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New Mobilities Across the Life Course: a Framework for Analysing Demographically Linked Drivers of Migration

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ABSTRACT

Taking the life course as the central concern, the authors set out a conceptual framework and define some key research questions for a programme of research that explores how the linked lives of mobile people are situated in time–space within the economic, social, and cultural structures of contemporary society. Drawing on methodologically innovative techniques, these perspectives can offer new insights into the changing nature and meanings of migration across the life course. Copyright © 2015 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

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INTRODUCTION

The main objective of this paper is to offer a conceptual framework for researchers wishing to deepen the understanding of the longitudinal relationship between migration and demographic change (Findlay & Wahba, 2013). The paper takes the relationship between migration and the life course as its central concern (Bailey, 2009). It explores how, across the life course, the linked lives of mobile people are situated in time–space within the changing economic, social, and cultural structures of contemporary society (Elder *et al*., 2003). It also serves as an introduction to a virtual issue of *Population, Space, and Place*, which highlights six other papers from the journal that serve as exemplars of the methodological and conceptual innovations that have taken place in this research field over the last 5 years.

The research framework that is proposed in this paper is important for two reasons. Firstly, it is noticeable that recent theorisations of how changing social relations have impacted on demography, such as the concept of a Second Demographic Transition (van de Kaa, 2004), adopt a sedentarist perspective and have ignored the role of human mobility. Secondly, the demographic literature tends to be both fragmentary and lacks an active perspective on the roles of time–space and relationality. The conceptual framework proposed here addresses these shortcomings and maps a new suite of research questions that merit exploration.

Before proceeding further, it is important to discuss a few key terms and to narrow the range of material that the paper claims to evaluate. Firstly, it is recognised from the outset that human migration is only one form of mobility and the term is used in an ambiguous way in the literature. Recent scholarship (Cresswell, 2012) makes it very clear that movement is not the same as mobility, and that if we consider every physical move either as migration or mobility, then the terms become meaningless (Adey, 2006). In this paper, the focus is on understanding residential mobility and other migrations across the life course. We limit discussion to moves involving a relocation of place of normal residence for periods ranging from months to years. Secondly, although we exclude from our paper many of the fascinating research findings emerging from the so-called mobility turn (Urry, 2007) arising in

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relation to moves that are part of a person's daily routine or involving limited duration relocation such as vacationing, we take from recent thinking about mobilities (Killick, 2012) the important concept of 'mobility as a relationship through which the world is lived and understood' (Adey, 2010: 270). In the case of the current paper, this understanding is hugely valuable in relation to understanding migration across the life course as something that is structured by wider processes shaping society. The overall motivation therefore is to conceptualise how this kind of thinking enlightens our understanding of the changing nature and meanings of residential mobility and other migrations across the life course.

The paper commences by mapping some key changes in perspective that have been adopted by researchers studying migration. It then considers the opportunities offered in population studies to advance the understanding of the links between migration and the life course through the use of longitudinal research methods. Discussion then turns to introducing a conceptual framework for analysing migration within population studies, before concluding with some exemplars of the research issues that might usefully be addressed.

LONGITUDINAL PERSPECTIVES ON MIGRATION AND MOBILITIES

Over time there have been several profound switches of perspective in migration and mobilities research (Fig. 1). Use of the term 'mobilities' signals the emergence of a 'movement driven' social science (Urry, 2007: 43) in which a new significance was found from studying

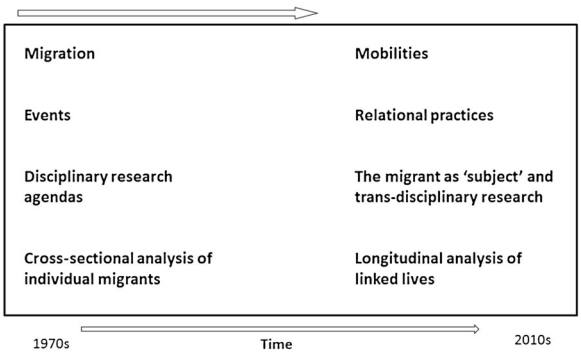

Figure 1. Changing perspectives on migration/mobilities and demographic change.

interdependent mobilities, potential mobilities (motility), and virtual mobilities. For demographic studies, what is arguably most important about this is that mobilities (including migration) have become understood as relational. Rather than migration being analysed as an 'event' at one point in time affecting a single decision maker, there has been increasing acknowledgement that movement is relational, linking lives over time and space (Bailey, 2009; Stone *et al.*, 2014). The linked-lives perspective recognises mobility as relational – relational between groups of people (e.g. the linked lives of people in a household that move together but with the moving desires of members of the household varying from one another), relational between movers and non-movers (those left behind and those in communities at the migrant's destination), relational between migrants and those with power and resources in the housing and labour markets, relational between the individual mover and the institutions to which she/he is linked (the transnational employer, the international banking system, and the pension scheme), and relational between the migrant and those in the state who govern mobility (Boyle *et al.*, 2009; Coulter *et al.*, 2012; Scott, 2013).

