

Lifestyle migration: architecture and kinship in the case of the British in Spain

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I, Alesya Krit, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.



Abstract

This thesis explores the phenomenon of lifestyle migration: people mainly in their 50s who move to another country, typically with warmer climate and in some cases less stable economies, to reside there full-time. By using the built environment as a means of analysis, this project explores the different ways in which lifestyle migrants come to interact with the architecture of their houses, reflect through them, and construct a new place they are able to call home. By examining how the migrants come to inhabit their new dwellings, the thesis also reveals the underlying importance of their kinship relations with members of their extended family. It highlights how, by moving away from their families, lifestyle migrants paradoxically come to improve their kin relations, employing the transformative capacity of the move. Additionally, it details the different meanings that lifestyle migrants attach to notions of bequeathing property and how they manipulate these concepts to improve relationships with their partners, at the same time contributing to transnational intergenerational contracts within their wider kinship networks. This thesis is based on ethnographic fieldwork in a community of British lifestyle migrants who reside full-time in southeastern Spain.

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Prologue

Spring 2011. *The Guardian* journalist Duncan Campbell reported his impressions on the life of lifestyle migrants in Spain from the city of Alicante. He gave his article a title 'Most Brits in Spain say no gracias to integration' and further commented: "The popular image of British expats here is of either reclusive retirees watching *EastEnders* on satellite TV, a *Daily Mail* on their lap, glass of cheap wine at their elbow and a full English breakfast in their belly or of boozed-up, drugged-up, football-loving young ravers. Journalist Benny Davis, who writes for the expat paper, *EuroWeekly News*, said [that] Brits tend to live in a bubble. With more and more information available in English, there's less reason to learn Spanish and, as a consequence, less opportunity to understand the local culture. Many residents speak no more than 10 Spanish words in an average week - usually restaurant Spanish - and they pride themselves on 'getting by' " (Campbell 2011).

Chapter 1

Lifestyle migration?

This PhD research in anthropology was inspired by the ambiguity of the new phenomenon of lifestyle migration. People who relocate to another country in search for a better lifestyle is a vaguely defined group, that we to date know relatively little about. The life they lead in the new destination country remains a subject to misinterpretation, in which lifestyle migrants are rarely recognized as full-time residents and often mistaken for tourists or second home owners.

The aim of this study is to shed some light on how lifestyle migrants create a place they are able to call home, how do they interact with the destination environment, how do they redefine it. From the anthropological perspective we tend to define people through the relationships they create and maintain. Hence, the focus of this research would be the different relationships lifestyle migrants maintain and still consider themselves to be a part of while residing in a new environment. British kinship has a reputation of being rather fragmented with high divorce rates and high mobility rates within the country. This study will show how such kinship relationships get acted upon in the context of migration to another country, or as some see it - 'escaping' from the UK.

Material culture analysis will be taken as a mean of examining different activities that lifestyle migrants undertake in the process of settling down in the destination environment. Since almost all of the dwellings bought by lifestyle migrants require renovation, the physical contact with the houses will reveal the dynamics of redefining those relationships.

Therefore, this thesis will contribute to the knowledge of novel ways in which lifestyle migrants recreate a home in the destination community, the different forms of the British kinship that are redefined in those processes, and finally, it will portray the movement of lifestyle migration at a different angle, allowing for better understanding of the phenomenon in general.

To start with, the concept of *lifestyle migration* is usually used to describe a relatively recent trend of millions of people from 'the global north' (northern Europe, northern America, Australia and Japan) who move to other countries usually with warmer climates and in some cases less stable economies in search for a 'better quality of life' (Benson & O'Reilly 2009; D'Andrea 2010; Janoschka 2009; Korpela 2009; Sagaza 1999; Sato 2001). Unlike residential tourists, lifestyle migrants tend to commit fully to their relocation, buying a property in the destination country and residing there more than nine months a year. The direct benefits of such moves usually include more sun, as in the case of Spain (O'Reilly 2000), cheaper healthcare for the elderly, as in Malaysia (Ono 2008) and more rural and remote lifestyles, as in Panama and Costa Rica (Jackiewicz 2010; Janoschka 2011a).

However, despite the straightforward benefits presented above, this group of people who voluntarily choose to relocate to another country is still somewhat ambiguous when viewed in the framework of global migration trends. They are not global business elites who travel the world to find better contracts for their international conglomerates. Nor is their position similar to that of refugees, who face genocide, political oppression or threats to their lives in conflict areas. Moreover, unlike labour migrants, lifestyle migrants lack economic push factors back at home such as poverty and few job opportunities. Employment vacancies and generally higher relative wage rates in the destination country do not seem to be decisive pull factors either. These people are not forced to

provide for their extended families by sending back remittances, nor do they seek to gain better chances for social advancement through marriage. So who are they?

Who is a lifestyle migrant?

What we do know is that the trend of migration in search for a better lifestyle in the modern sense (at this scope) started around the 1980s. A number of scholars specialising in tourism studies have been writing about the major propensities in societies that predisposed these moves. As an underlying motivation for lifestyle migration, Tim Neal (2007) suggested tourism's emerging nature as a membrane. In his opinion, tourism made the landscape static and pre-prepared, which normalised potentially exotic experience. An increase in disposable income, more leisure time and better travelling conditions generated a boom of travel to 'the South' (O'Reilly 2000). The relative availability of package tours changed people's perspectives on moving and created an intimate experience abroad where foreigners could rent out local houses, go to local markets and restaurants, use some of their knowledge of the local languages and, hence, imagine themselves residing in such an environment more permanently.

In the mid-1980s, it had already become clear that the seasonality of the tourism industry had to be supplemented by some other investments in the destination countries to attract visitors during 'out of season' time, which ultimately resulted in the property sales boom (*The Economist* 2008a). Availability and affordability of housing became a tempting combination for many people, who are in retrospect now referred to as early lifestyle migrants.

Apparently, such changes in mobility and lifestyle choices were well anticipated in the 1970s. According to Williams and Hall (2002), emerging trends of that time had suggested a growing distinction between first and second homes and the importance of the latter in the context of lengthening available leisure time and changing the character of work. In such a post-

modernist setting, they argued, nostalgia for real or imagined past lifestyles and landscapes had begun to prevail.

Subsequently, internationally operating estate agencies and the introduction of the Internet made information about foreign housing markets more available (as observed by Gustafson 2009). As for the media, according to the observations of Meyrowitz (1995), a new style of presenting information developed in which the viewer was directly positioned in the presented environment. Such a perspective created the 'presence effect', in which the viewer was presumed to participate in the discovery quest. This new presentation style of information contributed to the creation of pre-constructed forms of social experience, altering what Meyrowitz called the 'situational geography' of social interactions. Moreover, Marilyn Strathern (1999) highlighted this new relationship with such readily available visualisation by defining images as 'meanings made available ... for consumption' (1999: 46).

It became a difficult task for researchers to uncover the exact impact of such newly constructed media and travelling frameworks on lifestyle migrants that would go beyond generalisations. Because of the frequent exposure and deep pervasion of such new notions into the social existence of potential lifestyle migrants, one might only presume the nature of the effect of these newly constructed realities on different lifestyle migrants in their personal understanding of their current lives as well as their life goals.

From a number of studies that have been mainly conducted in the fields of tourism studies and aging studies, researchers such as Michaela Benson and Karen O'Reilly (2009) have been able to discern an increase in the willingness of migrants to lead alternative lifestyles that were also referred to as 'the "good" or "simple" life' (2009:2).

Lifestyle migration is a relatively new phenomenon in its current scope and nature - to separate it from other instances of lifestyle migration throughout the last 150 years, which mostly involved rich aristocrats going to reside in other countries and individual enthusiasts looking for exotic experiences. There is a certain body of various types of research that has been conducted about the phenomenon so far. People moving out of cities to escape the urban noise and

pace of life have been documented by urban researchers and geographers (Hoye 2005, 2006; Janoschka 2011b); enthusiasts buying houses in mountain areas to maintain their hobbies and passion for hiking and hence improve their lifestyles were looked at by geographers like Philippe Bourdeau (2009); pensioners buying second homes on sea coasts to escape cold winters were covered by tourism studies and sociologists (Huber & O'Reilly 2004; Nielsen Nielsen 2009); elderly people seeking cheaper medical care in other countries for a better quality of life were studied by anthropologists like Mayumi Ono (2008, 2010); migrants who moved to warmer exotic countries, such as India, to maintain spiritual lifestyles have been investigated by researchers like Mari Korpela (2009, 2010). Although most of the aforementioned types of moves had a temporary nature, they all shared the underlying ambition to improve one's lifestyle. Therefore, one could argue that these findings are able to shed some light on lifestyle migration as a phenomenon.

Indeed, it has been suggested that the recent search for a better lifestyle mirrors people's reflexive assessment of opportunities that Giddens (1991) identified as only recently made possible, rather than reflecting the direct outcome of relative economic privilege (Benson & O'Reilly 2009:3). Such personalised quests for utopia appeared in the relatively often-mentioned rhetoric of self-realisation, where migrants saw opportunities to recast their identities, distance themselves from mistakes they made and misadventures they had become part of and, in some cases, as Amit (2007) and O'Reilly (2000) argue, turn away from previous personal ties and commitments.

The rhetoric of escapism has also been examined by some scholars (Karisto 2005; Salva Thomas 2005), reflecting on people's willingness to escape from individual and community histories as well as from changing political, social and economic circumstances of their home environments.

In her ethnographic account of retired British people in Spain, Caroline Oliver (2008) highlighted the importance of the transformative potential of the move, which many of her informants were looking forward to: finding an ultimate opportunity for self-realisation, a chance to rediscover oneself and one's 'true' desires. The potentiality of the move seemed to be one of the major aspirations

among lifestyle migrants, as it enabled people to finally embrace their creative spirits and live the lives they had dreamt of. Similarly, Michaela Benson (2009) reported that British people in France viewed themselves as pioneers breaking new ground in undertaking the move to another country. This highlighted their image of themselves as different and fully committed to their aspirations in a way that their countrymen back in the UK might not be.

The transformative potential of the move was also reflected in accounts of migrants who were hoping to restructure their work-life balance so that a better quality of life could be achieved (Benson & O'Reilly 2009:2). Similarly, Benson (2009) and Hoey (2009) drew attention to the therapeutic and restorative capacities of a new environment, as anticipated by the British in the Lot area of France and the Americans in rural Michigan, respectively. Their expectations involved a willingness to restore their health and emotional wellbeing, as well as their faith in personal fulfilment.

In order to obtain a better understanding of who these lifestyle migrants actually were, a number of sociologists undertook the difficult task of trying to classify lifestyle migrants, suggesting certain categories such as age, educational background and household size (King et al. 2000). Using these characteristics in a number of comparative examples, King et al. attempted to outline a 'typical' mover using their dataset on British retirement migration to the Mediterranean countries. Unfortunately, due to a great variety of inner motivations, driving factors, kinship relationships, previous contact with the place, and aspirations, it was impossible to outline certain trends or even statistical coefficients suggesting clear groups of lifestyle migrants.

Similarly, Casado-Díaz et al. (2004) compared qualitative characteristics of British migrants to Tuscany (Italy) and Costa del Sol (Spain). Their findings suggested that the British migrants in Italy had 'the highest levels of education, the best knowledge skills and the closest integration with the host society' (2004:375). Such direct comparison certainly allowed for a general understanding of the trends - what types of people chose specific destination countries (rather, the imaginary of the countries, since their actual experiences were not particularly different regardless of country in many cases). Yet this

comparison did not reveal information about the nature of the experiences that the lifestyle migrants were going through.

Interaction with the destination environment

A number of research studies have expressed concern with the ways in which lifestyle migrants interact with their destination environments. Some of these negative findings have focused upon the consumerist nature of lifestyle migration in cases where a large-scale move demanded an equally large amount of housing stock in a relatively short amount of time. The rush to satisfy potential buyers sometimes resulted in poor planning and execution. Huete et al. (2008) analysed residential tourism's impact on the area of Costa Blanca in southeastern Spain, suggesting that despite the benefit of local councils from high construction taxes and building licences, poor or non-existent development planning was ultimately harmful for the area. Also, because most of the planning was done by private initiatives, such construction was done in the context of high demand and high return with little or no organisation. The poor quality of the resultant housing stock was argued to have more lasting negative effects on the area, as it was only capable of attracting tourists with low purchasing power. Studies by Vera and Ivars (2003) and Yepes and Medina (2005) also raised questions about the ability of destination environments to maintain a high quality of infrastructure, since towns and areas became destinations for mass tourism and, in some cases, lifestyle migration; this had a direct negative impact on local citizens' quality of life (see also Williams & Gill 2004).

The study by Huete et al. (2008) further notes that although local city councils saw immediate economic benefits from having such migrants in their area, the unstable nature of it was quite bothersome. Despite local councils creating a number of jobs in tourism-related services, the lifestyle migrants still tended to have a rather 'domestic' attitude and were less likely to spend money on such services. In that way, they became regular residents who demanded an increased supply of gas and electricity as well as services like education and healthcare.

Besides the urban and geographic concerns reported by researchers, some other negative findings originated from the nature of lifestyle migration. For example, geographer Philippe Bourdeau (2009), in his research on Alpine tourism practices, reported impressions of lifestyle migrants celebrating a continuous vacation or even their 'longest holiday in a lifetime' (2009:30). Such observations led Bourdeau to the postulation of a new period in tourism and travelling, which he called 'post-tourism'. By this, he meant that travellers sought continuity between their holiday practices and their everyday lives back at home. Under such circumstances, new transformations were demanded in which tourist destinations had to be transformed back into 'normal' or 'local' places in order for tourists to encounter life in the region from firsthand experience.

Similarly, Ferrario (2009) looked at 'amenity migrants' – people who bought property in the areas they enjoyed the most and used them as summer or winter houses. Ferrario noted that amenity migrants remodelled the understanding of the 'rural', reinterpreting the surrounding 'leisure landscapes' (2009:113). By engaging with their destination environment, people who relocated to the Eastern Alps area had a great impact on the redevelopment of remote or even abandoned mountain villages. In this way, they had a crucial impact on the notions of rurality in the spaces they came to become residents of (see also Borsdorf 2009).

Other research was carried out that emphasised the central role of power negotiations between the newcomers (lifestyle migrants) and the locals. Fountain and Hall (2002) presented an analysis of one such movement in Akaroa, New Zealand. The small village was redefined as a 'post-productivist' countryside. Locals started seeing it as a 'parody of itself and a playground for the well to do' (2002:162). As the newly arrived lifestyle migrants fashioned themselves as 'guardians' of the village, trying to defend the qualities that had attracted them to the district in the first place, the power relations in the village shifted as well. Moreover, 'on numerous occasions at public meetings, working class locals [were] present but refuse[d] to speak out because of their belief that they [could not] express their ideas as clearly' (2002:163).

Correspondingly, O'Reilly (2002) reported cases of perceived superior attitudes of the British lifestyle migrants who resided in Spain. She noted that these migrants viewed themselves as improving a deprived economy; they complained that the locals were 'so backward in so many ways' (2002:185) and that they could learn from the British migrants. O'Reilly suggested that as the migrants experienced the sudden change in their new environment, they associated themselves with the UK, although this was where they had eagerly moved away from. The migrants suddenly became aware of specifically British characteristics like punctuality, professionalism and respect for animal rights. At the same time, however, O'Reilly reported that the British constantly considered themselves to be guests in the country, so perhaps this association was a way to feel better about one's position in the destination community.

In a different account of the British in Spain, O'Reilly (2000) noticed that many of her respondents were almost living in two different worlds: there was 'constant contradiction between wanting to integrate and yet doing nothing about it; constructing an isolated community yet pretending they are integrated; loving Spain yet being frustrated by it; living in Spain and being like the Spanish yet not really knowing what that means; feeling marginalised yet doing nothing about it; acting ethnically but denying that too' (2000:153).

Moreover, Swedish sociologist Per Gustafson (2001) offered a classification of strategies of managing cultural differences among retired Swedish migrants in Spain. These strategies varied between total assimilation to total disconnection with the destination environment, including *translocal normality*, *multilocal adaptation*, and *routinised sojourning*. However, the author himself admitted that such classifications were mere guidelines and that the actual cases usually exemplified a mixture of different categories. Nevertheless, these characteristics were quite representative of how social scientists think about integration and ways of managing a new environment. Although the study offered interesting groupings of behaviour at the new destination environment, the wide scope of experiences within this study demonstrated a variety of approaches by lifestyle migrants.

In general, however, the studies presented in this section showed a relatively negative image of lifestyle migrants who were willing to remodel their destination environment to their own preferences with little or no interaction with local residents of the areas. This willingness to restructure a different environment could, of course, bring one back to the colonialism argument in which people felt a certain right to impose 'better' knowledge onto indigenous populations. Katie Walsh and Anne-Meike Fechter (2012) came to similar conclusions in their latest book on new expatriates. However, they chose as their subject mobile professionals; their migrants represented knowledge and experience in their professional areas and, hence, could impose the power of superiority. In the case of lifestyle migrants, such intentions were not raised, since in many instances they became 'guests' of the destination countries.

Hence, one could suggest that lifestyle migrants' impact on destination environments was not necessarily negative, but ambiguous in many ways. This was especially so given the unspecified roles of lifestyle migrants: they were not just visitors or tourists, since they had purchased their houses; many worked part-time and their children went to local schools. Nor, however, were they locals or residents, as they had no voting power or official recognition by the state, from which they were unable to demand social security and protection from unemployment.

The previously outlined studies suggested that the individual was at the centre of the move to relocate somewhere new and different. Migrants' aspirations for the move also seemed to point to the willingness of people to improve themselves as individuals, to finally get out and become mobile – become free.

Being mobile – being free

Productive nature of mobility and the necessity to part with the place of origin in order to recreate self in a different environment has been often observed in anthropology (for example see Carsten & Hugh-Jones 1995), and hence, hardly could be claimed to be a uniquely modern phenomenon. Nevertheless, a modern discourse of mobility as a liberating experience could be argued to

have its profound influences not only on the ways in which lifestyle migrants think about themselves, but also academics when they analyse different migratory movements. Therefore, I would argue that such discourse of mobility should be examined when addressing lifestyle migration.

In the last century, the idea of movement and migration has changed quite dramatically not only in scope but also in nature: 'People are on the move both globally and locally as never before, changing traditional framings of... community' (Carrington 2002:117). In their study of global movements, Castles and Davidson (2000) outlined the major changes that 'a migrant' had gone through in the last fifty years. According to them, people who decide to move nowadays are not likely to be willing to join the host culture, although they are subject to economic and social forces. In fact, Castles and Davidson went as far as to suggest the existence of a new layer of citizenship above that of the nation – 'the citizen who does not belong' (2000:157). Their implications were based on observations of the emergence of a new type of multi-ethnic societies within nation-state borders practically everywhere.

