESS) and *Eurobarometer* (EB), thus representing a substantial methodological contribution to research on European migration. The respondents were recruited and located through a name-based telephone-directory sampling technique that recognized foreign individuals in each country on the basis of a probability estimation regarding first and family names (Braun and Arsene 2009).<sup>8</sup> The survey questionnaire included questions centred on the respondents' socio-demographic information, migration trajectory, European and national identity, quality of life, social integration and political and media practices, which enabled the researchers to sketch out crucial dimensions of the personal and social mobility paths in different countries.

To achieve the objective of this chapter, a pool of 514 individuals who reported that they lived in a rural area and had migrated for quality of life reasons was shifted from the original database.<sup>9</sup> Thus the selection, across five countries, of individuals who had moved to rural settings, driven by "quality of life" motives, makes this sub-sample unique, allowing cross-national comparisons on personal and social features and mobility paths.

The EIMSS database was examined using both multiple correspondence analysis (MCA) and hierarchical (*Ward's* and *Furthest Neighbour Methods*) and k-means cluster analysis, since a combination of these methods minimizes the complexity of the data and allows the mapping not only of patterns but also of a specific typology of intra-EU mobility trajectories to rural areas across different European states.<sup>10</sup> A battery of qualitative indicators was considered and used in the descriptive and multivariate analysis: gender, age, country of residence, nationality, education, work status, marital status and year of migration. These socio-demographic

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<sup>8</sup> For further details of the methodological discussion, see Braun and Santacreu (2009).

<sup>9</sup> The original dataset included a total of 4902 migrants (approximately 1000 per nationality). From these movers, 250 national groups were interviewed in each of the five countries.

<sup>10</sup> Multiple Correspondence Analysis (MCA) is a multivariate technique for nominal categorical data, used to map and represent underlying structures between the categories of the variables. The representation of the data appears as points in a low-distance Euclidean space. Furthermore, cluster analysis is a technique designed to group a set of similar objects in the same group (or cluster) in order to distinguish them from another clusters.

indicators were of great use in identifying EU movers within a two-dimensional social space.

### **Patterns and types of rural lifestyle migrants**

The descriptive results of the EIMSS survey reveal that most respondents come from northern European countries, i.e. Germany (41.5 per cent) and Great Britain (34.6 per cent), followed by French nationals (12.3 per cent), Italians (8.6 per cent) and Spanish (3.1 per cent). Additionally, as expected, the most popular destination countries of these EU movers are Spain (37.9 per cent), France (35.4 per cent) and Italy (17.9 per cent), and to a lesser extent Germany (4.9 per cent) and Great Britain (3.9 per cent). These figures are consistent with some of the research on lifestyle migration mentioned above, which documented specific nation-related niches of northern EU movers attracted by the French and Spanish countryside as a place to live (Benson 2011, 2010, 2009; Lardiés 1999; Santacreu et al. 2009; Stone and Stubbs 2007).

Other characteristics of rural lifestyle migrants reflect a balance in the gender of the respondents—50.6 per cent are male and 49.4 per cent female. The majority are married (66.9 per cent). Likewise, in line with earlier research (Braun and Arsene 2009; Santacreu et al. 2009), the educational level is fairly high as 38.2 per cent have had a tertiary education, 40.6 per cent a secondary education and only 21.3 per cent just a primary education. The share of retired EU migrants (54 per cent) is greater than those who are working (34.6 per cent) or unemployed (11.4 per cent). This figure, in conjunction with the age cohorts identified in the results aged 65+ years (56.8 per cent), 46-64 years (36.8 per cent) and 28-45 years (6.4 per cent), reinforces the idea that individuals moving for quality of life reasons, particularly German and British citizens, are older and at the retirement or pre-retirement stage of their life paths (Braun and Arsene 2009; Santacreu et al. 2009). Finally, when the *year of migration* is considered, it can be observed that more than half of the movers settled during the period 1994-2003 (58.9 per cent), while the remainder arrived from 1993-1984 (24.1 per cent) or 1974-1983 (16.9 per cent).<sup>11</sup> These

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<sup>11</sup> To offer an insight into the pace at which the different groups of EU migrants have moved during recent decades, the classification periods defined by Braun and Arsene (2009)—1974-1983, 1984-1993 and 1994-2003—are taken for this analysis. The first period, from 1974 to 1983, includes labour recruitment to industries in northern European countries. The second period—1984-1993—corresponds to a transitional stage in which certain new EU citizens (e.g. the Spanish) were entitled to the freedom of movement across Europe. The last period—1994-2003—is