Analysis of mobilities has witnessed a shift away from disciplinary imperialism. Not only have the disciplinary 'capitals' fallen in response to recognition of the socially constructed nature of knowledge, but interdisciplinary research on migration has been embraced within a wider reframing of what is understood as the nature of 'research'. This has involved a change in research praxis from positioning migrants as 'out there' (Law, 2004) to be analysed, to a contemporary emphasis on understanding migrants being produced as 'subject'.

A final change of perspective identified by Figure 1 has been the switch away from cross-sectional investigation in favour of longitudinal analysis of mobility. The ability, using large-scale longitudinal datasets (involving many repeated contacts with the same individual/household over time), to explore 'linked lives' within a household (and beyond) has resulted in the possibility of revealing many new mobilities (Baltagi, 2008; Buck & McFall, 2011; Long, 2011). Longitudinal datasets offering insights at both the individual and grouped levels (households) have allowed a diversity of 'linked lives' to be

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researched (of husbands and wives, of parents and children, of siblings, of unmarried partners, of same sex couples, of separated and divorced couples, and others). Thus in place of studying household migration as a collective outcome, the possibility of tracing the movement over time of individuals living in relationship to others in a family, or other household context (Berthoud & Gershuny, 2000), has presented the possibility of researching some of the social practices underpinning 'intimate mobilities' (Blossfeld *et al.*, 2012; Holdsworth, 2013). For the social scientist, researching mobility as an outcome of relational living has therefore become a very exciting possibility. This is true, not only in the context of residential mobilities and the family (Coulter & Scott, 2015), but also in relation to other types of linkages between the individual and the employer.

Longitudinal surveys have allowed detailed consideration of the timing of migration in relation to demographic characteristics such as age, cohort, and period effects. Figure 2 adapts Feijten's (2005) schema of the nature of timed events (temporary, lasting, leading, lagged, and anticipated) in relation to mobility. The diagram adds to earlier conceptions (Blossfeld & Mills, 2001) in two ways. Firstly, it reinforces the observation (aforementioned) that migration is usually not a one off 'event' either in terms of time or space. In spatial terms, it may be oscillatory, as in some transnational households moving back and forth between households that are spread across countries (King *et al.*, 2014), or as in the complex inter-regional movements of couples living in long-distance relationships (Reuschke, 2010). Other complex movements include the multiple residential mobilities of students in the early stages of entering the labour market, which Sage *et al.* (2013) have shown to involve multiple temporary relocations between place of study, parental home, and residence close to a new place of employment. Equally, one can imagine skilled transients with a partner recorded as living in one global city, but with short-term relocations to multiple other global cities for work assignments of varying durations. Secondly, Figure 2 signals the potential of researching not only the effects of demographic and economic events (such as divorce, widowhood, and redundancy) on migration (Feijten & Mulder, 2002; Feijten & van Ham, 2013), but also using longitudinal data to explore emotions (such as happiness) and social practices in relation to mobility (Nowok *et al.*, 2013).

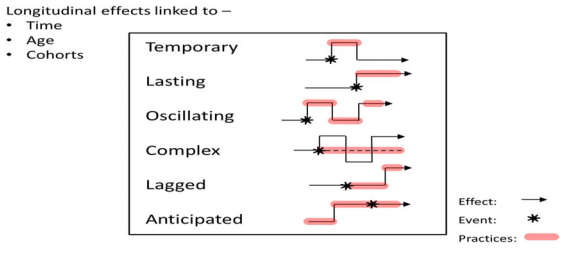

Figure 2. Mobility through a longitudinal lens. (Source: adapted from Feijten, 2005)

Our purpose is not to rehearse once again the diverse and emerging research field arising from work on the timing of migration in relation to ageing (Malmberg *et al.*, 2010). However, it is useful to offer a few exemplars of work that has begun to show the significance within population studies of longitudinal research on *age*, *cohort*, and *period* effects on mobility (although in practice these effects are often more complicated to tease out even with high-quality longitudinal data). The propensity of members of a population to migrate has long been recognised to change with age as captured in model age migration schedules (Rogers & Castro, 1981). Cohort effects capture the commonalities of experience of similar people, for example, those born at the same time and experiencing the same structural effects on their mobility. By contrast, period effects on mobility affect people of any age living in a particular time phase, such as a recession, which may exhibit distinctive mobility responses to the structural forces operating at that time. Figure 3 shows in a schematic fashion the