Such an abstract notion of 'the traveller' instantly became an attractive research subject for those social scientists defending their assumptions about late-modern societies, liquid modernity and cosmopolitanism (Giddens 1991; Baumann 2000; Beck 2006). Additionally, these 'movers' became the embodiment of new notions of culture, which according to Tim Cresswell (2006) 'no longer sits in places, but is hybrid, dynamic - more about routes than roots' (2006:1). Analysing the latest trends of mobility in the modern Western world, Cresswell observed 'the end of sedentarism and the rise of foundationless nomadism' (ibid.).

Arjun Appadurai (1996) connected the rupture between the pre-modern and modern stages with new developments in media and technology that changed the notions of movement. He suggested that these changes produced a new form of imagination that became a 'constitutive feature of modern subjectivity' (1996:3). This was a means of questioning modern subjectivities and relating them to abstract notions of time and space, which became very evident with the global shift to Internet and transportation technologies. People started to travel

to different continents in a matter of hours and to cyberspace in a matter of minutes - even travelling to space became a reality. Boundaries were shifted, and people started to position and relate themselves along these newly constructed axes.

However, the actual notion of mobility is a complex one. Cresswell (2006) reflected on current research suggesting that mobility is sometimes unspecified, evoking 'a kind of blank space that stands as an alternative to place, boundedness, foundations, and stability' (2006:2). Instead, he argued that mobility was the geographical imagination that transformed the mere act of movement. This imagination took the form of personal mental maps that people created and the specific knowledge they had of interaction with a number of spaces and times.

Similarly, David Delaney (1999) suggested that mobility implicated both physical bodies moving through material landscapes and categorical figures moving through representational spaces. These were culture-specific understandings of the importance of categories of movement that mattered the most.

According to Cresswell (2006), the meanings of mobility that are pervasive in the modern Western world are mostly positive. Mobility is associated with progress, freedom, opportunity and modernity, as well as nonconformity and resistance. From a historical perspective, mobility was viewed as a right in Europe at the beginning of modernity: a citizen could travel within the borders of the nation-state at his or her own will. Furthermore, the idea of the Grand Tour became popular, in which wealthy young men would set out on an extended voyage as a tourist around Europe. Thus, mobility gave social and cultural power, as new tourists, or people who were mobile, depended on the relative immobility of those who provided them with service during their leisure trips. Those who were 'stuck' in the picturesque villages of the South, together with women who held direct responsibility for care of children and households, were associated with something 'rooted, based on foundations, static, or bounded... reactionary, dull, and of the past' (Cresswell 2006:25). This was quite ironic, considering that often in Britain women were the 'mobile'

parts of societies: through marriages and 'exchanging' women different alliances were formed. Nevertheless, this impression stood in opposition to the fluid and dynamic characteristics of the exciting contemporary mobile lives.

Being 'uprooted', however, modern migrants caused a threat to the order and control of governmental offices and other bureaucratic organisations. James Scott (1998) noted that modern states became preoccupied with ordering and disciplining those mobile subjects. Migrants, together with gipsies, refugees, and asylum seekers, were a constant source of anxiety to the state. They were labelled 'amoral' and 'without any sense of personal or social responsibility' because of their lack of attachment to any specific community. As Malkki (1992) put it, '[t]hey no longer feel themselves bound by ethical precepts which every honest citizen... respects. They become a menace, dangerous characters who will stop at nothing' (1992:32).

In the case of lifestyle migration, governments of the 'sending' countries had difficulty in defining their relationships to people who moved. Although they no longer lived in their home country, many lifestyle migrants had once lived there for decades, paid their taxes and contributed to their communities in many different ways. It was difficult for local governments to justify to their current voters why enormous segments of their budgets on pensions and heating allowances were spent on people who had made a conscious decision to leave their home countries.

On the other hand, the 'receiving' countries had difficulty keeping track of people who moved into their second houses for a few months instead of for the anticipated short summer vacation. Moreover, a large number of people relocated full-time, creating unanticipated demand for healthcare and schooling for children as well as an infrastructure for gas and electricity. This became especially problematic in rural areas where locals used to live only part-time, using houses for farming or recreational purposes. Lifestyle migrants moving into houses full-time further complicated the situation due to the lack of available infrastructure as well as local councils' lack of capacity to help newly arrived residents with their dwellings.

Michel de Certeau (1984) presented an interesting view on nature of modern migratory patterns:

Never in history has distance meant less. Never have man's relationships with place been more numerous, fragile and temporarily. Throughout the advanced technological societies, and particularly among those I have characterised as 'the people of the future', commuting, travelling, and regularly relocating one's family have become second nature. Figuratively we 'use up' places and dispose of them in much the same way that we dispose of Kleenex or beer cans. We are witnessing a historic decline in the significance of place in human life. We are breeding a new race of nomads, and few suspect quite how massive, widespread and significant their migrations are (1984:29).

Despite not being on the move all the time, it can certainly be argued, given the research presented in the first part of this chapter, that lifestyle migrants operate under principles of flexibility, making it possible for them to characterise the move as 'exciting' and 'making one free'. However, one could begin to wonder if notions of fluidity and, hence, the ability to change one's life circumstances were just an underlying idea of the move. Moreover, one could question the significance of notions of fluidity in the actual lives of lifestyle migrants in their new destination environments.

Reconsidering lifestyle migration: is it really about being fluid?

Lifestyle migration could be seen as a result of people's demands for fluidity in their lives. According to Victor Buchli, 'real estate investment... enables the production of "fluid" subjects... within a highly fluid property market and thereby ensure[s] the terms of constantly shifting subjectivity required by late capitalist modernity' (Buchli 2006:263).

Moreover, it is sometimes suggested that flexibility is the key to understanding lifestyle migration (O'Reilly 2002). A global economy based on short-term goals seems to promote 'flexible people' who are always ready to change their jobs

and residences. Such logic is used to explain the movement of lifestyle migrants, who focus on immediate satisfaction such as better climate and lower living costs, recreating an abstract notion of 'home' and relating to it.

However, does new global economy really enable the production of such 'fluid subjects'? Or does it just create an impression that becoming 'fluid' is something that people should easily be able to do without any major changes in ways of thinking about relocation?

The social and psychological aspects of the ability of a person to define him- or herself as 'flexible' could be questioned. In order to better understand the processes in which lifestyle migrants become involved, one could have a look at Christine Geoffroy's 2007 work on mobile contexts and immobile cultures. The author suggests that a potential migrant receives some preliminary visual experience of visiting different countries and is later confronted with the apparent freedom to select between other contexts to live in. However, being highly mobile, a lifestyle migrant sooner or later will feel imbalance between the enduring and the situated self and will need to become connected with some land and belong to it to ground identity; in other words, find the materiality to his or her fluidity. Hence, one could wonder if notions of home actually play an important role in the lives of lifestyle migrants.

The particularly trendy notions of flexibility and escape from the material constraints of capitalist societies do not, in my opinion, fully reflect the nature of lifestyle migration. Without a history of nomadic heritage, these migrants created their own personal notions of travel and the pursuit of their goals in their new destination environment. How they managed to do so, however, is a relatively unknown field that until now has been subject to the speculation of the local tourism councils in destination regions and the tabloids of 'sending' countries. The different factors that were elaborated on by the studies presented earlier in this chapter although quite viable are quite general. From the anthropological perspective it is quite difficult to suggest that all those factors would have the same effect on all lifestyle migrants in different contexts.

Therefore, in this thesis, I would like to address this knowledge gap by looking into the different ways lifestyle migrants create a place they call home in their

new destination environment. How do they see their moves? How do they live with the gaps they have created between their current and previous lives, between them and their family and friends back at home? What are the relationships that define their new existence?

Furthermore, one could question the individualistic nature of the move. Although ideas of personal freedom and search for the true self sound quite viable, in taking an anthropological approach – according to which people are defined through their relationships – one could begin to wonder what those relationships are, how are they formed and what they bring to the lives of lifestyle migrants.

Moreover, relationships in the wider sense might also include the kin networks that people consider themselves to be part of. Unlike labour migratory movements, in which people seek possibilities to maximise income at particular destination environments, lifestyle migration movement is not associated with career planning or the direct improvement of family welfare. Hence, one could wonder how lifestyle migrants relate to their families, if at all.

The notion of transnational families is certainly not new; according to Bryceson and Ulla (2002), they are ‘seemingly capable of unending social mutation’ (2002:3). However, from an academic perspective, it was only some twenty years ago that transnational migration studies began to challenge the premise of discontinuity, recognising that migrants maintained their relationships across borders (see also Baldassar et al. 2007; Bottomeley 1992; Rouse 1991; Schiller & Fouron 2001; Olwig 2002).

Whether it is Turkish families who create widespread child care for the offspring of parents working abroad (Erel 2002), Bosnian migrants in the Netherlands and the UK facilitating their family’s migration out of war-torn communities (Al-Ali 2002), Japanese migrant women in the UK who wrestle with the responsibilities of providing care for their elderly parents back at home (Izuhara & Shibata 2002) or Senegalese migrants in France who send remittances to their families for day-to-day basic needs (Salzbrunn 2002; Kane 2002), all migrants are engaged in the complex process of relationship negotiation, through which they must define the self in such relational terms.

Even in the extreme case of the Philippines, where nine million children under the age of 18 have at least one parent abroad as a migrant labourer (Parreñas 2005:12), mothers living abroad try their best to maintain kin relationships. They try to support their children's welfare by investing in their education and medical support, although in some cases they do not get to witness their children growing up at all.

Bryceson and Ulla (2002) argue that on different levels all migrants consciously and unconsciously work toward making their families succeed as social units. Are lifestyle migrants, then, an exception? Do they constitute a new type of migrant, flexible in their identity negotiations and adaptation to a new reality in which their own experiences are the key to their aspirations? Do they not consider themselves to be part of kinship networks?

Problematizing lifestyle migration through kinship relationships

Ever since the time when kinship was first considered to be the perfect means of an anthropological analysis of genealogical modelling, there has been a constant quest to make sense of the complex kinship fabric present in every known society. One could consider how modern anthropologists define British kinship and how such type of relationships will be further acted upon by the lifestyle migrants who choose to leave the country.

The failure of kinship as a universal genealogical model

In 1910, W.H.R. Rivers published a work, *The Genealogical Method of Anthropological Inquiry* (1968[1910]), which suggested genealogical modelling to be a perfect point of reference for ethnographical comparison. Indeed, by indicating the different ways in which societies structure themselves, one could observe a great variety of kinship memberships influencing social identities.

In suggesting genealogical modelling as a tool for anthropologists, Rivers was in a line of thought first presented by Charles Darwin in his work *The Origin of Species* (2009[1876]). There, Darwin argued that one's social status came from knowing one's ancestors, and that genealogy played an important role as a record of natural relations.

Eventually, Rivers' method became widely accepted within anthropology and other social and natural sciences (Bamford & Leach 2009). It allowed different local ways of social organisation to be examined through blood ties and marital unions. In fact, many scientists went as far as to view kinship as an independently existing analytical domain (Weston 1995:89).

For that matter, kinship was seen as a way of defining societies. In many accounts, historians based their work on the structural accounts of family censuses, creating descriptions of families based on statistics and levels of blood relatedness. The limitation of such a form of kinship analysis was, of course, the fact that scientists were able to produce a number of studies on the families that people lived *with* over the centuries, but not the families they lived *by* – actively interacted with and felt related to (Gillas 1996).

One of the biggest critics of this approach was David Schneider (1968, 1984), who felt that for years, all that anthropologists had done was apply their Euro-American categories to indigenous kinship networks all over the world, not taking the variety of locally constructed types of relatedness into consideration. This critique reflected the decreasing interest in kinship as a means of defining societies, where anthropologists had shifted their focus from structure to practice and from practice to discourse (Carsten 2000).

In the 1990s, however, kinship studies had 'risen from its ashes', according to Schneider and Handler (1995:193). This praise was due largely in part to emerging gay and lesbian kinship studies, feminist writings and research on reproductive technologies (Franklin 1997; Hayden 1995; Strathern 1992; Weston 1991, 1995, to name a few). Analysing stories of those coming out, anthropologists such as Weston (1995) found that their subjects were faced with choices about their kinship belongingness. People saw their blood ties with families as temporary and open for interpretation in the light of their sexuality

and, hence, their possibility of belongingness. These usually disruptive experiences prompted family-like commitments to others to whom they felt more connection than their blood relatives. Hence, the question of kinship was raised again in a new light, where the families that they lived by were 'chosen' rather than 'received by birth'. Notions of depth, commitment and belonging were renegotiated once again; hence, the whole notion of kinship was redefined.

Similarly, in studies of reproductive technologies, the whole concept of natural procreation and relatedness underwent microscopic analysis. People's very roles were blended when the opportunity to choose whom one could be related to appeared on the scientific horizon. People were put in a position to redefine themselves as parents, as family and as fortune-tellers for their kin. Besides the fact that the whole notion of kinship was pulled apart and rethought, a variety of approaches in different cultural contexts allowed one to understand the notions of bodies and connectedness on a completely different level. Hayden (1995) discussed cases in which lesbian co-mothers struggled to give their children names, as they wanted these names to reflect their joint decision to have a child and raise it equally in the way they thought was best. After looking at the different and unexpected ways people understood their kinship, one could suggest that kinship became a means of defining a self and one's personal choices of relatedness.

Such an interpretative attitude toward the understanding of kinship and ways of examining it all over the world heralded the emergence of what Schneider had been advocating for: kinship seen as a socially specific nature of relatedness in a given ethnographic context, not a universal genealogical model.

In her studies of Malays on the island of Langkawi in Southeast Asia, Janet Carsten (1995, 1997) examined the ways in which kinship relations were defined over the years through the exchange of substances and participation in certain rituals. Similarly, Mary Weismantel (1995), in her analysis of Zumbagua adoptions, highlighted unexpected findings about local kinship ties: they were not defined based on biological connection, but rather through social care and the nurturing of children's physical needs. This new approach to a more flexible

understanding of kinship inspired anthropologists like Teresa Holmes (2009) to go back to the Luo people of western Kenya in order to compare their kinship practices with the colonial archival documentation that many kinship policies and practices of the 19th and early 20th centuries were based upon. Her research revealed the incongruity between genealogically based colonial models and documented Luo special practices, where women were just as involved in descent strategies as men; many such practices were much more flexible than originally assumed. A number of studies provided a broader view on kinship, such as Sandra Bamford's 2009 study of the Kamea in Papua New Guinea. Bamford discovered that only children born from the same parents were considered to have kinship relatedness, as they shared 'one blood'; hence, they were not believed to be related to their own parents, as their blood was 'different'. For others, like the people from the Rai coast of Papua New Guinea, kinship was a matter of being connected to the same landscape where one's ancestors cultivated plants and raised animals (Leach 2009). These studies raised awareness of numerous creative ways in which people dealt with the issue of relatedness, which led social scientists to suggest more flexible notions of kinship. These did not only include its culturally based, versatile nature, as in the numerous studies mentioned above, but also reflected its temporally flexible nature: in a given cultural context, depending on the circumstances, kinship could be reconsidered and redefined at any time.

Modern British kinship: flexible or normative?

As has been discussed in the previous section, a view of kinship as the fundamental structure and function of society failed to live up to the expectations of genealogists of the beginning of the 20th century. Instead, anthropologists like Strathern (1992) and Carsten (2000) greatly contributed to the approach of kinship as a process rather than a given set of normative categories. According to Carsten (2000), it is through daily routine that notions of kinship and belonging are developed and lived through nowadays in Anglo-American societies.

Since then, the very notion of kinship has been widely accepted to possess a rather flexible nature. According to Firth et al. (1969), kinship is a set of socially recognised ties between persons because of their genealogical connection of marriage and/or procreation of children (1969:3). However, such connections cannot be regarded in biological terms only, as the intimate union of two people does not presuppose kinship relations; rather, they are created and constantly worked on.

According to Finch and Mason (1993), people decide on an individual basis who belongs to their 'inner circle', and in which circumstances and when such relationships should be activated. Similarly, Rosser and Harris (1965) argue that the concept of 'extended family' in the UK is an enduring social entity that should be understood 'as a variable, amorphous vague social grouping' (1965:288), to which Firth et al. (1970) add that British kinship links are constantly renegotiated and should not be seen as fixed.

Moreover, Firth et al. (1969) suggest that people tend to be quite selective in the implementation of their kin ties and regard them as 'a flow of social behaviour rather than a structural set of positions' (1969:461).

Such findings suggest that modern kinship relations are underlined by a number of vaguely defined expectations of how things *could* work; it is up to people themselves to pick up the ones they really care about at times in their lives that they feel are right. A modern understanding of kinship seems to be based on a set of negotiated relationships that is essentially experimental. It is based on practice rather than guided by given principles.

An alternative opinion on modern kinship has been suggested by Daniel Miller (2007) in his reevaluation of the findings of modern anthropologists like Finch and Mason (2000) and their work on inheritance practices in the UK. Miller highlights the 'almost obsessive concern with kinship as formal and normative' (2007:3) that can be read between the lines of the material presented by Finch and Mason and suggests that there are certain formal expectations of kinship that exist in the UK.

In the example of British inheritance, where people are free to leave their assets to absolutely anyone, the majority of people tend to follow the unspoken norms of 'the right thing to do' (such as leaving assets fairly divided among children irrespective of one's actual personal relationships with them), despite the multiple options they have at hand. Hence, kinship relationships are not demarcated by a flexible definition of actual negotiated relationships, but by following the unspoken idealised norms that in some cases are more prescriptive than any laws.

For example, Finch and Mason (2000) present evidence on flexible kinship relations, suggesting that in families where partners have been previously married, they try to experiment and be flexible with their stepchildren to create closer relations. One could see this example as a creative way of using different types of potential kinship connectedness to achieve a parent-child relationship that could work in that specific situation. However, Miller (2007) suggests that what is actually important is what guides those people in creating a certain parent-child connection. He argues that flexibility is a mean to 'find ways to make a complex situation where the rules are unclear accord with and remain analogous to the basic principles generated by formal kinship' (2007:4). In the aforementioned case, stepparents employed this flexibility to make their stepchildren feel as loved and cared for as their own children.

Thriving individualism in the UK: a failed case of (idealised) normativism?