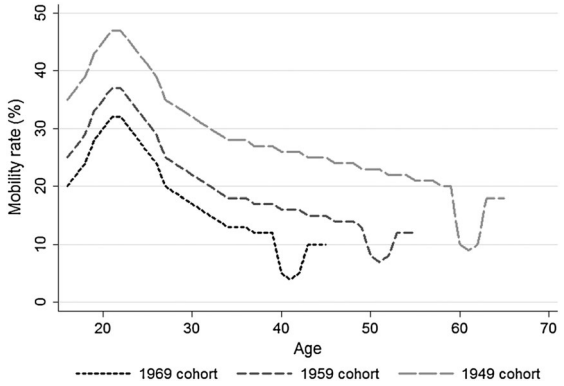

Figure 3. Age, cohort, and period effects on mobility rates.

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potential mobility rate outcomes of combined age, cohort, and period effects. For each of the three cohorts born in 1949, 1959, and 1969, higher mobility rates are observed during the late teens and early twenties as people leave their parental home for education, work, or marriage (Coulter & Scott, 2015). With ageing, mobility rates drop for each cohort. The diagram also shows that later cohorts have lower mobility than earlier ones, while the period effects of say a recession is shown schematically to impact all three cohorts, creating a distinctive nick in mobility rates below the 'normal trend'. If time were plotted on the horizontal access instead of age, then the 'nicks' would be vertically aligned for each cohort.

Evidence of cohort effects include Lundholm's (2007) use of Swedish data to examine the effects of having children in inhibiting residential migration, with longer distance commuting becoming more likely over time. Meanwhile, period effects have been suggested by Dunford and Fielding (1997) to account for variations in mobility rates within the UK, with downturns in the housing market associated with periods of higher in-migration to the South East, while during boom periods Fielding (2012) observed net out-migration from this region. Currently, much research is underway to explore period effects linked to the impact of the Great Recession that commenced in 2008. Most researchers have only undertaken repeated cross-sectional analysis to examine the effect on migrant behaviour of a labour or housing market affected by recession (such as the effect on mobility of the greater propensities to become unemployed or to experience wage effects). Interestingly, Vargas-Silva (2014) suggests that British highly skilled workers have been more sensitive to the effects of the economic downturn than has been the case for equivalent foreign nationals working in the UK. Work remains to be completed to fully reveal the period effects of the Great Recession on mobility using longitudinal analysis.

A FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYSING DEMOGRAPHICALLY LINKED DRIVERS OF POPULATION MOBILITY

The preceding section has introduced the conceptual basis for proposing a new framework, with a distinctive demographic focus, for analysing mobility in a longitudinal fashion. Others such as Fielding (2012) have proposed economic schema for investigating mobility over time from an economic perspective, with parallel strands relating to the business cycle and longer-term shifts in economic organisation. Our argument is that no equivalent schema exist that privilege the analysis of mobility relative to demographic time frames.

While any framework is limited by its ontological and epistemological bases, Fielding's schema has the distinctive merit of highlighting the parallel and simultaneous influences of short and longer-term economic effects on mobility. The schema challenges researchers to disentangle cyclical effects from structural forces (such as changing spatial divisions of labour and deeper and longer run cultural–economic trends), but it excludes the life course and geo-demographic dimensions of mobility. Drawing inspiration from Fielding (2012), Figure 4 privileges the demographic by placing the life course at the heart of population mobility studies. It proposes three levels of conceptual engagement. A distinction is made between (a) the changing nature of the life course and its influence on mobility, (b) the links between life course mobility and changing socio-economic structures, and (c) the multiple economically embedded time–space contexts within which new population mobilities are emerging. The framework suggests that migration trends can be charted through historical time (horizontal axis), while indicating that the three different levels involve parallel and interwoven processes affecting the linked lives of individuals and households embedded in spatial and socio-economic structures operating at regional and global scales. The following sections briefly discuss each of the three levels.

Mobility and the Life Course

The life course has been defined as 'an age graded sequence of socially defined roles and events that are enacted over historical time and place' (Elder *et al.*, 2003: 15). Much sociological research assumes that in the mid-twentieth century, the life course in Western society was organised in a remarkably linear fashion with individuals passing through a series of life stages (Rossi, 1955) starting at birth, spending childhood and the adolescent years in the parental home, before leaving home for marriage, or proximity to employment. It anticipated that early

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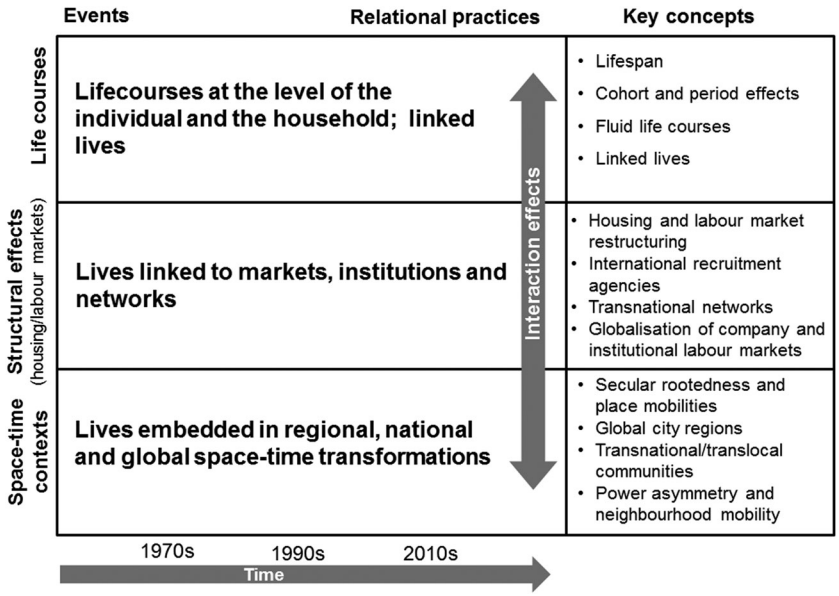

Figure 4. Demographically linked drivers of population mobility.

married life would be followed by the birth of children triggering the likelihood of further residential mobility to find accommodation appropriate to family size. The subsequent departure of these children and retirement from work represented later stages in the life cycle. An extensive literature exists that refines these ideas and proposes the replacement of the lifecycle model with a life course approach (Mulder & Hooimeijer, 1999; Clark *et al*., 2006).

The seminal contribution of Elder *et al*. (2003) to life course theory recognises five principles (the *lifespan*, *human agency, time and place*, *timing*, and *linked lives*) that explore the relation between mobility and the multiple transition in roles (and sometime reversals) that occur across the life course. We choose to discuss each of the principles in more detail in the succeeding text for two reasons. Firstly, Elder *et al.* (2003) gave surprisingly little attention to the mobility dimensions of the life course, and secondly, we stress these principles because they underpin fundamental demographic research issues that need to be evaluated with a stronger evidence base. We illustrate in the succeeding texts some migration and mobility questions that arise from thinking about each of the principles.

Rising life expectancy, in lengthening the *lifespan*, has not only introduced more years in the latter part of the life course for residential relocations to take place in relation to people's leisure desires, as well as moves associated with adjustments to the vulnerabilities of the ageing body, but it has also led to questions about the role of migration and other mobilities in maintaining links between the generations across the extended lifespan (Lundholm & Malmberg, 2009). Elder *et al*. (2003) also consider the lifespan in terms of personal developmental issues, emphasising that development does not end at age 18 years, and calling for research on the importance of different geographical contexts on an individual's development. By implication, they point to the interesting research question of whether migration between different environments impacts on well-being and longevity, thus, positioning migration as a causal force in demographic change and not, as is usually argued, a response to life course change. To some extent, researchers (Boyle *et al*., 2002; Halliday & Kimmitt, 2008) have begun to explore differences in the physical and emotional well-being of migrants and non-migrants, but much remains to be carried out in fully developing an understanding of the role of migration in the uneven 'accumulation of experiences, resources and vulnerabilities' (Bailey, 2009: 411) across the life course (Stockdale & Catney, 2014).

In terms of *human agency*, Elder *et al*. (2003: 11) point to the idea that 'individuals construct their own life course'. This has been applied within some areas of sociology (e.g. the sociology of

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youth) in the form of the concept of choice biography, which has its genesis in the work of the luminary Ulrich Beck (1992). In this approach, there is a distinction made between normal and choice biographies (Denzin, 1989). Normal biographies refer to the linear, and relatively predictable, move through the life course (e.g. from youth to adulthood), which was seen to have characterised most of the trajectories of those born in the baby boom. In contrast, choice biographies are seen to emerge in contemporary societies as more of the individual's biography becomes open to 'choice' and is therefore in need of being constructed personally (Woodman, 2009).