In the UK, as in many other Western countries, the notion of the average or idealised family is widespread and continually evoked (Barrett & McIntosh 1982; Gillas 1996). Interestingly, however, this romantic image of strong family values, continuous close interaction, interdependency and respect within the family is neither timeless nor culture-free. According to Mark Poster (1978), such a hegemonic family model reflects the idealised view of the 19th-century bourgeoisie and retains a powerful impact, given that contemporary family life is constantly compared to it.

According to the research of John Gillas (1996), families in the past are considered to be more dependent and, hence, more involved with their immediate kinship networks:

We imagine them not only as large but as better integrated, untroubled by generational division, close to kin, respectful of the old, honouring the dead. Families past are imagined as rooted and centred, identified with particular places and loyal to their own pasts. We think of them as 'traditional', not only because they belong to the past but because they were supposedly more attached to it (Gillas 1996:3-4).

Such images are very popular in British society and are often referred to as 'traditional', even though many of these developments did not take place until the end of the 19th century. Before then, most Europeans, even those whom we would consider 'middle-class', moved between households quite frequently and had very little attachment to a specific house as a special place associated with childhood or their family of origin (ibid.).

However, the theme of such idealised family relations is often raised in conjunction with another popular debate about the 'declining family' (Barrett & McIntosh 1982), in which it is argued that kinship structures are falling apart and failing to maintain their role of preserving moral values in society.

David Popenoe, a sociologist and leading advocate of the family decline argument, suggests that over the centuries the institution of family has been stripped down to its bare nucleus, and now that nucleus appears to be splitting apart (Popenoe 1993). In his opinion, the nuclear family was the unit that passed family values to further generations, and with modern kinship arrangements of family units broken more often, 'familism' as a cultural value is under threat of extinction. This hypothesis is generally also underpinned by statistics of later marriages, lower birth rates and more isolated, mobile households.

Indeed, Britain does have the highest divorce rate in Europe, with more than half of divorced couples in 1990 having a child under 16 years of age (Strathern 2005:22). Such an overwhelming divorce rate was deemed a 'revolution in family structure' by Maclean (1987), suggesting a new trend in society and

highlighting the anxiety of creating new types of relationships under such conditions. According to the research of Smart and Neale (1999), families are 'fragmented' on a regular basis in certain ways: people face the need to construct their own effective 'family' across multiple households. As there are no well-established rules about ways of maintaining these relationships, people are forced to be creative; however, not all of them are up for the challenge.

Moreover, it is sometimes argued that there is an underlying 'individualistic' logic behind modern kinship relationships in the UK. Researchers like Giddens (1992) see intimate relationships as a strong agenda of the reflexive self, in which individuals seek 'pure relationships' and commit to them as long as they are satisfactory and fulfilling.

Also, due to the great expectations forced upon the 'family project' (like the idealised family mentioned above), other researchers suggest that people find themselves caught between individual ambitions and family commitments, or as Beck and Beck-Gernheim (1995) put it, 'a collision between love, the family and personal freedom' (1995:1). In this way, the family is seen as 'breaking apart in the face of the decisions demanded of it' (Beck 1992:117).

However, anthropologists that work more closely with ethnographic material, rather than general theories, highlight a different angle of 'individualism' that prevails in British kinship. Marilyn Strathern (1992) argues that British kinship is individualistic because people relate to each other as individuals, and not by virtue of their genealogical position. Relationships with children, for example, are based more on their personal characters than on their pure kinship 'positions'. Already back in the 1970s, Alan Macfarlane (1978) had described British kinship as 'ego-centred', in which each individual was at the centre of one's kin universe and all other kin relations were projected outward from oneself. This was a different concept in comparison with other 'ancestor-centred' kinship approaches, whereby kinship was reckoned by tracing lineage back to one's ancestors. According to Macfarlane, an individual constructed concentric circles of relations according to his or her personal understanding of attachment and relatedness. Hence, a person was presumed to create a family

and not simply 'join' one, as no preexisting kinship network was presumed in the first place.

This constant negotiation of being connected and disconnected with different members of kin networks will be a mean of analysing the ways lifestyle migrants relate to different family members while living abroad, if at all. The next chapter will explain why did I choose the British in Spain as the case study to address the phenomenon of lifestyle migration. Moreover, the methodological approach will be outlined, explaining why material culture analysis was chosen to examine the different dynamics that took place in the new destination environment.

Chapter 2

In focus: British lifestyle migration to Spain

The case of the British in Spain primarily attracted me because of its mere size – at the time of my research, an estimated three-quarters of a million British migrants resided in Spain (IPPR 2006). Spain was the second most popular emigration destination from the UK after Australia; other popular countries that were chosen by the British as a residence were the USA, Canada and Ireland. This was very telling data as, unlike Spain, all other countries had previous colonial links with the UK and a common spoken language. This revealed the particular nature of the move, since family connections or career opportunities were less likely to be main motivation factors for those migrations.

This particular case of the British in Spain was also quite fascinating due to its controversy in the UK. Only a few weeks into this project, while still preparing background research, I was confronted with a relatively well-defined popular image of the group. Such stereotypes portrayed those British who made the move to be groups of pensioners who escaped from their criminal pasts to the coasts of Spain, drinking sangria, eating fish and chips and sitting in the sun without any interest in their destination communities. Such an image was not only communicated to me by my British colleagues, but was also easily found in other sources such as British newspaper articles, which revealed instances of people committing benefit fraud while living in Spain, TV shows like *Eldorado* in the 1990s, and even movies like *Sexy Beast* (2000), which portrayed the lives of British criminals in the Costa del Sol area.

After the first few months of research, I discovered that existing demographic data did not fully support the popular image of the British in Spain as retired elderly people. Estimated statistics by the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR 2006) suggested that only 10 per cent of people residing in Spain were pensioners. Almost 40 per cent, however, were suggested to be between 45 and 64 years of age, suggesting a large number of early retirees. Moreover, almost 25 per cent were between 25 and 44 years of age, which meant that they were potentially active migrants with children and jobs in Spain.

Spain, furthermore, was a great example of a southern European country that benefitted from the lifestyle migration of other Europeans. In 2007, 700,000 new housing units were built in Spain – more than France, Germany and Italy combined (*The Economist* 2008a). Such dramatic demand for property from lifestyle migrants and second homebuyers, as well as from investors in general, created a boom in the Spanish economy. This became quite evident: Spain was responsible for creating one in every three new jobs in the Eurozone for the past decade. In becoming a destination country for a large amount of visitors as well as residents, Spain was a typical example of a southern European country that, for the first time in its long history, had changed its profile from a country that was sending European migrants away to one that was receiving them.

Historical excursus

Intra-European migration has constantly changed over the centuries. Some of the biggest turns were noticed around 1815, when the 'premier age of urbanisation' began and people started to gravitate toward living in bigger cities (Moch 2003:4). Most of the migratory movements within Europe, however, had a predominantly temporal or seasonal character.

In the beginning of the nineteenth century, the growth of machine production and centralised industry not only attracted an increasing amount of workers, mostly from Southern Europe, to industrial locations, but also had its effects on the agricultural sector. Farmers who were not employing new machinery faced severe competition and shifted their labour demand into even more seasonal work, resulting in the proliferation of short-term jobs. The two World Wars, however, brought Europe to economic and demographic stagnation; though state policies were usually designed to discourage migration across national borders, northwestern countries faced an enormous labour deficit (ibid.:176).

Urbanisation and emigration from rural areas continued after the Second World War (ibid.:175). The lowering of trade barriers among Common Market countries in the 1960s increased competition from different markets. Farmers adopted more efficient measures and consequently needed fewer workers; the countryside became less agricultural and more a site of leisure activities. Heavy investments were made in tourism infrastructure in order to make up for the losses in agriculture.

Later, however, southern European countries experienced rapid economic development that created labour market shortages (Geddes 2003). Due to low birthrates and sharp demographic drops, immigrants in Spain were hired for jobs that locals were no longer willing to do. This allowed local citizens to move to more highly ranked jobs and leave cleaning, mining and childbearing to newcomers. Yet in 2000, the Financial Times reported that the 'Spanish melting pot started to bubble' (ibid.:163) and immigration became a rather hot political issue. All of these factors predisposed the Spanish to have welcoming attitudes toward more desirable migrants from northern Europe, unlike those from Morocco and Ecuador.

At the same time, an increase in disposable income, more leisure time, and better travelling conditions for northern Europeans generated a boom in travel to 'the South' (O'Reilly 2000). Additionally, a number of loans and reforms undertaken in the late 1960s by the Spanish government allowed for an industrial boom, which resulted in an increasing number of hotels and vacation apartments available for tourists. Package tours experienced phenomenal sales, and a second home abroad became the 'ultimate consumer aspiration' (ibid.:33).

Ramona Lenz (2006) had similar comments on European tourism, which, as she saw it, took the concept of the 'backwardness' of Mediterranean areas and reinterpreted it into an authentic and traditional Mediterranean lifestyle. The media, at the same time, spread the ever-fashionable desire for 'nostalgia', in Neal's (2007) terms - the longing for a place that perhaps never existed. Since the late 1980s, Spanish authorities have made it their priority to promote 'cultural tourism' in Spain, moving away from the image of cheap package tours in the sun (Marvin 1990; Valenzuela 1988). Today, there remains a trend of trying to attract migrants who appreciate culture, traditions and quality of life.

Shucksmith et al. (2009) have reported on the latest European Quality of Life Survey, which measured urban and rural differences in 'quality of life' across the European Union. Because of the recent popularity of the term, the Committee of European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions tried to incorporate into the Survey all variables thought to be a part of the 'quality of life' concept. Hence, characteristics such as access to health services, subjective social well-being, income, quality of housing, Internet use, education, employment, working conditions and work-life balance were included. Some of the variables illustrated the subjective relevance of idyllic views of rural life, emphasising stability, integrity and a strong nexus of values, traditions and personal and family relationships. Contradictory to the common goals of balanced rural life, however, the results indicated higher indexes of material welfare and quality of life in urban areas. The study also concluded that there were larger differences between urban and rural areas among poorer eastern and southern EU countries. According to Shucksmith, 'this quality of life approach has allowed the examination of the widely held view that the

intrinsic, non-material qualities of rural life compensate for what might be the material advantages of urban life' (2009:13). However, the study provided almost no evidence that the non-material aspects of lifestyle, social network and community were better in rural areas.

With critical indexes indicating an imbalance between aspirations of idyllic rural life and the actual data collected by the European Quality of Life Survey, one could begin to wonder if the British who wanted to migrate to Spain were indeed able to find the improved lifestyle they were looking for. The Spanish people, on the other hand, had to undergo a number of difficult historical processes that were generally hidden behind the idealised image of 'the Mediterranean' that attracted foreigners.

On the destination country

For the last century, Spain has been better known as a land of emigration than as a destination country. Many communities all over Spain experienced the migration of much of their populations to northern Europe and America in search of better jobs and a better political and social environment (Bestard-Camps 1991).

In her study of household and family in Formentera on the island of Ibiza, Joan Bestard-Camps suggested that '[t]he real reason why the emigrants left was not to gain new occupations in other societies but rather to improve their position in their own society' (1991:125). As mostly wage-workers in farms, dockyards and craftsmanship shops, those emigrants finally had a chance to disconnect from endless seasonal jobs and earn real money to start a family or build a house when they came back home. One could see such migratory dynamics in the landscaping of the village, since immigrants, together with the money that they had earned, also returned home with ideas of different styles of housing that they had aspired to own while living abroad. Small, flat traditional houses were replaced and in the majority of cases supplemented by taller, more modern buildings with bigger windows and different room arrangements. However, older houses were not destroyed; for locals who had returned, they

represented a discontinuity with the past when those people lacked the necessary resources to improve their domestic life. Indeed, these surviving houses signified many important links with the past, but the point of rupture of migration was crucial to the residents of Formentera, as only that radical break from old forms of living and habitation made survival in their new households possible.

Spaniards' connections to their traditions became more problematic after the dramatic transformation of the Spanish countryside, which occurred between 1950 and 1970 when villages' systems of preindustrial capitalist agriculture collapsed. According to Jane Fishburne Collier (1997), this was a difficult time due to growing emigration from villages; emigration rates that had been steadily low since the 1900s suddenly doubled in the 1960s. Fishburne Collier wrote about young Spaniards who were descendants of emigrants from the village of Los Olivos in western Andalucía, relating a story about the anxiety that young parents felt when telling their children about their 'roots' – about the village where their relatives came from. Interestingly, in order to counter the discrimination they experienced in coming from a small village in Andalucía, those informants chose to turn to encyclopaedias that described the area where they came from, instead of speaking with their living elders, when looking for information about Andalusian culture. In that way, they used more 'modern' means of reclaiming their cultural heritage, remaking themselves from villagers who 'were traditional' into Andalusians who 'had traditions'. Using a secondary independent source such as an encyclopaedia, those people were able to employ what Fishburne Collier has called 'modern subjectivity': being referred to and hence 'reinvented' had more value than seeing yourself as actually possessing those characteristics.

In a more recent study, Sarah Pink and Ana Martinez Perez (2006) analysed the re-connection of young professionals in urban environments with traditional kinship structures. The authors analysed the service of *telemadre.com*, which offered home-cooked meals prepared by elderly ladies and delivered to busy young professionals on a daily basis. With the breakdown of traditional families, especially in big cities where young professionals were more able to follow dreams and careers instead of staying close to their families, a certain

gap consisting of 'childless mothers' and 'motherless children' appeared. An increasing number of people with no or little access to family support systems created a demand for domestic services such as cooking. With the creation of *telemadre.com*, young professionals who lacked domestic structure, time and the skills to cook traditional, healthy food finally had access to it, while at the same time mothers who had the knowledge and time could finally reconnect with 'children' who needed them. This online service replaced a real social model, reproducing people's family identities in the fragmented environments of modern cities. The expert vision of *telemadres*, as well as their knowledge of the tastes and needs of their *telehijos*, ensured the authenticity of such relationships.

For the Spanish, major disconnections with the traditional environment were not always associated with migration, embarrassment or a hectic urban lifestyle. In many cases, the complexity of Spanish history within the last century made certain memories taboo, surrounding them with official silence (Tremlet 2006). As Corbin and Corbin (1984) briefly summarised it:

[m]odern Spanish history is punctuated by periods of public disorder and followed by military reaction. In 1936 General Francisco Franco responded to one such period by leading a military rebellion, which provoked three years of civil war followed by thirty-six years of military dictatorship. After Franco's death in 1975 parliamentary democracy was restored and early in the transition the Francoist military was remarkably quiescent (1984:x).

Such a violent historical background was made even more dramatic by the nature of the conflict. In his study of class and community in lower Andalucía, David Gilmore (1980) implied that landowners and labourers were pulled apart by internal community dynamics during the war because of polarised class structures and property ownership in the villages. Moreover, members of a single family often found themselves on different sides of the barricade; many were willing to act on their beliefs, and mass murders were not uncommon (Renshaw 2011). When such dramatic events – brother against brother – are woven into one's history, a reconnection with tradition, history and one's cultural identity is not always easy.

Nor is a reconnection easy to do in the context of 17 autonomous communities fighting for their independence and redefining their roles in history (*The Economist* 2008b). Notions of nationality and belonging are especially crucial in the case of Spain, where the whole country operates under a fine balance of regional authority structures (Mar-Molinero & Smith 1996). Such a system certainly benefits from spreading power, promoting liberal thinking, democratising political decision-making by bringing it closer to people and encouraging competition between regions (*The Economist* 2008b). However, in a situation where each autonomous community tries to glorify its role in history and promote independent identities by rewriting history books and making local languages compulsory for civil employees, connecting with 'traditional Spanish identity' might become somewhat problematic and certainly ambiguous due to this multiplicity of origins.

When the British come to inhabit different villages in Spain, however, it becomes even more complex for local Spaniards to define the 'real' traditions they themselves might relate to. Jacqueline Waldren (1996) conducted research on the interactional dynamics of insiders and outsiders in the village of Deia on the island of Mallorca. Her research showed that the local population managed a balance between tradition and modernity. Confronted with the image of paradise that the outsiders brought to their village, the local population felt outside pressure to personally define traditional aspects of their past. When forced to redefine and communicate their cultural heritage, Deianencs managed to create a sense of continuity with the past and consciously relate to local distinctiveness. The central point of negotiation, however, became the material symbols of the past, such as land ownership, that locals felt needed to be protected from outsiders. They felt that '[I]and ownership, once the basis of social status, the source of life and individual identity, [had] become a commodity sold to the highest bidder' (1996:xx). Deianencs felt vulnerable because the value of certain dwellings, owned by generations of families, was suddenly measured by the foreign investment of people who perhaps had little concern about generational continuities within the villages.

Waldren's 1996 research is based on the notion of insiders and outsiders, which on its own is quite a complex idea and perhaps not particularly accurate. As

Marilyn Strathern (1981) well illustrated in her study of Elmdon, a village in northwest Essex, there is always an ambiguous division between these extreme ends of the spectrum. In her study, the 'real Elmdoners' spoke of themselves as 'villagers', 'country people' and 'the people' in contrast to 'outsiders', 'strangers', 'new people', 'foreigners' and 'not natives'. However, the notion of 'rootedness' could be defined in many different ways, beginning with the time when their ancestors had come to the village: what kind of activities they undertook, what kind of businesses they ran, how they contributed to the community and when they bought houses. With numerous characteristics such as these at hand, Elmdoners strategically chose when to stress such connections to the village for benefit or to give their opinions more weight in certain communal disputes. Such a flexible notion of locality made it extremely difficult to pinpoint a moment in which 'the outsider' became 'the local'. What is interesting, however, is the productive nature of dualism by which people are able to negotiate their positions in the destination environment.

In the case of the British in Spain, therefore, one could wonder if the British are able to find their way to becoming 'local' and how do they interact with the complex notions of traditionalism that already exist in the destination country.

European Union facilitation framework

In 1986, Spain joined the European Community, which enabled the production of legislation making it easier for British people to travel to Spain, purchase property there, settle and even work. The organisation of European countries has undergone a major transformation, from the European Coal and Steel Community, to the Common Market, to the European Economic Community and, finally, to the European Union (Shore 2000). The 1992 Maastricht Treaty was an important step in transferring the focus of the EU from economic propriety and legal harmonisation to integration as a cultural process.

Europe as an entity created new kinds of networks and relationships across invisible national borders (Neveu 2000). Although Europeans did not require visas to travel to other countries within the continent before, the elimination of

official border control created a different kind of dynamic between countries. Borders – ‘dangerous edges’, according to Walker (1998:326) – in general create a material separation between ‘us’ and ‘them’, constituting spheres of domestic comfort and external distress (Geddes 2008). Opening up these borders lessened the drastic nature of international migration, making it a move ‘within the EU’ instead of ‘outside the country’.