The relative significance of human agency in migration is a matter that has been debated to some extent relative to ideas about structuration (Halfacree, 1995), but the availability of rich new longitudinal datasets opens the prospect of evaluating more fully than ever before the determining influence of the neighbourhoods within which people live on their subsequent migrations and life trajectories, as opposed to the effects of human agency within the 'structuration engines' (Coulter *et al*., 2013) of residential mobility or career migration.

Because *time and place* is a principle addressed directly in Figure 4 in terms of how the life course is embedded historically and geographically, we do not discuss this further here, but turn to the principle of *timing*. The most obvious significance of the second demographic transition (van de Kaa, 2004) for the study of migration has been that it has changed the timing and nature of mobility in relation to transitions from one household state to another. Longitudinal data present the opportunity to discover whether the changing meanings of home, family, pregnancy, and parenthood relative to residential mobility produce different outcomes in the later life course. Moreover, researchers have recognised that it is not just the timing of migration in relation to life course transitions that matters but also the sequencing, and that a change in sequencing fundamentally affects the meaning of a particular migration move. There is potential to explore this further through using biographical methods to elicit deeper understandings of the multiple meanings of mobility (Beck, 1992; Findlay & Li, 2007).

Explanation of the decision of whether or not to migrate has involved analysis of *linked lives* (Bailey, 2009). This has focused attention on how people within a household negotiate from different age, gender, and class positions the relative desirability of residential migration. Coulter *et al*. (2013) provide an extensive literature review of the implications of this for researching residential mobility and this ground is not rehearsed again here.

Others have looked at the effects of the spatial mismatch between where people live and where jobs are available and have shown how neoclassical labour economics has had to be adapted to explain which individuals (in terms of age, gender, marital status, and family composition) are likely to move to enter the labour market or for later career advancement within a national labour market (van Ham, 2002). Moreover, in parallel with the shift from the assumptions of the traditional household with a single male wage-earner to households with multiple earners and complex multiple labour market links, it has been increasingly recognised how complicated are the decisions about household relocation following opportunities for career progression for the highest earning household member (Raghuram, 2004).

Not only are decisions about labour-market-motivated mobility negotiated between the linked lives of household members, but they are also structured by the decisions of significant actors such as employers and recruitment agencies. At the level of links to the employer and labour market, Scott (2013) has observed how an employer-led perspective on labour migration has helped to deepen the understanding of the significance of sectoral specialisation and the intensification of production (Rogaly, 2008). Others have explored the link between international labour migration and the life course. For example, Trevena *et al*. (2013) in researching the internal mobility of Polish migrants in the UK have found, perhaps not surprisingly, that those without children are more mobile than those with children (especially in school). Moreover, Trevena *et al.* (2013) show how the likelihood of internal migration by international migrants declines over time as a result of the achievement of a transition to secure jobs and longer-term stable accommodation. In spite of these examples, life course theory concepts (such as roles, transitions, trajectories, and turning points) remain to be fully applied in many areas of migration research.

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In summarising this level of engagement, we have mapped a shift from researchers analysing a single migration event, to adopting life course theory to explore the fluidity of modern day mobility trajectories. Moreover, the possibility of studying linked lives has ushered in an era when migration researchers can operationalise in a new way the relational nature of migration and its association with a range of social practices.

Migration and Structural Change

Mobile lives are linked not only to increasingly fluid life courses, but they are also associated with work, study, and residential behaviour with other socio-economic contexts that are driving changes in mobility (Fig. 4). This fluidity of life courses has been accentuated by national and structural changes that have allowed free movements of individuals across certain state boundaries (e.g. within the European Union). Given the tendency to privilege residential migration in the examples chosen in the previous section we focus here on migration linked to temporal changes in the labour market (although other arenas such as student mobility also reflect structural influences such as the globalisation of higher education; Brooks & Waters, 2011).

An important starting point in analysing how migration may evolve in relation to labour market change is the observation that in most Western societies, there is not a single integrated labour market but many sub-markets 'hierarchically structured by location and by class, gender, ethnicity and age' (Fielding, 2012: 98). For example, Scott (2013) notes how sectoral differences in sub-markets produce uneven geographies of employment for low-wage international labour, while Giulietti *et al*. (2013) have analysed whether methods of employment search (in particular, finding jobs through links to local social networks) vary between migrant groups and domestic labour.

Turning to the issue of labour market change over time, the period effect of short-run boom and bust cycles on labour mobility can now be analysed longitudinally. Within neo-classical economics, it has been hypothesised that during an upturn in the economy, the increase in investment produced by rising demand for labour will result in greater opportunities for labour mobility (including international migration) with the inverse effect during recessionary times. The reality of segmented hierarchically structured labour markets was more complex in terms of the trends observed in internal and international migration (Papademetriou *et al*., 2009; Findlay *et al*., 2010). With national economies experiencing business cycles in different ways because of the distinctive nature and positioning of their economic geographies within the global economy, and with the timing of boom and bust being geographically specific, the consequence of the Great Recession has been the production of a diverse set of migration flows, some back to locations of origin and others onward to other international labour markets (Jeffery & Murison, 2011).

While most research on migration and the business cycle has focused on the demand for migrants in relation to national economic trends, it is equally important to recognise the importance of labour markets operating at other scales. For example, the importance of specific labour market shocks is commonly observed in terms of sudden increases in unemployment rates and the impact this has on migration duration and return decisions (Bijwaard *et al*., 2014). Also, individual migrants may be linked to short-run oscillations in demand by the processes operating within the internal labour markets of transnational companies as they shift their staff from place to place in relation to changing economic circumstances. Others note the changing significance across the business cycle of sourcing migrants through the operation of gangmasters and international recruitment agencies (Findlay & McCollum, 2013; McGhee *et al*., 2013).

The wider economic restructuring of employment from a regional sectoral division of labour to a new spatial international division of labour has had huge effects in producing the patterning of both internal and transnational migrants observed in the modern world. Once again our purpose here is not to rehearse debates that have been the subject of many journal papers describing the shift from mass migration for an era of Fordist mass production (Castles, 2010; Skeldon, 2012) to the new mobilities that were to follow. These emerged on the one hand from the globalisation of production involving the planned transnational separation of labour tasks, and on the other, the expansion and deepening of new political–economic blocks such as the European Union that

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were to enshrine the right of freedom of movement of labour between member states (King, 2002; McGhee *et al.*, 2013). The consequences of these new mass migrations for the families of those involved both at origin and destination have been profound. As Trevena *et al.* (2013) have shown, the dislocation has often involved multiple moves not only between countries but within countries as migrants adjust to local labour and housing market opportunities.

Recent socio-economic restructuring has therefore resulted in many new mobilities (in some cases hyper-mobilities) especially amongst younger cohorts of the population (Favell, 2009). At the same time as facilitating significant flows of labour within economic blocs such as the European Union, international political groupings have also added to the efforts of nation states to regulate (often to severely restrict) legal labour immigration from other destinations (such as from the majority world of less wealthy nations). Some would argue that these efforts have done little more than to produce flows of illegal migration (Anderson & Ruhs, 2010) and to distort migration flows by encouraging those motivated to move to enter Western democracies by other channels (such as asylum).

Fielding (2012) recognises a deeper and longer run level of cultural and economic changes that also impacts on migration over the long run. He points, for example, to the slow decline of the West with the end of the empire and the decline of the West's economic dominance of transnational trade and global production systems (Held & McGrew, 2007). In place of traditional expatriates, there is the emergence of the new capitalist class (Sklair, 2001). In parallel, he notes the rise of the East and of the BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India, and China) economies and the effect of their increasing economic and demographic power in reshaping flows not only at a global scale but in relation to the flow of an international service class in and out of global cities (including those located in Western economies).

Space–Time Contexts

The third principle of Elder *et al.* (2003) was defined as 'the principle of time and place'. They noted that the 'lifecourse of individuals is embedded and shaped by the historical times and places they experience over their lifetime' (Elder *et al.*, 2003: 12). Given the prominence given to place with their schema, it is surprising to find that other prominent accounts of life course perspectives omit the place and space dimension altogether and indeed give little attention to migration across the life course. The well-known text on the lifecourse by Hutchison (2010), reports on the work of Elder *et al.* (2003) but reduces the analysis to four principles, excluding space and place from her conceptualisation. By contrast, Figure 4 locates the life course relative to historically specific socio-economic structures (second level), as well as the spatially embedded nature of the life course (third level). This third layer is important because not only does it recognise that mobility across the life course is relational (relative to power relations within the linked lives of the household) and the historical location of migration relative to the key socio-economic and cultural phases impacting on any given lifespan (level 2), but that it is relationally relative to geographical understandings of space (Bailey, 2005). Thus, space needs to be considered as an active context rather than a passive property associated with mobilities across the life course. Not only have the space–time contexts of mobilities been transformed by processes of time–space convergence, time–space compression, and distanciation, but the interpretation of mobilities needs to be read through a relational understanding of the uneven meanings of mobility reported by different actors and in different places. Moreover, researchers engaging in studies of the space–time contexts of new mobilities need to recognise their roles in the co-construction of the societies and spaces (Little, 2014) that they are studying.