Adrian Favell (2008) suggested that the establishment of the European Union created new forms of cross-border mobility, widening people’s horizons. European Union agreements between countries chiefly secured equality in opportunity for the citizens of all member states across the union, as well as strengthening welfare support (Muench 2001). This gave ‘the opportunity to millions of EU citizens to move effortlessly across borders: to forget roots, challenge lives and career’ (Favell 2008:viii).

Moreover, the concept of shared European history and identity was promoted to endorse social cohesion in the European Union (Lenz 2006). This was not an easy task, as historically ‘Europe has been characterised more by division and conflict than by unity and harmony’ (Bideleux 1996:1). Yet during the last 60 years, Europe has united against political and religious opposition in order to protect European values.

The main intention of promoting inter-European identity was to move away from economic- and business-orientated notions and to extend integration into more ‘cultural’ aspects, transferring these notions to the psychological domains of everyday life. The promotion of social cohesion in the European Union was executed through the concept of common culture. However, as culture is commonly understood as a clearly definable, territorially bound unit, it did not come as a surprise when a number of countries, including the UK, hesitated to align completely with the European Community and part with their national characteristic features (Papadakis 1999; Radice 1992). Reportedly, the British became the biggest Euro-sceptics, reluctant to express a European identity or trust European institutions (European Commission 1998, 1999). Unwilling to integrate with the Union, the British strove instead to maintain independence within a loosely integrated European framework (Muench 2001:26).

In his study of European nations and nationalism, Russell F. Farnen (2000) suggested that the British expressed mistrust and unwillingness to accept European identity as a part of its own because they felt that new European cosmopolitanism '[would] be competing for space in the hearts of Britons along with traditional respect for the monarchy, science, the welfare state, and parliamentary democracy' (2000:486).

Irene Bellier and Thomas Wilson (2000) suggested that the unease of countries like the UK to accept an inter-European identity came from the way this identity was constructed and promoted. Drawing from their analysis of the institutional building of the European Union, the authors argued that leaders and elites of the EU borrowed heavily from the models of nation and state building, unable to escape intellectually and linguistically from the dominant model of the nation-state (2000:6). Hence, the implementation of two competing systems that in certain ways mirrored each other could have been seen as a threat to national identity.

On the other hand, the whole idea of inter-European identity so far has not been prescriptive, but rather reactive in regard to other agents in the production of areas of European culture (Bellier & Wilson 2000). Such an organisational structure created immense areas of uncertainty that could be widely reinterpreted:

While governments will continue to negotiate the defence of national interests, Europeans may also enjoy the convenience and safety of the wider identity of 'European citizen', which might allow more space for the recognition and validation of their minority racial, ethnic, and political identities (2000:9).

One could wonder if people like British lifestyle migrants took advantage of ambiguous notions of inter-European identity and saw the European Union as a solution to their desire to lead the lives that they had been longing for. They would have had the comfort of free travel and the ease of relocation to another country within the European Union without losing their British identities, instead coupling them with their new European selves. According to Benedict Anderson (1991), the most vital aspect of any nation-state membership is imagination. One might suggest that British lifestyle migrants managed to

'imagine' themselves to be a part of the joint European community, allowing them to maintain their Britishness while living in a part of the European Union – in this particular case, Spain.

Methodology

Materiality of the move

As has been suggested before, lifestyle migration movement could be viewed through a material culture perspective. Material culture analysis presents a vision of how social relations are expressed and acted upon through material surroundings (with the great examples of Brown 2003; Hodder 1982; Hodder & Hutson 2003; Ingold 2000; Latour & Weibel 2005; Meskell 2004; Miller 1987, 2005; Shanks & Tilley 1987).

Such an approach explores the role of the built environment in the destination countries of migrants. By managing their local surroundings, migrants develop their own strategies of coping with the move, recreating their notions of 'home'. The objects and structures that surround migrants are important means of self-representation to the wider world as well as significant means of self-definition.

Material culture analysis has undergone an enormous transformation from merely providing signifiers of ceremonies and belief systems from anthropological expeditions that showcase 'the vanishing world' in a dead, inert manner (Tilley 2006). Only in the 1960s were material objects re-conceptualised as, in the words of Lévi-Strauss, 'good to think with' (1966): as tools to help people adapt to different environments or as passive markers of social status and ethnic difference. Since then, '[m]uch of material culture studies is concentrated with deepening our insight into how persons make things and things make persons' (Tilley 2006:2).

As far as architectural forms are concerned in material culture analysis, they have been treated as indicators of daily life behavior and social organisations

since at least the 18th century (Buchli 2002). Domestication was suggested to be political and social processes, through which development of human society could be surveyed (Morgan 1965[1881]). However, it was not until the middle of the twentieth century that Lévi-Strauss (1982) reintroduced architecture as the social blueprint by which societies organised themselves. Analysis of the construction and renovation of the built environment allowed for an understanding of the intricacies of social dynamics structuring society. The function of a house was seen as positioning people in space and linking them in time, relating them to different historical groups with varying social status. Edward Hall (1959) proposed that there was ample opportunity to study the different ways in which people shaped their relationships through analysis of their interaction with built forms. At the same time, 'architectural forms [were] more than mere expressions of change; they promoted the changes in society themselves by physically reorganising social groups' (Birdwell-Pheasant & Lawrence-Zaniga 1999:10; see also Carsten 1995; Lévi -Strauss 1982; Hobsbawm & Ranger 1992).

The underlining logic of material culture studies, however, is that '[t]o express our own ideas even to ourselves, we need to attach those ideas to material things that symbolize them' (Durkheim 1995:229). Such material things - anything from a totem to a house - need to surround people in their daily lives, as they make shared ideas more tangible to all, transforming these ideas into 'reality'. Material objects bring the members of a group moral unity and make ideas and relationships more durable.

Similarly, in his study of houses amongst the Kabyle, Pierre Bourdieu (2005) implied architecture to be a literal embodiment of *habitus* - an unconscious set of dispositions that structure interactions amongst people. The house was defined as *opus operatum*, not only incorporating external meanings but also objectifying social relationships. However, Bourdieu also argued that a house was the product of practical mastery of *modus operandi*, where each particular agent had no conscious mastery of his habitus. Hence, any interactions with the built environment could 'work only to the extent that they encounter and reinforce predispositions' (Bourdieu et al. 1990:25). This limited *modus operandi*

approach to the normative level did not account for situations of rupture of familiar knowledge and environments.

However, at the point of rupture with familiar surroundings and relocation to a completely new destination with its own social dynamics embedded in its built environment, how does one create a place they can call home?

When a person comes to live in a house that has its own, independent history, one of the ways to embrace its authenticity is 'through the shape of time', according to Daisy Froud (2004:231). As she illustrated with the example of authentic-looking new houses in the UK, new residents must be able to write their own histories into those of the houses. Froud argued that in authentic-looking houses 'the mind recognises visual similarities, the body, through the evidence of all the senses, recognises the feeling of being in a similar place through perception of familiar forms' (2004:218). Life in a new environment, however, requires special familiarity and continuity through an intimate relationship of 'body memory'. In the case of lifestyle migrants, they had not lived in the houses in their destination environments while growing up and consequently never experienced them as personal heritage.

Since the aim of this thesis is to understand how lifestyle migrants established themselves in their new lives, material culture analysis offered great means to explore the social dynamics of interest.

This thesis explores the role of the built environment in re-constructing the local identities and values of full-time lifestyle migrants. The purchase of property seemed to be a means of entrance into a destination society, the architecture of which was an indivisible characteristic of the history and traditions of local communities. From a material culture perspective, I undertook an analysis of the different ways by which the lifestyle migrants came to inhabit new dwellings and reconstruct their existence in their new environment, creating a place they could call home.

An analysis of the architecture of houses would help to reveal the friction between expectations and new experiences that the British encountered once they had arrived in their destination country of Spain. It would also assist in

understanding of these houses' materials, their origins and associations; the technologies required to produce desired environments; the activities of building maintenance and the social effects of people organising their relationships to one another via the materiality of built forms; and, finally, the power dynamics played out during interaction with the built environment.

Conducting fieldwork

To get the full scope of all these activities, I planned to immerse myself in a single social context of a town in Spain for an extended period of time: one year. This would allow me to feel a sense of the annual cycle of social life and the dynamic nature of the interactions that took place in the destination environment.

In order to observe what I anticipated to be intense relationships between British lifestyle migrants and the Spanish built environment, I decided to find a location for my fieldwork that would be relatively small in size. As I was quite familiar with studies in urban anthropology (Caldeira 1996a; Lynch 1960; Foster & Kemper 2002; Solnit & Schwartzenberg 2000; Wirth 1938), I was well aware of the level of anonymity that prevails in bigger cities, where one is able to hide behind masses of people and avoid direct interaction with the locals.

As for the geographical location of my potential fieldwork site, I had a closer look at the areas that were particularly popular among British lifestyle migrants. To gather more current information, I watched popular TV shows like *Place in the Sun: Home or Away*, read magazines like *Living Spain*, *Spanish Home*, *Emigrate*, *Homes Overseas*, *Everything Spain* and *Spain* and visited an exhibition show, *Place in the Sun*, in London, where I had a fantastic chance to interview not only those companies who offered real estate services, but also people who were thinking about relocating to Spain.

Such preliminary research showed that southern and eastern coastal areas were most popular among the British. The coastal regions of Andalucía and Valencia had some of the best tourism infrastructures, which usually included - in

addition to houses that were readily available for purchase – lawyers, estate agents and even doctors who spoke English and could facilitate the move.

However, one of the constant worries that I had at the back of my mind was the general economic situation during the autumn of 2008, when I started my research. When the so-called ‘financial crisis’ suddenly hit major companies like Lehman Brothers, people were not sure how drastic of a fall to expect. My personal concern was that I had planned to interview people who had been living in Spain for a while, as well as newcomers, to get a full scope of experiences. However, with housing prices remaining expensive in Spain and people losing jobs in the UK, I predicted that people who needed social security support from the government would stay in the UK instead of moving abroad.

The solution to my dilemma came with an article I read about the coastal region of Murcia (*PropertyWire* 2008). Located on the coastal line exactly between Andalucía and Valencia, Murcia region had not been such a popular destination for the British, mainly due to its agricultural economic profile. Since the area’s major income came from farming, tourism on the coastal areas attracted mainly the Spanish themselves, usually those who had family in the area and were willing to spend a few days on the beach while visiting their families during holidays. However, as it became aware of the great success of its neighbours, the Murcian government began different programmes of building houses to satisfy demand from abroad. Because it was relatively new on the British radar, property prices were still comparatively cheap in Murcia, allowing British customers to find houses 15 per cent cheaper than in neighbouring areas. I determined that in times of potential financial instability, people who were willing to relocate to Spain would consider moving to an area with cheaper housing. Hence, the Murcia area was chosen as the destination for carrying out my fieldwork.

After some online research was conducted, it became evident that a number of British lifestyle migrants were running small hotels, also known as bed-and-breakfasts, in the area. Spending time in some of these seemed like a perfect way to access the lives of the British from the position of an outsider: I would be able to ask questions while being an official guest in their houses. For the pilot

study, I chose five towns throughout Murcia: some were located on the coast, while others were situated in areas further inland.

In April-May 2009, I undertook a pilot study, visiting the towns, residing with the British in their houses and interviewing British estate agents and developers, some of whom I managed to find online and some that were recommended by the locals. I discovered that there were roughly four types of settlements where the British tended to buy houses.

These included houses inside towns (old town houses); farms next to villages; houses in the '*urbanizaciones*' (specially planned developments outside original settlements, mostly for foreigners) and caravan homes parked in special areas. Due to the fact that I intended to conduct research among full-time lifestyle migrants who spent at least nine months a year in Spain, I decided not to focus on the last type of settlement (see Figures 1, 2 and 3; there is a nice piece of research conducted on trailer parks by Hege Leivestad in 2012).

The villages on the coast that I visited during my pilot study were as empty as ghost towns. The majority of the properties were standing empty, with only a few houses occupied on a yearly basis. The rest were mostly rented out to tourists during the holiday season and visited by second homeowners on an irregular basis. However attractive the option of spending a year at the coastal areas, I needed to choose an inland location where the majority of the British population would reside for the whole year in order to achieve my outlined objectives. It also came to my attention that the majority of the research on the British in Spain conducted so far had been done in coastal areas, so having access to people who resided in rural locations would give an interesting insight into the lives of lifestyle migrants who did not have to interact with tourism areas on an everyday basis.

Finally, I managed to find an ideal location that matched all the above criteria. My hosts were very friendly; they invited me to meet their families and friends, showed me the area around the town and agreed to take me on their daily trips, such as shopping or visits to the hospital.



Figure 1:
Old town houses



Figure 2:
A farmhouse



Figure 3:
An *urbanización*

My host family agreed to provide me with lodging for a few months so that I would have somewhere to live at first during my fieldwork. The decision was made, and five months later they were meeting me at the local train station in Villar del Río.

The town of Villar del Río became the centre of my fieldwork during that year; it was where most of my interviews and participant observation took place. The name of the town, however, is a pseudonym for the purpose of maintaining the anonymity of my informants. That particular community of British lifestyle migrants was quite small; this was a preventive method to minimise the potential negative impact of this particular anthropological research. Methodologically, however, I do not consider not knowing the real name of the town to be a big disadvantage, since after visiting a large number of neighbouring villages and towns in the area it became clear to me that the stories of people in that particular town were very typical to the area in general.

The pseudonym of Villar del Río was taken from a 1953 Spanish comedy movie, *¡Bienvenido, Mr. Marshall!* (Welcome, Mr Marshall!), directed by Luis García Berlanga. In this movie, the citizens of a small Spanish village tried to pretend

to be very traditional to impress American diplomats and eventually benefit from the Marshall Plan. I found this choice of a name to be particularly suitable, as the notions that were raised in the film, such as trying to redefine 'traditional', were particularly important in my own research.

Out of 16,000 inhabitants of the town, some 500 were British, who lived in three particularly different types of properties: town houses in the old part of town, countryside houses with large parcels of land located throughout the town and houses in *urbanizaciones* located at various distances from Villar del Río.

The family who accommodated me for the first four months became the essential gatekeepers who introduced me to their friends and family, invited me to parties around the area and in general were extremely kind in sharing their daily experiences with me over dinner. While living in their house, not only did I have the bodily experience of residing in one of their dwellings, but I also learned about their lives, got to know their friends and, in such a snowballing manner, got to know people who lived in each of the three different environments. Even those of their friends who did not live in the town came there at some stage, so I had a chance to introduce myself and later was invited to their houses for further interviews.

At first it was difficult, as there was no British community as such; people tended to interact in smaller groups. I outlined a number of 'hot spots' where the British could be found, such as charity shops, cafés, estate agencies and beauty salons. I met some British people by being introduced and sometimes by bluntly coming up and introducing myself. After a year of my fieldwork, I recorded interviews with 67 households of different sizes in addition to some 20 more with whom I had less structured talks. These are the people whose stories are presented in the following seven chapters. I was usually invited to visit their houses, where I recorded semi-structured interviews. There, I was usually given a tour of the house and took many pictures to visually capture the living spaces and architecture of their built environment. In many cases, I returned on less official visits as a guest at big parties or relaxed evening gatherings. There were many people that I met a few times on different occasions. After a few months, I joined a local walking group and ladies' group and went out

regularly for drinks with a few of the families I got to know especially well. Therefore, I had a chance to talk to people both in the official role of an interviewer and on more informal occasions.

Over time, I expanded my research site by visiting people in the countryside and living with them on a few occasions. I also rented an apartment in one of the *urbanizaciones* that was located 15 kilometres away from Villar del Río to get an 'insider' experience instead of simply visiting my informants for interview purposes as I had done in the beginning of my fieldwork.

The people with whom I conducted this research were British – citizens of the United Kingdom. In some of the examples my informants would use the term 'England' because that is where they came from. I would like to stress that I do not use those terms interchangeably.

In order to roughly manage my sample of informants, I received official statistics from the town hall about the ages of the British people who were living in and around the town. In that way, I could validate this sample so that it would not be particularly biased in terms of the age and gender of my informants.

The average age of my informants was 52, and the average length of their stay in Spain was 5 years. Such data supported my expectations of Murcia as a developing area in terms of a destination for lifestyle migration from the UK. The average age of one's coming to reside in Spain was 47 (Figures 5 and 6); this said a lot about the general trend of early retirement and the dynamics within the British families of that particular age and will be further examined in Chapter 4.

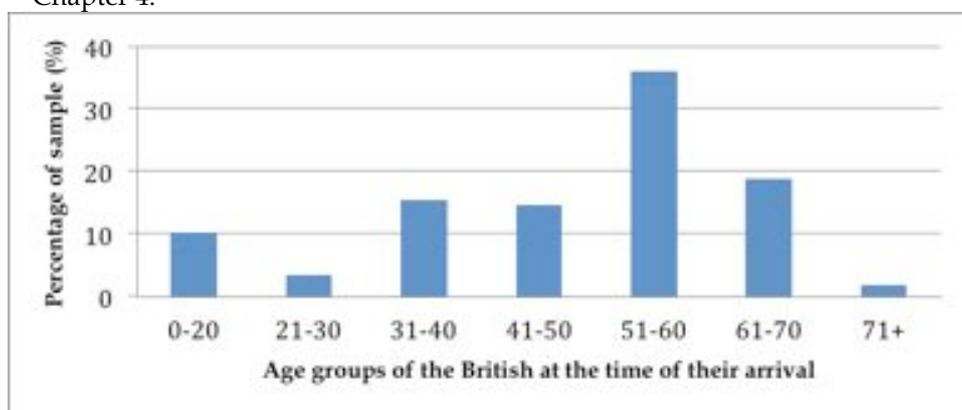


Figure 5:
Size of age groups of the British in this research at the time of their arrival in Spain

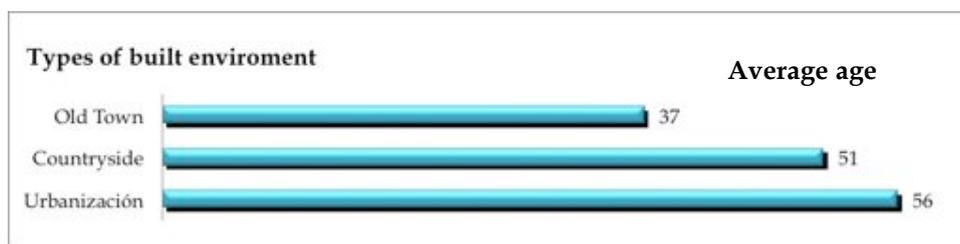


Figure 6:
Average age of
the British
residing in
Spain in each
built
environment

The differences in the age of people coming to reside in those three housing types mirrored the nature of their engagement with the built environment, which will be examined in detail in Chapters 5, 6 and 7.