A few examples serve to illustrate the significance of this third level of engagement. Even if space were understood to be a passive force, with geographical boundaries being no more than defining lines around the empty containers of the spatial dimension of society, there would still be worth in undertaking a comparative analysis of population change in general and migration in particular. This would highlight, for example, how differences between states in the way that resources are distributed, and in the way that society is governed, influence demographic events

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and processes. One would expect to find significant contrasts, for example, between the frequency and nature of population mobility in countries such as the UK, Sweden, and the Netherlands simply because of the distinctive ways that these countries have constituted the relations between the family, the welfare state, and the economy. Indeed, the skill type of a migrant is affected not only by immigration laws but also by the generosity of the welfare state (Razin & Wahba, 2015). A major challenge in undertaking this comparative type of research remains. This is the very different basis in which movement data are defined and collected in each country (Bell *et al*., 2015).

Most researchers would recognise that space is not passive, but active. Population movements are embedded in a spatial context that is constantly changing and doing so unevenly. For example, improved travel technologies have continued to change the threshold defining the break point between residential migration and commuting opportunities (Lundholm, 2007), thus redefining the desirability of residential migration relative to other mobilities. This change has not happened evenly across space with greater investment in improved transportation in large urban centres and in core economic regions, with rural and peripheral areas being less favoured. Over time, electronic media and the world wide web have also enabled new virtual mobilities to substitute for some physical moves (Verne, 2014), but once again these changes have transformed certain more economically favoured places in Western societies more rapidly than less connected parts of the majority world. Even within the favoured locations that are best served by telecommunications, access has been uneven with a digital divide emerging in many Western societies (with the elderly and the less well-off falling on the wrong side of this divide). It is in this context that hypotheses such as the idea that secular society is increasingly rooted (Cooke, 2011) needs to be explored, because not all members of society have the same opportunities to fulfil their mobility and immobility desires. Simultaneously, the redefining of social roles (e.g. in relation to gender and parenting, or ageing and intergenerational care relationships) within the close and extended family have changed the timing and significance of mobility–life course relationships, but they have carried out so unevenly between social groups and between different communities (Stockdale & Catney, 2014). In summary, space has not only been an active force in shaping mobility–life course relationships simply because society is spatially constituted, but it has also been the arena through which the asymmetries of power relations have been played out (in terms of the structuring influence of gender, class, and race).

The intersectionality of gender, race, and class in relation to mobility merit wider review, but within the scope of this paper it is only possible to note, for example, that research now confirms that in the UK the mobility of ethnic groups has changed significantly over time in relation to their positioning in housing and labour markets (Finney & Simpson, 2009; Finney, 2011). A key question remains as to how powerful residential neighbourhoods are in shaping people's life opportunities, and consequently the importance of neighbourhoods in determining the likelihood and destinations of moves in the housing and labour markets (van Ham *et al*., 2013). Changing scale, similar questions might be asked of the role of inter-regional migration in enhancing social mobility (and inversely of immobility in hampering opportunities for self improvement). While the so-called escalator region effect has been noted as significant both in the UK and Sweden in relation to in-migration to their capital cities in accounting for regional differences in upward occupational mobility (Fischer & Malmberg, 2001; van Ham *et al*., 2012), work remains to be carried out to identify whether similar spatial effects can be identified for metropolitan centres at lower levels in the urban hierarchy (Champion & Shuttleworth, 2014; Champion *et al*., 2014) and to establish the effect of interactions between international and internal migration in relation to this effect.

Power asymmetries are perhaps nowhere as evident as in the spatial context of the global city. Spatial analysis of ethnic niches in the labour markets of global cities have been re-theorised as part of a new 'migrant division of labour' (May *et al*., 2007; Wills *et al*., 2010). In the landmark study of London by Wills *et al*. (2010), the gendered, ethnic, and class dimensions of this are recognised, but research on the 'relational lives' of the migrants remains limited, and this is true both relative to the other parts of the world from which the migrants have come and also

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relative to mobilities of the host population served by the migrants. If research on mobility in relation to the power asymmetries evident in the global city provides a large canvas for future research (Walsh, 2014), even more remains to be carried out on topics such as transnational localism and transnational ruralism as key dimensions in understanding the place-based nature of the meanings given to mobility.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The main purpose of this paper was to establish a new conceptual framework for the analysis of population mobility across the life course, in order to deepen the geographical understanding of the significance of demographic processes such as the second demographic transition. It has been argued that longitudinal analysis of demographic concepts (such as age, cohort, and period effects) reveals the increasing fluidity of life courses. These in turn are both made possible by, and also produce, new mobilities (both locally and internationally). It has also been noted that the sociospatial contexts of people's lives affect the timing, frequency, and meanings associated with mobility and it is in this context that many of the papers on the topic published in *Population, Space and Place* (including those in this Special Issue of the journal) contribute to significantly advancing this field of study. Mobility is therefore better conceptualised not only when longitudinal associations with mobility are made across the life course, but also across time–space in relation to the structures that govern key social practices.

In the absence of a conceptual framework such as this, it is all too easy for research effort to dissipate and for individual studies of the new mobilities produced by, and producing, population change in Western societies to end up being no more than a few extra case studies scattered across the burgeoning academic literature on the topic. By contrast, acceptance of the three-level schema (Fig. 4) points to:

(a) the need to recognise the importance of holding simultaneously in view life course moves and other time-linked drivers of mobility ranging from short-run cyclical economic processes to medium-term economic restructuring, to longer-term shifts in cultural/economic values,
(b) the value in recognising how events and processes operating in one arena (e.g. increasingly fluid life courses) interface with other drivers of change (e.g. hypothesised tendencies towards increased secular rootedness), and
(c) the desirability of considering the forces responsible for producing changes in migration trajectories in different locations (e.g. cross-national comparisons), where space and place are interpreted as having ontological significance and are not treated purely as 'containers' within which demographic processes unfold.

The conceptual framework proposed in this paper leads to a range of specific research questions as outlined below. The list of six questions is not intended to be a comprehensive one. Instead, the questions are illustrative of how key ideas reported in Figure 4 could be evidenced:

(1) *Fluid life courses*: Is there evidence that destandardisation of the life course has affected the timing and frequency of residential mobility? To what extent has destandardisation of the life course affected the timing and frequency of longer distance labour market moves, and to what extent have increased opportunities for transnational mobility operated in the opposite direction in complicating life course trajectories?
(2) *Linked lives*: From the perspective of data that now reveals something of the relationship between mobility and linked lives, can a more nuanced understanding of the drivers and consequences of migration be achieved? For example, in dual earner households moving between regions, what have been the consequences over time in terms of changes in the financial and emotional well-being of each adult member of the household?
(3) *Lives linked to markets, institutions, and networks*: What has been the relative importance of short, medium, and longer-term structural processes in affecting overall levels of mobility for different cohorts and types of individuals in different locations? Why do some international migrants settle, while others move on or return to their countries of origin? What have been the uneven experiences of

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different migrant groups during the recession (in global cities such as London compared with other economic spaces) and to what extent have experiences been shaped by local and national institutions?

(4) *Links to employers and to providers of migrants rights*: Recognising the asymmetry of power relations, how have the interests of key actors such as employers (both large and small) and insurers in mobile workers changed over time? How can the differences in approach to worker mobility and social rights between states be understood (e.g. in relation to contrasting pension and production regimes) and how do these impact on the policy environment?

(5) *Mobility and time–space transformations*: Has the changing nature of the time–space arena resulted in changes in the timing and meanings of new mobility patterns (e.g. for those entrained in complex, oscillating, and itinerant mobility paths such as Polish migrant and non-migrant families in sending and receiving areas)? Is there evidence from longitudinal data of increasing unevenness in secular rootedness/mobility?

(6) *Embedded lives*: What can be learned from a comparative approach that poses the same set of migration-related propositions (e.g. in relation to migrant rights or student mobilities) in several different European countries? In parallel, is it possible to advance longitudinal methods seeking to compare population mobilities over time?

There are many research challenges involved in trying to address these and other questions. There is a need to avoid creating new false binaries as a result of adopting the framework. There is also a need for vigilance to avoid reifying the constructs that are privileged in our research, if we are not simply to end up advocating some new totalising discourse in place of the work that has gone before. These and other challenges should not, however, be an excuse for retreating to an indulgent engagement with small questions that can be answered from the data feast that faces us. Instead, this is a moment of opportunity to make our research count by seeking as researchers committed to demography to advancing the conceptual understanding of the new mobilities evident in contemporary Western society using a multi-disciplinary approach and a longitudinal perspective.

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