As for other characteristics of my informants, most of them came from working-class or middle-class backgrounds. This was an interesting indicator of how these lifestyle migrants perceived their future lifestyle and their dwellings: they felt able to afford to live a life they could not necessary afford back at home. These aspirations, and the housing market strategies of British migrants, will be further explored in Chapter 3.

Furthermore, there were no great similarities among the travel histories of the British: some of them had been in the army and travelled extensively, others went on holiday once a year, and other people had, until the move, never left their hometowns. Their personal stories of coming to Spain varied: some came on vacation and fell in love with the country, while others visited friends' summer vacation houses for a number of years before one day deciding to buy their own. The majority of the British lived in couples; some had families and small children who went to local schools. Most had some kind of occupation either back in the UK or in Spain, where they usually engaged part-time in professions such as builders, estate agents, house managers (taking care of houses while their owners were away), owning shops that sold British as well as Spanish goods, running charities, doing translations or teaching English.

At this point certain limitations of this thesis should be acknowledged, given its exclusive focus on British lifestyle migrants and not Spanish citizens who undoubtedly are a part of lifestyle migration phenomenon. After fieldwork research was conducted, the ethnographic material suggested lack of interaction between the lifestyle migrants and the locals (that will be closely discussed in

Chapter 4). It was decided, therefore, that this particular thesis would outline the phenomenon from the British lifestyle migrants' perspective, since the actual opinions and activities of the local Spaniards existed parallel with the British ones and rarely crossed. Those notions of friction between the newcomers and the locals, however, are planned to be further examined in subsequent examination in a form of post-graduate research.

Another large aspect of my project focused on interviewing a number of professionals working in areas related to house construction, consumption and bequeathing. Having undertaken Spanish language training back in the UK, I was able to interview both British and Spanish professionals, who gave interesting insight on the phenomenon of lifestyle migration from different perspectives.

I started by getting to know six estate agents who were working in the town and the area. Later, I interviewed architects, builders, developers, lawyers and translators. Not only did they eagerly introduce me to some of their clients so that I could widen the circles I had access to, but they also shared valuable information on homeowner processes that the British had become involved with and certain regulations that they had become subject to. This information later allowed me to ask more detailed questions during interviews with my informants.

To learn more about traditional ways of building houses in the area, I became a member at a local library, which had an informative archive of the architecture and archaeology of the town and its region. Moreover, I became acquainted with the official historian of the town, who shared some interesting oral histories that he had been collecting about people in the town and their occupations, families and rituals as well as their traditions. He also organised some private trips, during which I had an opportunity to visit houses that represented the built environment of different historical eras in addition to visiting factories where the building materials for local houses were produced. This allowed me to better understand the historical dynamics in the town and how the locals viewed it, in turn enabling me to compare them with the perspectives of British lifestyle migrants who came to reside in the area.

Outline of the thesis

First, the British understanding of houses and home ownership will be addressed in Chapter 3. Drawing on the background of neo-liberal policies in the UK, it will be examined how the importance of property ownership was introduced to the British and what roles did they assign to houses in the process of climbing the social ladder.

Later, the actual move to Spain will be outlined in Chapter 4. After certain traumatic events, many lifestyle migrants reconsidered their aspirations and means of achieving them, one way to which became relocation to a different country, which happened to be Spain.

In the next part of the thesis each of the three different housing types will be elaborated on, discussing in detail about the ways the British got engaged with their environments and how through those means new channels of communication with families were established. Chapter 5 will address the productive decayed state of ruins in the case of old town houses. Interaction with houses in the countryside will be discussed in Chapter 6, suggesting the productive labour of kinship negotiation in which old traditional housing was redefined into new traditional. Chapter 7 will reveal the different strategies that lifestyle migrants employed in redefining their dwellings in *urbanizaciones*. By constructing distributed habitat, lifestyle migrants created potentiality of relationships with the family back in the UK, ultimately improving those relations.

Finally, Chapter 8 will draw on the creative ways, in which kinship relations were redefined by the British migrants through the processes of writing wills and participating in transnational intergenerational contracts. Despite taking out kin members in the UK from their wills, many lifestyle migrants continued to actively support their family both morally and financially. Writing a will became a mean of rewarding relationships with direct kin members with whom lifestyle migrants were residing in Spain.

The general findings of this research will support observations of John Gillas (1996), who suggested that despite high divorce rates, complex, fragmented families and the highly individualistic nature of kinship – none of which are congruent with an image of the idealised ‘average’ household of the past – the family is still the number-one priority for the majority of Europeans and Americans. Despite the prevalence of arguments stressing the decline of the family, statistics in another study of Bob Simpson (1998) showed that both families and marriage remained popular: one in three marriages was a remarriage (*ibid.*:viii).

In line with those studies, this research will confirm that British lifestyle migrants who move to Spain do value family connections, regardless of demographics and migratory trends. The thriving individualism found in the UK is not a failed case of idealised normativism. People still believe in that idealised family connection. People are still willing to take the risk of marriage to find that perfect relationship of unconditional love in the new destination environment. People tend to believe in those norms and go a long way to make their kinship relatedness resemble what they consider to be proper kinship bonds.

Chapter 3

Becoming a 'nation of homeowners'

Since I chose dwellings as the means by which to analyse British lifestyle migrants' new destination environment, this particular chapter will examine the role of home ownership in the national identity of the British, trying to reveal the underlying motivations and aspirations in their relocation to another country. Although the historical trends that will be discussed might appear somewhat general, a knowledge of these will allow for a better understanding of what lifestyle migrants considered to be the fundamental meanings of home, which were later reenacted in their new destination environment.

During the postwar years (1945-1946), the housing shortage in the UK was brought to the government's attention by frequent instances of squatting in empty properties all over the country (Short 1982). As a reaction to such dramatic conditions, a large number of houses were renovated and new council houses started to appear in the early 1960s. Many people were re-housed in new council housing in peripheral areas of cities, leaving the old, overcrowded, damp and insect-infested dwellings they had been living in. This offer of new

housing was great for many people, especially considering the low rent that was partially covered by local councils.

British ex-prime minister Margaret Thatcher once mentioned that her government viewed basic ties of the family to be at the heart of society, and it was on family that it built its policies on welfare, education and care (Brynin & Ermisch 2009:3). Supporting the neo-liberal theory of political economic practices, the British government was convinced that 'human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterised by strong private property rights, free markets and free trade' (Harvey 2005:2). Deregulation, privatisation, and withdrawal of the state from many areas of social provision were common trends at the time, leading to a large project that promoted the ownership of personal housing.

Beginning in the 1970s, a number of neo-liberal policy initiatives, such as mandatory sales of council houses, were introduced. Under the *Right to Buy* scheme, the government offered people discounted rates on the purchases of the houses they were renting, allowing them to start managing them on their own terms.

At that time, the Conservatives and some among the Labour Party were promoting owner-occupation as a desirable tenure form, stressing newly valuable goals of being thrifty, hardworking and, most importantly, independent. Owner-occupation was a rather new concept for many families, for whom owning their own property had not been a financially available option to begin with.

House ownership became a very desirable prospect: not only did it potentially provide respectability and a higher social status for people in working-class employment, but it also represented security against unemployment and old age (Mackenzie & Rose 1983). Moreover, it was also claimed to be a 'natural' aspect of life (Saunders 1990). In 1964, the chairman of the Building Societies Association suggested that house ownership 'satisfies a basic human need to surround oneself with something that is absolutely personal and private' (quoted in Dickens et al. 1985:195). Similarly, in 1985 Prime Minister Margaret

Thatcher declared that 'the desire to have and to hold something of one's own is basic to the spirit of man' (quoted in Pahl & Wallace 1988:145).

Owning a house became a sign of personal achievement, a challenge for one's ego. A prosperous future was promised to those who worked hard. People were aspired to achieve more than their parents – or their neighbours, for that matter. The notion of a 'property ladder' was quite popular at that time: a new family would be encouraged to buy a small property and, through years of hard work and increasing wages, would be able to buy bigger and better property as if climbing some sort of a ladder.

Such continuous messages from the government were reflected in public opinion at the time, and statistics clearly showed the success of such propaganda: first, private renting collapsed from around 90 per cent to 8 per cent of households in just seventy years; second, state-owned housing increased from nonexistence to three households in ten by 1981. Moreover, owner-occupation grew from around 10 per cent of households in 1914 to 63 per cent in 1986 (Saunders 1990:15).

Despite the fact that such a shift in life aspiration was mainly motivated by the government and building societies, a number of studies show that people found order, continuity and physical safety, as well as a sense of physical belonging, through house ownership (Rakoff 1977). It also radically changed the notion of home: owning a house allowed it to become 'a home of your own' rather than a house of one's parents or rented accommodation. By 1990, two-thirds of the British population owned houses, which made people free to personalise their dwellings. They were finally able to adapt their physical environments to their taste and style, and the growing do-it-yourself industry allowed people to establish their own personal statements and exercise control over their living environments (Allan 1996). Similarly, Cooper spoke of home ownership in a 1976 study, saying that: 'As we become accustomed to, and lay claim to, this little niche in the world, we project something of ourselves onto its physical fabric' (Cooper 1976:436). 'For most people ... the self is a fragile and vulnerable entity; we wish therefore to envelop ourselves in a symbol-for-self which is

familiar, solid, inviolate, unchanging' (ibid.:447). As one of my informants explained:

We do put a lot of emphasis on buying property, rather than renting. [When we bought a house], it was a big thing; it was a huge thing. I don't know. How did I feel? Proud, I suppose, because we were able to buy our own place and, you know, you want to make it your own and it's a start, and everything is new. You know, you are starting your life. I think because you are buying, it feels more home. If you are renting, you don't bother about putting light fittings on in every room... because it's not yours anyway. (Valery, 53)

An abundance of opportunities were given to people to fulfil their own potential. It was about the future; it was about what *could* happen. Giving people clear aims for their life and multiple financial instruments with which to fulfil those dreams was in the fashion of the 'market forces' at the time. The philosophy of 'what could be' was borrowed from American models by the Thatcher government, and people were taught to 'think by the future' - i.e. of what would happen - living their lives in dreams and hopes, and giving little attention to the current state of things.

However, acquiring property was not as straightforward as it seemed: the money to buy the first property in 'the ladder' had to come from somewhere. The majority of my informants did not get any financial support from their parents or other family members. This was another way that the British kinship system exercised a factor of independence and individuality within relationships: parents wanted their children to make this big step on their own, and children took pride in being so independent as to manage the huge and very difficult task of establishing 'property ownership' themselves. Hence, the banks were the next port of call.

After the *Right to Buy* scheme was introduced in the UK, deregulation of the credit market followed, resulting in highly competitive creditors giving out loans to ever 'riskier' customers (Ford et al. 2001). It was made to appear as if all possible options were provided and people 'just' had to manage them wisely in order to achieve the 'success' of owning a house. Yet one could argue that owning a house required a specific mindset and attitude. The uncertain and

risky nature of welfare and a lack of support from the government imposed all responsibility on the individual to manage his or her property.

Indeed, managing one's mortgage was not all that simple. What began as a mismatch of the desire for accumulation and the reality of employment opportunities resulted in anxiety from borrowing money that one possibly would not be able to pay back. Giddens (1991) refers to Western societies as having an underlying 'risk culture' with certain elements destabilising the rock-solid notions of property ownership, control and safety. Indeed, one cannot deny that the future is constantly drawn into the present and that there is always some degree of a calculative attitude to open possibilities of action. One could further concur that motives for home ownership are essentially born out of anxiety (for example, fear of remaining in a rented apartment and not being able to provide a great future for your family). However, in many cases when such motives encouraged one to fall into the ambiguous position of a mortgaged house owner, even greater anxiety eventually developed.

I think buying a house is a stupid thing in a way, but everybody does it. If you ever rented accommodation, you can move your place, your situation very easily. If you bought a house, it was a lot more difficult. Why did I want to buy a house? Because it's the best – so they say – investment you can ever make... until the housing market collapses and you are bought at the lowest price. (Conor, 48)

Climbing the property ladder, or in some cases just staying on it, was extremely difficult in its full sense – sometimes mortgage payments were as high as 70 per cent of a couple's income. When borrowing money from family was not an option for a majority of people, a mortgage was seen as a necessary evil, providing a certain level of the independence they had been longing for.

For one of my informants, who had got divorced when her children were in their 20s, a mortgage was an opportunity to start a new life. Even though half of the family house belonged to her, she barely had any money to buy it out and get away from the man from whom she so urgently wanted to flee:

So instead of fighting, I took on a mortgage. At 45 I borrowed the money; I took on a mortgage to pay him his half of the house. So I kept the house. This is when I got into some problems, because obviously I was not on high wage, I

had children still at home, and whatever... So yeah, I took on a mortgage.
(Tamara, 60)

For her, it was an immense act: by taking out this mortgage, she signed off her working age to 70, and it would be at least another 25 years before she could pay it off. Yet she did it. Her children, mother and other siblings were partially dependent on her at that time, and taking such a great financial obligation was a way to break away from images of the 'weak woman' and 'housewife' her husband had always considered her to be. Taking out a mortgage was the only way of doing this, and she accepted it as her burden.

However, such undertakings made many people feel extremely vulnerable. For people like Barley, ever-growing mortgage payments became quite overpowering and threatening after only ten years of having a mortgage:

If there was a month when my husband wasn't working, you'd have to find that money to pay that mortgage even if you weren't earning anything. We lived in an expensive city to buy property and it just felt like all we were doing was worrying about the biggest expense: mortgage. It was like at least 600 pounds every month. And in the back of my mind it's like, you will eventually own the house, you know it takes 25 years to own it of paying out and if the interest rate went up. It could be as much as 100 pounds extra every month...
(Barley, 53)

It was quite understandable that under such circumstances one was scared about his or her own financial security. After so many houses were repossessed by the bank, many were sold just to pay off a mortgage. 'I don't want to be one of those statistics in two years' time,' shared Barley; others simply referred to the whole notion of mortgages as 'scary'. For some, such fears actually materialised: their funds crashed a few years later. In that way, some of my informants lost 24 years' worth of savings that they had been hoping to use. They ended up selling their houses in the UK and having doubts about a fairly comfortable existence after their retirement:

So we paid into the mortgage for 23 years, had 2 years to go. And everything was fine. Then we had a letter saying that the economic crisis – the stock exchange crashed, and that we all had to put in another 10 pound a month. So we did that. And we had another letter for the next 12 months to put another 10 quid because the situation is a little bit worse and that would... Fine, did that. Then we got a letter saying that the situation was that there is no way –

this company we've been investing in for 24 years – were they gonna be able to pay us enough to cover the mortgage. So all the money that we accrued had disappeared... And it was a lot of, I mean, hundreds, thousands of people in the UK were in the same boat and they found what happened was these companies had mis-sold the policies. And they told people, 'What a lovely wonderful rosy picture' when in actual fact it wasn't. (Ben, 69)

When people became more involved with a market-led economy, it became quite evident that certain traits of the gift exchange economy were missing in their lives (Mauss 1990). For the first half of the century, the majority of people in the UK rented houses, which meant that close kinship could become crucial in acquiring a house; for instance, mothers would advocate their married children's cases to find housing in the neighbourhood (Allan 1996:45). With the growing importance of owner-occupation, however, houses available for purchase – especially among postwar redevelopment programmes – usually tended not to be very close to where people had previously lived. Hence, kinship relations could not be activated at such a high rate as before in the procurement of a house, and since owner-occupation became highly popular among people from a working-class background, it was only in very rare cases that kinship networks could provide a financial safety net for a couple to obtain a house. Hence, banks and council houses replaced kinship networks in providing means to achieve that happy life of nuclear families in their own brand-new houses.

One could argue that homeowners' financial difficulties were the result of a lack of solidarity in their relationships with organisations, which had replaced kin relations in financial terms. People signed contracts, agreeing with obligations to pay the bank/local council/building society in return for a morally fulfilling property-owner state of mind. The latter, however, seemed unachievable to a certain degree, as there were no obligations or guarantees from the side of the bank that rates would not rise and houses would not be repossessed. Such a cycle of reciprocation of promises and support was greatly undermined by the money-borrowing businesses, the unstable terms of which created what one could refer to as a crisis of house accumulation. Its aim was very clear (ownership of a house), and the benefits it provided were widely talked about and promoted, but even when one felt committed to it, there was no

counterbalancing constant provision of support found in an intangible social contract.

Many people became hostages of flexible economic models, which imposed greater employment flexibility and decreasing social security. One could not help but wonder, when people were well aware of the increasing interest rates, fall of house prices and outstanding mortgage debts exceeding dwellings' current values, how they would deal with the fact that their houses, once assets, shifted into the category of a liability.

When British citizens were young, they were promised a great future full of success: their dreams would come true in exchange for their hard work. However, it was extremely challenging to turn this future into reality, especially for those born into working-class families who had to fight the daily ambiguity of being a 'homeowner'. This must have been a feeling of great unrest: instead of solid security and peace of mind, many people ended up feeling a general sense of debt, underachievement, guilt and disappointment.

For many who felt pressure to provide for a security that would in many cases never become reality, the prospect of life in the future became a daily worry. Moving to the sunnier countries of Spain, France, Italy and Greece became a new strategy for the British to redefine the self and rediscover that present that had been hidden by constant promises of a shiny future and worries about consistent labour.

When 'the future' becomes 'the present'

Many people found themselves in a state of unease as they struggled to maintain 'norms' in their kinship relationships that had been idealised by models of accepted behaviour suggested by the government.

As has been discussed, the liberalisation of market forces provided individuals with a greater possibility to take charge of their personal success. At the same time, people became trapped by flexible economic models in which working contracts became ever more unstable and social security became unreliable. Left

one-on-one with blunt, heartless financial contracts, many British people who later became lifestyle migrants took an active approach toward changing the situation of working for a future that perhaps would never come. They found themselves in a position where they were no longer able to be perfect providers for their families, and their self-assurance in their chances of success was shaken.

In some cases, people were not willing to obey the suggested economic models; after realising the absoluteness and unattainability of these models, they created their own rebel strategies by moving to different countries and making drastic decisions about what their present would look like. The economy had solidified social and financial boundaries to the extent that breaking apart from them required a much larger step: moving to a different country where different rules prevailed.

Moving became a strategy whereby, in changing their immediate surroundings – physically reshaping their built environment – people actively became involved in defining how they viewed themselves and their relationships. In this way, many British, seeing a mismatch between their idealised/normatised desires for their families and the means that were available to them, changed the rules and created a new present. The British became the bricoleurs of their own futures, taking the present to a new and different dimension to bring them closer to the family situations they hoped to be part of.

Stepping outside the system that prescribed a recipe for success allowed thousands of people to tap into the source of success once more, defining the present on their own terms. How exactly this move took place, and the difficulties that the lifestyle migrants faced at the moment of encountering their new destination environment, will be examined in the following Chapter.

Chapter 4

The power of the move: on tearing apart and creating something new

This chapter will discuss the hopes and anxieties connected with the move to another country. It will explore the process of lifestyle migrants' tearing apart from their familiar environment and the expectations and aspirations that they held. I will examine the role of Spain as a destination country, suggesting that this move was not really about a particular country as such. The aspirational nature of the move will be further described, illustrating how the mere fact of relocation made people think and act differently. I will closely look at British migrants' communication with the Spanish, particularly to discern the reasons behind their lack of intention to integrate within the Spanish community. Finally, the role of the new residences will be discussed, suggesting the productive relational capacity of the new houses in Spain.

On tearing apart

The British are well known for their mobility inside the country (Chevalier 1998). On average, they regularly relocate every seven years in search of a better house, school or job. One might suggest that such a high moving rate reflects the flexibility of the British, their lack of attachment to one place or need for a long-term home to create a sense of belonging. Perhaps moving, for my British informants, was second nature and relocation to Spain did not differ from any other move. However, moving to another country was still a major change in one's life – suddenly the people around them did not speak the same language; they ate different food and worried about different things.

Hence, I would argue that such a drastic separation from the home country is worthy of deeper examination. Indeed, a move to a different country is a major decision in life that must be considered: it is about tearing yourself apart from the people you know and the familiar environment you have always associated yourself with.

Of course, my informants' willingness to move abroad did not just arise out of nowhere. Rather, it was a kind of post-traumatic response to some major events in their lives. This observation corresponds to the findings of Brian Hoye (2009), who also reported a sudden rupture among his American informants that resulted in the process of self-doubt and, eventually, a personal crisis. He reported that regardless of age, a large number of the lifestyle migrants he had interviewed went through a turning point of self-doubt and second-guessing in their lives, a personal crisis which ultimately resulted in the actual move (2009:42). A rupture in certain relationships (like parents, partners or siblings) or occupations creates an 'interstructural' state of 'liminality' in Victor Turner's terms (1967, 1974), in which people are already disconnected with the past but still do not associate with the future. The specific quality of ambiguity or disorientation that occurred in the middle stage of certain processes highlighted a disconnection with the initial stage of the process and a fear or inability to connect with the following stage. This was a way to explain disconnection with one's presumed identity and new role in the community. According to Horvath et al. (2009), during this in-between time hierarchies could be temporarily

dissolved or reversed and the continuity of tradition could be questioned. Similarly, by analysing middle-class American workers, Hoye (2009) found a parallel in the identity crises, watershed events in life, that his informants were reportedly undergoing. As Victor Turner noted in his work, a state of liminality could play an essential role in a 'process of regenerative renewal' (1985:159). In the particular case of Americans migrating to rural areas of Michigan (Hoye 2009), the crossroads at which informants found themselves opened up possibilities of reconsidering who they were and who they wanted to become.

For some of my British informants, the decision to move was triggered by news of diseases that would eventually kill them. Others were brutally fired from their long-term jobs. A few of my informants met a new partner, with whom they could imagine their life being different. Others, like Irvine and Charles, took early retirement:

We decided that we wanted to retire; because of the health reasons, we wanted to enjoy life. As opposed to working until you're 60, 65, and finding that you're dead next year kind of thing, there are loads of people like that. So we could afford to retire and so we did. At 55, we thought, 'Right, we're coming over here.' That was our choice. (Irvine, 60)

I just couldn't deal with it anymore, especially when my wife died. It was part of business she looked after – sort of oversaw the salaries and just day-to-day rooming – and I just couldn't do it anymore, so that was it. Well, doctors also said I needed to come to the sunshine. I've been diagnosed with a certain chest pain and they gave me a certain time to live, so I needed sunshine. So I got on the plane and away I left. (Charles, 62)

For others, sudden resolution of long-term care became an unexpected chance to do things differently:

My daughter had an incident and became disabled. That was absolutely devastating at the time. The court case took 12 years to go through. It was a very wearing process, so I needed some distance once she has got her compensation. Otherwise, I would have a breakdown. It was really difficult for me to effectively turn my back away from the family, but I couldn't take that much more. I would fly down pretty sharply on a number of occasions. I was terrified to tell our relatives that we were going, and their attitude was brilliant. They said, 'If your health [arthritis] is going to be better, go for it. You'll come over to England and we'll come over to Spain, and there is always

phone and Skype, so we will keep in touch.' Which I thought was a tremendous attitude, very not selfish. So we went. (Carrie, 66)

Some of the younger informants were refused a long-awaited promotion in their jobs, and when they were harshly denied, packed their bags and flew to Spain. 'There's more,' as one of my informants put it:

He [the boss] said: 'So basically it is not going to happen' [the expected promotion]. So I went home because I had to be there for the shop to open over the weekend; my days off were Thursday and Friday. On Thursday I went to my solicitor, I gave him a power of attorney to sell my house; I went to an estate agent and said, 'Can you sell my house?' Then Friday morning I flew to Spain and the MD called me up and he says, 'The shop is not open, where are you?'

'I went! Alicante airport,' I said. 'You know what it feels like to fly?' 'What?' – and I threw my mobile away. He called me up about 4 or 5 times asking me to go back. I said, 'Nah.' He botched on it once; I go back and it is going to happen again. There's more to life than that. (Evan, 30)

Such moments of immediate rupture made people stop, disconnect from their daily routine and look at their lives through a different lens. Many of them reflected on the constant race for efficiency that made them focus on a job. It locked them into concentrating on their routines, and they were left doing the jobs that were given to them and hoping not to get fired.

This was a dramatic realisation of the mismatch between their original aspirations and reality. Their attention was drawn to the fact that such ideals were not quite achievable – for example, paying out a lifelong mortgage for a house that only barely resembled the one that they dreamt of when they were young. It made them rethink their careers and relationships with friends and family. Most of them went on a search for something they were passionate about, and lives they could aspire to lead. The move to a different country was more of a result, rather than a catalyst for change.

Of course, there were those for whom, after such dramatic events, life itself lost its meaning. Some gave up, sold everything and tried to cheer themselves up, but for those who actually made the move, there was something that they found worth living for: a new partner, a new project or the realisation of their old desires.

Was it really about Spain?

As a destination country, Spain certainly had much to offer its new residents: plenty of sunshine, marvellous landscapes, wonderful Mediterranean cuisine and, of course, the easygoing '*mañana*' attitude where everything could be done tomorrow (not mentioning exactly which 'tomorrow' it would be). However, as in any migratory move, there were a number of push-and pull-factors that could better characterise a situation in which a migrant finds himself on the verge of a decision to go and live somewhere else.

To start with the push factors, lifestyle migrants mentioned unsatisfying political and social situations in the UK on multiple occasions. With increasing insecurity in the job market, many people had to work extremely hard to support families and pay bills, with council taxes and water and electricity bills rising every quarter of a year disproportionately to their salaries. The general feeling that the government was trying to implement too many rules and regulations created an atmosphere of confusion in which people no longer knew what they could do without stepping over the imaginary line drawn for them by the 'nanny state'.

Moreover, the British government introduced a number of regulations to promote more tolerant relations and include migrants and minority groups in local communities throughout the UK. These regulations suggested the adjustment of public behaviour in schools, hospitals and other public areas. Due to implied religious neutrality in some cities, Christmas trees were abandoned and 'Happy Holidays' were wished instead of 'Merry Christmas'. Similarly, more benefits were offered to recently arrived migrants, which made some of the British feel like the country was not taking care of them anymore and had instead simply abandoned them.

Certainly, a number of facilitating factors existed for lifestyle migration. As was mentioned in Chapter 2, the European Union project of integration and promotion of intra-European identity created favourable conditions for a move. Besides making the entire process of relocating, buying a house and getting children enrolled in schools easier for Europeans in every corner of the Union, it also created ambiguity surrounding who 'the European' actually was. Bellier

and Wilson (2000) drew similar conclusions, suggesting that such openness of the definition left plenty of space for people to act on their alternative or unpopular selves with minority racial, ethnic or political identities. The overarching nature of the intra-European identity also allowed lifestyle migrants to maintain their Britishness parallel to their new identities as full-time residents in Spain.

Moreover, special arrangements with the Spanish health system allowed some of the British migrants to go to local hospitals to seek medical advice and assistance, which was later directly paid from their British funds. A number of studies conducted in Spain (Fernandez-Mayoralas et al. 1998; Rodriguez Rodriguez 2008) have shown that the presence of cheap – indeed, virtually free – medical help was a decisive factor in many foreigners' decisions to move and live full-time in Spain. However, medications were at least as expensive as in the UK, and medical services almost never included aftercare; this was usually performed by Spanish relatives, to which the British obviously did not have access (this will be further discussed Chapter 8).

As for the pull factors, bright sun and blue sky were quite attractive for British lifestyle migrants. As there were only eight weeks a year when it was impossible to sit on an outside terrace, it made a rather desirable destination. Spain's warm weather improved the daily wellbeing of many people with certain chronic diseases, so the option to live without constant prescriptions was a great one. Moreover, with the decreasing prices for airfare, flights back to the UK became more available, and hence the whole relocation not as dramatic, being 'only 2.5 hours away'.

A large number of British migrants, in choosing where to live, were also attracted by the authenticity offered by somewhat remote areas: there would be more genuine people, living a romanticised life of 'simple pleasures and simple tasks'. Others saw it as a chance to show their children the 'real life', by which they meant qualities associated with working-class people who did not need extra material possessions that were supposed to make them feel better. In Spain, the British enjoyed life in a 'typical neighbourhood' with a mixture of private and rented houses, where neighbours knew each other, where a sense of

community prevailed and where their children could play in the streets while the elderly looked after them.

As it has been mentioned in Chapter 1, the growing popularity of tourism and the widely spread image of Mediterranean 'backwardness' resulted in normalising potentially exotic experiences. Such a combination of the 'postcard' – a static image and the nostalgic flavour with which it was presented – created a blurred image of the country. In that context, potential migrants might not necessarily feel attracted to Murcia, Andalucía or Cataluña in particular, but rather perceived 'abstract Spain' to be a destination.

In fact, such cultural 'extras' like bullfighting and flamenco music did not seem to be deciding factors for lifestyle migrants. In their imaginations, Spain existed in the same category as Italy, Malta and Australia: it stood for an attractive location where their new lives could finally start. The images that my informants had in mind before their move were shots of a landscape: empty, curving village streets and terraces with views to die for. Abstract beauty became attractive scenery for the proposed move, where dreams for their new lives would come true.

Some of my informants suggested that the image of Spain was a preconceived idea of the middle class in the UK, where sunshine, authenticity and affordability came together in a desired destination. Yet one could not but wonder: was it really about Spain? Or did it just happen to be Spain; could it just as easily be Cyprus, Greece or even Florida? Interestingly, when most of my informants were asked about the different options they had considered when choosing a place to relocate, the uniqueness of the country's history or its mentality were not the major criteria; rather, 'it just happened to be Spain'. A combination of all the factors mentioned above allowed Spain in this case – or France or Cyprus in others – to be portrayed as fertile ground for the personal projects of those lifestyle migrants.

The move as the key to an endless land of opportunities

After fully committing to their new projects and actually relocating, people started to accept reality in a different way. Many of them stopped living the 'draft' of their lives and instead tapped into the aspirational selves they wanted to be. Such aspirations for self-realisation were in line with the findings of social scientists like Pifer and Bronte (1986) and Laslett (1996), who suggested the rapidly emerging importance of the so-called Third Age. With increasing life expectancies in Western countries, a radical revision of attitude toward aging and achievement was noted. This usually took place in the time between two stages in life: the first characterised by independence, maturity, responsibility, earning and saving, and the second described as the final age of end-of-life dependency. Older people, feeling trapped by the hostile and demeaning label of 'elderly', began to demand new goals and aims at the ages of 50 or 60 when, statistically, they still had some 25 years to realise them. British lifestyle migrants wishing to engage in new projects seemed to be in the same state of mind, wishing to set new aspirations and give purpose to their 'additional' years.

Many migrants highlighted the fact that they felt like 'a new person': free, spontaneous, relaxed, harmonic and sometimes utterly romantic feelings ran like a thread through dozens of interviews that I conducted. For some, getting out of the UK was in itself an exciting experience that they had not dared to think about before. Others did something relatively unexpected, like changing their careers and opening bed-and-breakfasts in southeastern Spain without having any related experience in the hospitality industry:

It's just something we wanted to do. And as we got older... because we've always wanted to run a guest house – years and years ago, but never got off the ground... so I suppose retiring and then we came to look, 'cos we didn't come with the view to buying anyway at the time, but we did get the house big enough at the end. (Bridget, 64)

Some came to Spain without any particular plans of what they were going to do. They knew that they wanted to work to maintain their income, but nothing more specific. Many people came without even looking into the area, instead feeling more spontaneous and acting on the moment:

In actual fact, I've got off the plane in Alicante, I just sort of drove, ended up somewhere. I thought, 'This is quite good, nice little villages around.' Then I found this place and talked to one of the Spanish guys in the restaurant – said he got some land to sell, so I bought land from him. It was all done in the spur of the moment. Came out of the van, flew over, bought a piece of land, employed a builder – then I left it, I just left for two years. (Charles, 45)

Such adventurous spontaneity spread to the act of buying the first house they saw or spending all of their money on one house – ‘putting all the eggs in one basket’, as they put it, and ‘acting against our own advice and experience’. Even though such spontaneity was premeditated – they did buy a ticket, go to Spain, and consider buying a house there in the first place – this logical explanation, in my opinion, still did not reflect the true nature of the act. What was important to many of the British was the idea that they could do something ‘crazy’ like that – that they were capable not only of achieving it financially but also psychologically, going out of the permitted boundaries set for them by their family, the media and the government back in the UK.

Once we made a final decision to move, we put the house on the market and sold it in 48 hours. I thought, 'What do we do now?' So we came out on a 5-day viewing trip. We didn't know the area, so we looked at the map of Spain, and we knew we wanted to be down south; we didn't want it to be Torrevieja. We didn't want to go Malaga way, so we just sort of wiggled our fingers and pointed at the map and thought, 'That looks interesting, we'll go and have a look there.' So we got a very basic brochure. We arrived on the Monday, met the representative and viewed on the Tuesday and put a deposit down on it on the Thursday. (Reena, 64)

The ability to live and survive in a foreign environment, to learn the language and find one's way around, was a desirable idea. Starting a new life in a foreign environment was a huge step for most of them, although it could be argued that Spain was not as exotic as some other destinations could have been. However, it became quite clear after a very short period of time that for many British people, integration with their new environment was not their main aim. Instead, the mere idea of entering a new environment pushed them into discovering new ways they could live their new reality. Some of the British who enjoyed modern dwellings in the UK decided, upon arrival in Spain, to purchase old, crumbling town houses with crooked walls and windows that refused to close entirely.

Another important factor in moving to Spain was that decisions were made without worry for children, parents or regulations. Although such a strategy created a 'rose-coloured glasses effect' if the British didn't care much about the legality or trustworthiness of estate agents and builders, they nevertheless felt quite proud of being so independent and free.

Thus acting 'in the spirit of the moment', many British took on hobbies and activities they had been forced to give up back in the UK because of more prestigious jobs, lack of time or lack of motivation. Many of them picked up guitars or easels that had previously been gathering dust in their garages.

The general mood that prevailed while the British were planning their moves was one of adventure and challenge, even romance: packing whatever they could into caravans and setting into a journey, driving into the sunset. In interviews, they remembered their journeys through Europe, when they could finally fall asleep without stress and the thermometer in their car gradually began to rise, signifying that their final destination in the south was getting closer.

Due to the fact that many British could afford working part-time or did not need to work at all, instead living off their savings, many of them changed their daily routines and dedicated their time - their present - to the things they thought truly mattered. They suddenly found time for their friends. Some met in the afternoon for 'sparkly time', when they would sit in the shadows next to a swimming pool and drink local rosé champagne, discussing current political developments and the latest economic recovery strategies.

The challenging transformative potential of the move, however, was locked into the process of lifestyle negotiation. On one hand, lifestyle from Bourdieu's (1998) perspective was approached as a personal ability to differentiate between social codes used in society to make a distinction of one group from another. By buying property in a specific location, a person invested money into specific social knowledge, which he intended to share with the local people. However, the migrant lifestyle could no longer be considered a 'systematic product of habitus' (1998:172) recreating classificatory schemes in a society. Rather, it offered immediate means of gaining social knowledge that, according to

Bourdieu, was supposed to be acquired through a long process of early socialisation. Hence, lifestyle as a concept did not represent the identities of British migrants based on their heritage, but instead symbolised who they aspired to be and the realisation of the lives they were moving toward.

Such a vital process of lifestyle reinvention was in line with the argument of Nikolas Rose (1989, 1996), who outlined the growing importance of individual responsibility and self-provisioning articulated by the government. According to his observations, governance of the self is undertaken through autonomously taking control of defining one's goals and achieving them by personal powers. In those terms, 'lifestyle' can be understood as a reflexive, structured process of self-construction and self-presentation through consumption that underlines neo-liberal models of citizenship (Bell & Hollows 2006; Chaney 1996; Featherstone 1991; Giddens 1991). Such self-governance is usually communicated through lifestyle television, 'an inexpensive form of programming dedicated to refashioning and improving one's self, home, garden, and food' (Rosenberg 2011:7; see also Bonner 2005; Brunsdon et al. 2001; de Solier 2005). Such a process of empowerment involved the communication of self-governance techniques in order to help people 'morally and aesthetically improve [them]selves' (Bell & Hollows 2006:4). According to Palmer (2004), such programmes aimed to address insecurities and instruct viewers in matters of taste, especially those of working- and lower-middle classes in the context of an ever-changing social system where such divisions were not particularly clear. In his study of popular and high cultures, Herbert Gans (1999) suggested that in the process of social mobility, people learnt the different symbolic appropriations that came with material wealth. Buying a house abroad, perhaps, was one of these.

In buying a house, lifestyle migrants were actively redefining themselves as part of the destination community, hence considering themselves to share the anticipated common values of the new host country such as greater respect for the elderly and closer family ties. Hence, lifestyle migrants believed that they had gained some social capital, despite their new residence status in the community. By coming to dwell in and restore decaying houses in the old towns and taking responsibility for the farmland surrounding country houses,

migrants physically re-established themselves in their new destination environment, materialising their lifestyle inspirations. As will be discussed in fuller detail in Chapters 5, 6 and 7, lifestyle migrants were very eager to physically engage with their new homes by restoring them and choosing materials, techniques and arrangements for their dwellings, as well as undertaking the tasks of overseeing apricot orchards and vegetable garden plots as befitted the conduct of the Spanish countryside. However, these notions of one's active re-establishment in a new destination environment needed to be translated into the everyday life of the town. Although quite inspirational, one could wonder how these notions were communicated to the locals, whose lifestyles were more closely related to tradition and continuity rather than a chosen quality of life.

The British and the Spanish: an unarticulated dialogue

The original intention of this research project was to focus on the interaction between the British and the Spanish and the friction generated by the value systems of the two groups in dwelling next to each other. One might understand my frustration when, after living in the town for a few months, following my informants, meeting them and living with them, I realised it was clear that I was not destined to capture this grand opposition, as it was simply not well articulated. What I had been fantasising, sitting in my office in London, to be a 'constant merge of ideas through networks of British/Spanish friends and family' ended up being a strange process of coexistence, to which one could ultimately refer as 'an unarticulated dialogue'.

Of course, a number of preconceptions existed within each group before the actual contact of my informants, in their roles of residents alongside the Spanish, took place. The British referred to experiences of their touristic trips, mainly to the coastal areas, where they received impressions of friendly and welcoming Spanish people. For the Spanish, on the other hand, it was difficult to imagine British people as their neighbours. They mostly referred to the existing image of the 'bad British' - people buying houses on the coast, using

the Spanish health system and not contributing to the society in general. Later, when some British people moved to their villages, it was difficult to treat them as residents and not as tourists.

Once my British informants moved to their new environment, there was, of course, a certain level of interaction, sometimes in rather unexpected ways. Quite a few people, who decided to relocate to a more rural area in farmhouses outside the villages, were overwhelmed with help and advice from their immediate neighbours:

The first time we met our Spanish neighbour, he came by and started pulling all the weeds away. He moved some plants – he knew that we couldn't have watermelons here, otherwise they would blow up because it's too hot. The first melon we had, it was 9 kilos. He said that we need this, this and this. He got us someone to concrete the road. He was born and brought up here; he works on the land, he knows everybody. Doesn't speak any English. He told us if they need cutting, spraying. Irrigation channels were there from the river filling in the pond, and we just have to fill it in once in a while. (Vincent, 62)

In England you would just have flat land and it's all go down and you put your peas or whatever it is, but you don't do that here – you've got to do it the Spanish way. We had the first load of rain and it washed all the seeds away. So it's correct to do it the Spanish way; you got to listen. (Ben, 64)

Some informants living in the old part of town also received support from their neighbours. For men, advice on building and construction matters was generally what started relatively limited but friendly interactions, whereas the household was a common theme that both British and Spanish women could relate to:

I go shopping with Dolores, and we go together to the neighbouring village on the bus. I don't feel intimidated or frightened, because I can converse. We talk a lot, we laugh a lot. We teach each other cooking. Considering that she doesn't speak any English at all, I am quite comfortable going out and about with her. (Nicole, 57)

Those interactions, however, remained more of an exception than a rule. The majority of my informants limited communication with their Spanish neighbours to a friendly '*hola*' every now and then and a traditional exchange of homemade or homegrown goods before the Christmas holidays.

In general, however, the British had to learn how to communicate with the Spanish by doing it, making mistakes and seeking advice from other British who had been through the same experience. One of the most difficult instances of communication was, of course, the Spanish bureaucracy: in local town halls, it was all about who you knew and to whom were you related. Local lawyers would call a cousin or friend if someone was about to start a legal case against them, and local authorities would not necessarily give someone permission to build unless he or she had some channels of relatedness. As official requests could last months in Spain, some of the more experienced and sharp-witted British took advantage of the relational system they had come to live in:

I went to see somebody else I know from the town hall who was in charge of works – street works – and I saw him and I said, ‘Oh, Antonio, I need your help. I’ve got this open sewer outside the house – it is stinking. All I want is permission to tap into the main drain.’ He said, ‘When do you want to do this?’ I said, ‘Today?’ He said on the phone, ‘That’s fine, that’s not a problem.’ That was in the morning; it was about 11 o’clock. About 8 o’clock that night we dug up the road, tapped into the main’s drains, and they still aren’t charging me for it. But it was hilarious! We dug up the road, we held up the traffic. (Nadine, 58)

Others who became personally involved with the renovation of their houses had to struggle, fighting against local ways of doing things and proposing their own views of ‘new traditional Spanish’ building:

For a start, they think we are completely strange because we live in the campo [countryside]. If you speak to Spanish, they don’t live in the campo. Most Spaniards have a place in the campo because of the inheritance laws and because of the ways things have happened in Spain, and it still holds true. They always had their place for yielding the crops in the country, but they live in the towns. So they tend to have two places: the town is where they live, the country is where they come for weekends and holidays to play around, make a lot of noise, light fires, enjoy themselves and go home again. Because we live in the country, we are weird because that’s what poor people do. In England, it’s completely the opposite. You are probably poorer if you live in the town. And you have a nice country property – that’s considered really upper-class. Here it’s completely different, so we are the poor people that live in the countryside. So when they come here and they see what we’ve got, it’s like - wow, it’s not just a little shack, it’s not just a little cottage. It looks from outside quite small because it’s just a little rustic rectangle, but actually it’s not small, and they think it’s really strange.

The guy who owned this big piece of land before us had died seven years before we bought – been dead about nine years, yeah – so it was overgrown, it was full of rubbish. I mean, the Spanish take on this area is that ‘medio ambiente’ [environment] is important and that it’s a beautiful location near the river, needs to be... You don’t have buildings, it’s not ‘urbanisable’ – in other words, that’s why the building’s in trouble. But it was full of old bits of cars, dead dogs and everything that Spanish wanted to dump in this long grass. It was hideous, and we can’t seem to get through to the Spanish that we can enhance the area; we are not necessarily going to make it worse. We are not going to make it worse, that’s not possible. We will enhance it, we will keep it in style, we will make it rural, we are gonna plant extensively if you just give us the chance. And it will be beautiful, we will make it a much nicer area... (Eleanor, 51)

Besides those confrontations and rare bonding activities, the main impressions that the British shared with me came from observations and stories they also shared among their British acquaintances. These turned almost to anecdotes, as I came to hear multiple variations of such stories while living in the town: they were stories of the ‘other’ that the British lived next to. Allocating certain characteristics to the Spanish created a means for the British to learn how to navigate and survive in their foreign environment.

To start with, one of the most powerful images was the fact that their new Spanish neighbours had never left their hometowns; this, of course, was greatly opposite to the worldviews of the British, who had committed to full-time relocation to another country:

With the Spanish people, the problem with the Spanish people here is that they are very parochial: this is their world and they never explore beyond it. I would say this is true of about 80 per cent of Spanish people I know here. For example, there is a farmer down the road, and I was talking to him one day and he said he’s never been to the neighbouring village! He is the same age as me; he is about 45 or 46... He told me he’s never been to that village in his life! The only time he goes out of town is once a year – they have a holiday or a day trip and they go to the beach, and they always go to the same beach every year and that’s it. That is big adventure. But as I said, he’s got a very parochial outlook: he’s got his friends here, he works here, his bar is here and that’s all he does. It’s all local; he doesn’t have a bigger picture. I don’t think he’s ever been to Madrid or Barcelona or... he’s never been outside Spain, to another country. (Trey, 45)

A deeper attachment among the Spanish to traditions and a feeling of continuity also amazed the British:

Spanish people, they get married later than an English person would ever get married. Here they get married in their late 20s, 30s, and they buy a dining room table and they sit at that dining room table the first day after they get married; they have their first supper or their first dinner at that dining table and before they go off to the 'cemetario' they have their last dinner on that same table because they bought that table for life. They bought a table for 1500 euros, but to have it forever and ever. Doesn't matter if it's gonna look out of fashion; they buy it for life. They buy things for life. Whereas we possibly... since we lived here in Spain to sit down and have dinner... probably 4 tables. Because I don't want the same table all my life. (Conor, 48)

Another characteristic of the 'other' was their connection to the land, as they were aware of where their food was coming from. Participation in gardening and farming was a large part of socialisation in these villages:

It's weird, isn't it, because I've got a video of a rabbit killed and skinned and so forth, which I intend to put on YouTube just for the hell of it. I think it's great. It's just an ordinary domestic couple; they couldn't be more ordinary, but they are just laying this rabbit down and chopping the legs off and things – it's great. If I showed that on English television, there would be letters, people complaining. But over here it's the most normal thing. It's quite shocking to me that you can walk down the road on a Saturday afternoon and if you walk past that place down in Gran Via you'll see little girls, maybe 9, 10 years old, walking out with rabbits, and they'll be holding the rabbits by the back legs, taking them back for the meal. And I think it's wrong what happens in England, where everything is sanitised and people think that rabbits wear waistcoats and things... You know Enid Blyton? She wrote stories about rabbits and ducks wearing waistcoats and things like that and treated them like people. Anthropomorphised. It's just the idea of putting animals in human situations, they... I think it's done a lot of damage in England because people have separated from food sources and they don't understand nature. That's one of the things I find refreshing about Spain. (Trey, 45)

Similarly, for some of the British who had placed their children in local schools, it was difficult to fight against the local professional continuity that was promoted or merely presumed there. One of the women told me of a difficult experience she had when her children came back from school one day. There, they had been told that the jobs and careers they should be aiming for were

only those that their parents held – butchers’ children should want to become butchers, and the children of farmers should ‘obviously’ grow up to be farmers. Having made such a dramatic life change themselves, it was existentially difficult not to criticise the local ways and explain the local point of view to their children.

The essence of such an unarticulated dialogue, however, was not even about the language. Of course, for many British it was difficult to get communication across in the local dialect, especially if some of them had moved when they were older than 60 and had not learned or used the foreign language earlier in their lives.

We got more Spanish now than in the beginning, but we still can't have a conversation properly because if you say one thing, she goes, 'Shhhhhhhhhhhhhhh' [speaking Spanish quickly]... [Laughs] She thinks 'Oh! They actually got it at last.' (Bailey, 74)

A few of the British were taking Spanish classes, but for many of them, this was to feel more confident in their daily lives rather than creating stronger bonds with the Spaniards. Those British who already had very good Spanish knowledge and were able to communicate fluently with the locals, however, expressed their anxieties about communication:

But here, because of these family values, they are already so settled in their friends, it's so difficult to make Spanish friends. You can talk to them superficially, but like friends-friends, from my opinion, in the village, it's very difficult. Even though my Spanish is perfect, it's very difficult. I know a man here, Alfonso, and we worked a lot together, but that's because of work. Then his daughter married; I went to her wedding, but that's the first. (Catherine, 48)

Well, it's very difficult to integrate in Spain. The sense of family unit is quite strict and people are not eager to get to know you. Like, my neighbours are really, really nice, and they will do all sorts of things for me, but they've never invited me for a dinner or in the house or for a cup of tea or anything yet. It's just not done. And that's why I find it very difficult; getting closer to Spanish people is very difficult. (Gavin, 70)

In general, the dialogue about the friction that I was presupposing did not take place as such. The British were overwhelmed with unexpected advice and

support from their neighbours in rare cases, but they also had to find local ways of dealing with authorities and created a relatively homogenous image of the Spanish 'other' they could imagine themselves living next to. Among all of my informants, only two or three British families had constant contact with their Spanish neighbours and what one could call friendship and a dialogue about their experiences in their new destination country. The rest of their communication with the locals had been limited to random conversations in bars, cafés, banks, fruit markets and pharmacies that usually included making jokes and talking about the weather, which created a feeling of presence and belonging.

So why did one not observe more intense interaction between the two groups? Was it because the Spanish did not welcome the newcomers? Or was it because the British did not intend to become closer and assimilate in the traditional sense of migration? One could suggest that the British lifestyle migrants were a classical case of the 'imagined' and 'simulated' community according to Carrington (2002) and Albrow et al. (1997). Following their definition, 'community is a process of being disembedded to the extent that we identify its reconstitution on a non-local, non-spatially bounded basis' (Albrow et al. 1997:25). In this case, people define themselves around particular constructed identities rather than shared locations. Carrington stated that people 'make use of available technologies to pursue common agendas regardless of fractured physical presence' (2002:118). This means that people may not be as willing to bond with people in their immediate location, instead using technology to connect with people they feel close to, whom they can rely on and with whom they can build relationships deeper and more meaningful than with those who live on the other side of the fence.

Looking at British lifestyle migrants from such an angle allows for an understanding of their inner wishes and desires. For them, moving to Spain was not a traditional migration in which the presumed aim was integration with the destination environment. Rather, what mattered to these people was the power of the move: they could disconnect from their environment back in the UK and their lives there, which had been aimed at building a future that might never come, and relocate to a different environment - in this case, Spain -

to create something new, something that would make their lives happier. Many of them dedicated themselves to working on the relationships with their immediate family in Spain as well as to improving their relationships with relatives back in the UK.

On creating something new

In some cases the cruel reality of the real estate market in the UK had discouraged lifestyle migrants from the dream of buying a house; however, in their new environment of the Spanish countryside, houses were much more affordable, which meant that they did not have to take out 25-year mortgages to make such a dream come true.

Moving to Spain was the perfect way to create a special place where relationships were given a second chance and could prosper without disturbance from other relatives. Interestingly, and perhaps surprisingly, the family occupied a very central place in the lives of lifestyle migrants; finally they could enjoy their families at their best in the present.

Many of my informants who were parents or future parents mentioned that the towns they had moved to were great places for children to grow up. Additionally, most of them felt proud that they had given their children not only a chance to learn another language, but also the ability not to be 'limited to one perspective', as would have been the case if they had stayed in the UK. Also, having the chance to work more flexible hours or, in some cases, not to work at all allowed them to spend more time with their children, which they could not afford to do back in the UK. Becoming better parents was an essential part of rediscovering themselves in their new environment.

The mature couples, on the other hand, were somewhat happy that their adult children had flown the nest, seeing this as an opportunity to do something for themselves alone. Other couples, after going through serious personal cataclysms – misunderstanding, separation, infidelity, etc. – decided to give their relationships a second chance; the move became a material embodiment of

the opportunity for revitalisation that they were willing to give their partnerships. Additionally, some mature couples, experiencing a lack of communication with their children and grandchildren when still in the UK, felt very lonely in the context of the UK's anonymous neighbourhoods and saw the move as a way of escaping this loneliness. They substituted their own kinship relationships with those of the kin of their neighbours and friends in their destination country, who were much more family-orientated.

Quite surprisingly, an enormous amount of the British with whom I conducted this research happened to be newer couples. They had been married already (some two or even three times) and had children from their previous marriages back in the UK; the common phrase 'We have five children together' acquired another meaning for me in the time that I spent with them. Usually, these people were newly married or living together, trying to build a new reality just for the two of them. The whole process of bringing together two very different people with rich pasts was a challenge, but doing so in a foreign environment was a great opportunity to start from scratch.

On a different level, however, through the means of the Internet and telephone as well as certain physical changes, one's house in Spain also became the place for the negotiation of relationships with kin back in the UK. This home-island far away from home was chosen as a safe platform upon which to negotiate relationships, albeit in somewhat of a counterintuitive way.

How exactly these processes took place will be discussed in greater detail in the following three chapters, which will cover the three types of material environments that the British chose as their residences: the old town houses, farmhouses outside of towns in the countryside and the houses in the *urbanizaciones*, Spanish versions of gated communities which were not actually gated but were located outside of the towns.

Chapter 5

Owners of town houses, or 'Why buy a ruin?'

The process of building a house is as inseparable from the experience of dwelling as the physical environment of the house itself. Martin Heidegger, in his well-known essay *Building Dwelling Thinking* (1975), observed that building both cultivated and expressed dwelling. Both 'building' and 'dwelling' could refer to a house, but also to the processes that constitute, and contribute to, the experience of residing in one. The British who chose to buy old, decaying houses in Spain engaged in the process of rebuilding them and, hence, personally defining them. In this chapter, I will discuss how their new environment of old houses was created, renewed and related to and delineate the issues and relations that were reworked and redefined through this.

A house of a migrant is certainly a more complex notion, as it is no longer simply about the perfect combination suggested by Heidegger of building techniques, the layout of the house and its compatibility with the environment. A number of factors, such as cultural background negotiation and reinvention

of traditions, constitute the construction of migrants' new homes (Herzfeld 1991; Horst 2007; Probyn 1996). Migrants' homes are also complex notions for anthropologists, as people express numerous things through their dwellings, from their value of homeownership (Bourassa 1994; Pulvirentia 2000) and ancestral continuity to their sense of belonging to the local diaspora (Jacobs 2006). These notions, however, were wide, complex, and specific to the different contexts in which they were observed, so when approaching the old town dwellings in Villar del Río, I wanted to go 'back to the roots' and examine the notions of building and dwelling suggested by Heidegger. Out of three relocation options available for the British, old town houses were by far the most decayed, requiring actual construction and building. By focusing on the ways in which lifestyle migrants engaged with their decaying houses, one could examine the values communicated through these processes as well as the approaches taken to their new dwellings in the destination environment.

Here, the history of the modernisation of Villar del Río will first be looked at to provide a historical and cultural framework of the dwellings that the British later came to inhabit. I will present two case studies of British lifestyle migrant households in greater detail to allow for a better understanding of the processes that the migrants became involved with once they committed to the renovation of their dwellings. Subsequently, the attraction of the British to the decaying past will be examined and compared with the ways in which local Spaniards connected with the memories that these falling-apart ruins represented for them. I will consider if the British were able to create the same type of close and meaningful connection with these decaying dwellings as the locals. These fieldwork observations, together with discussions of anthropological ideas about decaying houses and their productive capacities, will finally allow us to answer the question: 'Why would a lifestyle migrant buy a ruin?'

Modernisation of Villar del Río

Villar del Río was located in the inland rural part of the Murcia region. A small town of 16,000 inhabitants, Villar del Río had a wide range of shops, several

supermarkets on the outskirts, branches of all major banks and even a bullring for yearly competitions. However, besides the new town with modern apartment blocks and wide roads, a large section was occupied by the old town with its antique buildings, ancient churches and leafy squares, giving Villar del Río an air of timeless simplicity and the feel of a village.

The old town looked like the film set for a period drama. There were cobbled streets barely wide enough to accommodate the intermittent traffic, lined by clusters of partially yellow, white and terracotta-coloured decaying houses. In the morning, one was roused by the roar of motorbikes, the main mode of transport in this part of town, as local residents headed off to work. During the day there were scarcely any people out walking in the streets: one could encounter an elderly lady sweeping the street in front of her house in her dressing gown and some dogs barking at random passersby. The regular chime of the church bell defined the daily routine, and one could hear boys screaming while playing football during their sport classes somewhere at the back of the old town.

The old part of the town was full of houses that working families had built for themselves from cheap and widely available materials such as rocks and mud. In the beginning of the 20th century, the majority of the town's population occupied these houses, as few people could afford to build anything new or even to restore their own dilapidated dwellings (Figure 7).



Figure 7:
Types of houses in the old part of the town

An existential crisis came to the village around the 1960s, when the local crafts of weaving and tile molding, together with agriculture in general, were majorly undermined by industrialisation. Agriculture became a far less significant part of the national economy and hence provided a smaller share of employment in Villar del Río as well as in Spain as a whole.

According to Adrian Shubert (1990), though the Franco regime proclaimed an ideology of the 'sovereignty of the peasantry', the values underlining rural life did not find much support in the main line of the Spanish government. Increasing industrialisation resulted in rising unemployment and a massive amount of migration to the cities as well as abroad. Only a small number of people living in the countryside were able to invest in the new technology of tractors and other machinery. Such technological improvement increased productivity, consequently widening the gap between those who could afford machinery and those who could not. One could imagine that 'the smallholder's standard of living declined relative to that of other groups, to the point when it was little better than that of the agricultural labourer' (Shubert 1990:221-222).

When work opportunities were scarce and not as profitable, citizens of Villar del Río did not escape the major trends of migration. The relocation city of choice in the 1960s became Barcelona, as it had a high demand for skilled craftsmen. Many young people left their extended families and sometimes abandoned their houses to start a new life in Catalonia, where their skills were more greatly needed. I heard many stories of locals whose family members made such a move. Those who migrated created their own community there, even bringing their patron saint from Villar del Río to their new churches in Barcelona. However, because families were still a very central part of these migrants' lives, they continued to return at times of major holidays to see their families and old friends.

As for those who stayed in the village, they became subject to plummeting wages in the early 1980s and more intensive rhythms of work. The increasing unemployment of agricultural labourers made life dreadful in terms of labour market opportunities; workers would spend the four months in winter doing

nothing but spending time with family and friends, wandering around the region trying to find any kind of daily job available.

As for Spain's political stance at the time, a 'neo-liberal course' had been proclaimed in the 1980s (Heywood 1995). Although this government did introduce greater flexibility in the labour market, which resulted in a massive increase of temporary contracts in 1984, the state still remained a big part of the system by securing its presence in the critical areas of Spain's economic structure: banking and energy providers. While trying to see themselves as 'letting it go', the central government remained interventionist in the construction of roads and infrastructure, even at the most remote corners of the country.

In his analysis of rural life, Shubert (1990) was convinced that despite the major formal changes happening in the country in the last half-century, life in rural settings did not seem to change that much; the government still had the majority of the power, retaining control over those areas that mattered, like banking or infrastructure. The state was still trying to modernise economically failing agricultural activities, which made most jobs temporal or seasonal and contributed to the uncertainty of rural life.

Hoggart and Paniagua (2001) came to similar conclusions, finding that beginning in Franco's time there had been no fundamental transformation of rural society. Of course there was some change, with huge population losses, the alteration of local social structures and the transformation of economic opportunities. Yet rural Spain had not been restructured in any fundamental way. They suggested that, although these massive efforts were undertaken to encourage new economic enterprises – especially in the tourism and second housing sector – they did not really help to transform the rural society, which was majorly based on family-centred social networks.

Although one could agree that no major changes took place in the rural way of managing things, certain transformations in the built environment certainly occurred as a result of family ties, personal connections and local economic contracts.

Until 2003, there was only a dusty road to the capital of the province that locals used to drive on with horses and carriages. Since then, many more goods and services became available to locals, with shops and companies building their offices in the town. At that time, however, the old part of the town, *casco antiguo*, looked like a hill of ramshackle buildings in comparison to the modern houses (from 1980 onward) that had been erected in the village. Apartments in these newly built houses became the focus of aspirations for a better place to live. The younger generation tended to leave their parents behind in the old part of the town, seeking to relocate to more modern dwellings. Even when relatives who were living in the historic part of the town died, their tenants were not willing to take on the houses. Buildings were left behind, not even considered worthy of renovation. This was more than a matter of the actual cost of renovation; it was a case in which aspirations were replaced and values shifted.

Ruth Behar (1986) had similar findings in her observations of traditional mud walls in the village in northwestern Spain where she conducted research. These walls were no longer built, as the necessary technique was quite specific and required continual maintenance. The fact that such walls kept warmth in the house during the winter and reflected light during the summer was not an effective argument for local dwellers. Similarly, Barrett (1986) reported that local dwellers had little appreciation for old things and readily tore down the centuries-old façades of their homes to replace them with blank exteriors.

In Villar del Río, however, the locals' new goals were to raise their children in modern buildings where the walls were not crooked or falling apart, where straight lines created perfectly shaped rooms, where isolation and central heating eliminated worries about the cold during the winter - where their children would be privileged to grow up in a modern environment, enjoying all the fruits of civilisation (Figure 8).



Figure 8:
Street views
of Villar del
Río of the old
and new parts
of the town

Ambiguity of the decaying past

The abandoned buildings and structures that were left to decay in Villar del Río carried a certain potential to understate the social consciousness, lived experiences, material conditions and cultural change that took place in the town. In anthropology and archaeology, ruins have proven to be productive sources of information, not only about societies that no longer exist (Nowakowski 2001; Stevanovic 1997), but also more recent events, the participants of which in some cases are still alive (Buchli & Lucas 2001a; Legendre 2001).

Abandoned buildings are sometimes interpreted as places of memory and collective recollection where relevant episodes of common history took place (see for example Allison 1999). However, the fact that different structures were consciously ruined or left to decay did not directly signify a path to oblivion, but rather a 'complex attitude towards things, in which ideas of identity, memory, and selfhood are deeply involved—a dialectic between forgetfulness and remembrance' (González-Ruibal 2005:131).

Melanie Van der Hoorn (2003) highlighted situations in which, by falling apart into multiple pieces, houses or structures were transformed into a multiplicity of objects that signified the past of different buildings. Those small parts became talismans, souvenirs that could be transported but also owned by many people who had their own connection with that ruin (be it a structure, like the Berlin Wall, or a commercial building, like the Twin Towers of New York). This was also another form of remembering in which people could alter the meaning of these fragments by personally handling them, reciting their individual experiences and, in the multiplicity of different stories, giving sense to the more complex history that those ruins stood for. The decayed or destroyed structures became valuable intermediaries between history and individual experience, through which people managed the processes of remembering and forgetting and, in doing so, defined themselves.

Ruins of houses, moreover, represented a certain type of decaying past in which it was not only the structure, but also the house itself, that mattered as a social unit and influenced the daily life that took place inside of it. According to Buchli and Lucas (2001b), different abandoned artefacts that could be found inside of those houses transmitted ideas of what life in those houses was really like, channelling the types of relationships that could be found there as well as recovering onetime personal dramas.

In the particular case of Spain, the decaying houses located throughout the country had become subject to different reinterpretations and usage. Due to their difficult history, these houses became a means of assessment of the complex past and, through it, the renegotiation of selves.

In her study of the village of Los Olivos in western Andalucía in the early 1980s, Jane Fishburne Collier (1997) noted that there was a general rejection of memories of the past when the majority of people lived in relatively poor conditions. The population of Los Olivos, together with neighbouring villages, was subject to an increasing amount of emigration to big cities in Spain and Europe beginning around the turn of the century and doubling in the 1960s. After this point, when parents told their children about their past in Los Olivos, they tended to use stories that had been presented in encyclopaedias instead of

referring to their grandparents' histories and asking them to share their own experiences. This signified a general trend in which people were trying to redefine themselves from 'being traditional' to 'having traditions'.

Similarly, the migrants who returned to Galicia in northwestern Spain from their journeys to Europe and America held very strong attitudes toward the decaying ruins of what used to be their homes. In his study of contemporary Galicia, Alfredo González-Ruibal (2005) highlighted the fact that many of the returning migrants came to feel a sense of shame for their old pre-modern peasant identities. Instead of being places for recollection and the shaping of positive memories at the moment of return, the ruins of their houses were approached with disappointment and rage toward the past that they represented. However, the returning Galicians did not abandon their decaying dwellings. Rather, they became engaged in an active process of dealing with memory and personal biographies through their decaying material culture. The ruins were sometimes used as basement levels for new villas that the returning migrants could finally afford with the money they had earned abroad.

When migrants built new houses in the same neighbourhoods, or even on top of their old houses, the final victory over their dreadful past was celebrated. In that case, the 'home' was evidently not a place of return, but rather a notable point from which one could symbolically escape.

These decaying houses became an important scene within which the Spaniards could define their new selves. Hence, one could join González-Ruibal (2005) in speaking about a *need* for a decaying past that was very productive in its nature. The past was modified through altering its materiality.

The decaying houses throughout Spain had a very distinctive character, as they were abandoned by multiple families – and sometimes entire villages – and left untouched for generations. Some of these houses were able to escape modernisation and, hence, were great examples of a traditional, vernacular way of constructing houses in which the knowledge of forms and techniques was handed down through generations.

Here, however, numerous questions arise: were British newcomers able to reflect on the decayed houses as the locals did and create a connection with these ruins, with which they had no previous history or personal memories? Were they really able to connect with the tradition that was a major force in shaping those dwellings? Were they able to channel the complexity of the past and redefine themselves through their new houses?

The British need for a decaying past

In the case of Villar del Río, where local Spaniards might have considered using these falling-apart ruins as nothing more than summer retreats and weekend gathering places for their family members, foreigners – mainly northern Europeans – began to arrive in the late 1990s, buying these old houses and subsequently renovating them. The locals found the actions of these foreigners to be very strange, but hardly ignorant. Of course, they could not but wonder at the increasing demand and, hence, prices for such dwellings, but their reactions could be mainly described as ‘touched’ by the genuine interest of the British. As for the British themselves, there were almost none of the feelings of ‘reviving the beauty of the old town’, ‘improving local conditions’ or ‘saving the day’ that I had originally presumed would exist before coming to the field. Rather, they felt a strange desire to become physically engaged with the reconstruction of their new dwellings, creating something personal for their families. They demonstrated their fascination with embodiment and ‘becoming’ through buying a house, choosing its new look with different techniques and materials and deciding on the functionalities and social aspects of its layout.

Of course, buying one of the dilapidated old houses in the historic town centre was only one of multiple options open to British people who wanted to relocate to the Spanish countryside. An exact number is hard to estimate, but one could suggest that roughly one-third of lifestyle migrants chose to dwell in these houses. Another third of the British decided upon houses in the countryside, and the remaining third opted to live in the *urbanizaciones* – local types of gated communities located outside of towns.

The majority of the British who chose to live in the old part of town were younger couples with children or retirees in their 60s. Such a general grouping could be presupposed by the fact that out of the three options, the town houses had the lowest price tags. Of course, there was generally also an open bill for the renovation of such dwellings, but that was a matter of future investments that could be dealt with later. The younger families with children, usually limited in their funding, found such an option quite attractive. They also benefitted from the accessibility of schools and kindergartens in the town. As for the elderly couples, those who were not able to drive any more for various reasons had better access to hospitals and public transportation in the area.

Statistically, however, those living in town houses were the youngest group of the British, with an average age of 37 at the moment of their arrival to Spain in comparison with 51 for those who moved to the countryside and 56 to the 'urbanizaciones'. These statistics were calculated using quantitative data collected during my fieldwork and were generally supported by the numbers provided by the local town hall.

Yet why would one want to buy a ruin? The multiple interviews I conducted with estate agents and those British who had already bought or were looking to buy a house, as well as certain viewing appointments to which I tagged along, all revealed the fact that there were not that many 'selling strategies' used to attract buyers. There were no specific romantic, cosy characteristics introduced by estate agents; in fact, many of them confirmed that they did not share the British people's widespread fascination with these houses' charm, but were happy to show them around. In fact, it was the buyers themselves who tried to picture themselves in the dwellings, visualising their desired homes in these decaying houses.

An early retirement couple: on rediscovered agency

Catherine (49) and Neil (56)

For a number of years after moving to Spain and living in the coastal area, Catherine was struggling to find a permanent job that would bring her steady

income. She had moved to the coast because it seemed to be one of the most straightforward paths she could take in relocating to a new country. Yet after a while, the idyllic Spanish town it had once seemed began to grow too quickly, becoming too big and too anonymous.

At that time, Catherine met Neil, who was separated like she was, and they decided to look for a house in the inland area. They felt that the coast was full of British tourists and those who came during the winter months, which contributed to a surreal 'never-ending holiday' feeling. The new couple could not find their peace and daily routine there, so they decided to make a move away from the 'hyper-excited visitors'. They chose the village of Villar del Río for its authenticity and distinctive personality.

Catherine and Neil were looking for something adventurous to do together. They did not want to go skydiving, but buying a house in such a unique and different environment was a challenge they felt ready for. The rural environment seemed to be such a hidden treasure that Catherine and Neil, quite naïvely, believed that they would be the only British people in the village. As for the house itself, such a move was in line with their general likes and dislikes: for a long time they had been living in different 'square apartments with bare ceilings and nothing to stop a gaze at'. A house with character, however, was something exciting they looked forward to.

It was the second house shown to them by the estate agent that Catherine really liked. Admittedly, it was not really a house, but more of a ruin at that time. The house was in such a decayed state that only Catherine's vision of what could be done with the house convinced Neil of the worthiness of the project. 'Imagine!' she said, and he believed her. Indeed, her partner could not but see the number of opportunities the house offered for a transformation into what they wanted their new house to be like. It had its own charm to it, unlike any house they had ever seen. It used to be two different houses; when they had been combined into one, every room was on a different level. It was unique, and they liked it. There was no solid roof, no intact floors, no electricity, no toilets, no water – nothing. Catherine simply said, 'Imagine!'

She just had a feeling about the house, and immediately saw what one could do with it by taking some of the walls out and dividing spaces. The complexity of the house did not frighten Catherine; rather, it fascinated her. It was a perfect, almost empty vessel for all of the possible narratives about their new future together to be written into. Yet at the same time, it had such a peculiar structure that they began to ask their neighbours about it, trying to find out more regarding its history.

They managed to collect only small pieces of information about it, as much of the town's archives went missing during the time of Franco. Apparently this house had become a ruin at some stage and was sold to the owner by a gipsy some hundred years ago. At that time, only a small written note was produced to seal the deal. These papers were later retraced by the couple's lawyers, who contacted distant relatives of the seller to prove that the neighbouring house was indeed a part of the dwelling that was supposed to be added to the deed of the property.

The house itself used to have its own wine press. The former owners would have come up the road with donkeys pulling their carts. There also used to be a horse stable in the house; another part of the dwelling once served as a chicken house, where some rabbits were kept as well. The living areas of the house had been divided into smaller sections. Years ago, when a son or daughter was married, he or she did not necessarily move out of the house; instead, a part of the house was blocked off for that child and his or her family to use.

Such a maze of housing units was rather typical in these towns, as with time many houses were divided among siblings when their parents died. Some parts were given to children when they were about to be married so that they could in turn raise children of their own there. In some cases, parts of houses were sold to neighbours to raise some additional money for the family. It was not uncommon to find some spaces, like kitchens, located across the street in a separate building, often occupying one or two rooms.

Catherine and Neil's building, like many others in that part of the village, had a very complex structure across three floors; its stairs led in different directions like a labyrinth. One of its greatest features was that it was intuitively difficult

to guess in which direction one should go next. There were a great amount of one- or two-step connections and rooms located diagonally from each other, so that one had to position one's body in many different directions in a short amount of time. This made walking in the house a separate experience worth mentioning. Though a fantastic feature, the house's flowing nature raised some problematic issues for Catherine and Neil. Some rooms led directly to others, limiting the privacy of their potential occupants. The couple planned to close off some of the rooms and install extra doors to create an environment they could comfortably dwell in.

Neil said that they wanted the house to be very personal, as it was the first house that they actually would choose and work to create as a couple. They were very happy to have a house with intriguing character; lacking certain basics, like parts of the roof or staircase, the house allowed space for interpretation.

When Catherine and Neil started renovation on the house, they noticed that in a few areas materials were used that were relatively modern, from the 1960s or 1970s. When they smashed the false ceilings, they discovered some of the older construction underneath, which had most likely been covered up by some of the house's previous owners in favour of more modern and fashionable decoration. The original beams and curved ceilings covered with white plaster were a true discovery for the British treasure hunters. By renewing these ceilings, Catherine and Neil felt like they were giving a real house a second life – a second chance to become a unique living environment one could be proud to dwell in.

By knocking on false walls and double floors and finding that many of them were hollow, the couple discovered many more hidden features. They found a fireplace at the back of the house that people had once used to cook dinners and heat the smaller living rooms more economically. In the cellar, they also found a source of water storage – a huge jar with a cone-shaped bottom like an amphora – as well as bits of pottery that were probably 100 years old. They tried not to modernise their house too much, so they kept as many of the house's little

nooks and crannies as they possibly could, including a lot of old doors, floor tiles and an area designated as a chapel.

Yet before any of the actual renovation work could take place, Catherine and Neil had to apply to the local town hall to obtain a renovation licence. The local authorities were supposed to regulate all of the changes that could be made to the house. In general, the local government of Villar del Río was always very pleased when people decided to invest in the houses in the old part of the village, but were conscious of all the possible 'modernisation' that could take place. British people were required to come to the town hall to obtain licences, pay a fee and let a local conservation architect draw a set of recommendations for their renovation.

When Catherine and Neil decided to rebuild the roof of their house, they submitted a request form to the local town hall, paid 30 euros and began their renovation. However, their licence for small renovation work arrived just when the roof was about to be finished. According to the newly issued document, their new roof was not supposed to be higher than the original level of the house, which at that stage it had already exceeded. The inspector that came from the town hall a few weeks later to check the building process was not happy about the whole project and declared that what they were doing could not be officially permitted. Moreover, according to the local regulations, some stairs needed to be changed, as they were too low. However, Catherine could not understand the logic of the inspector: their neighbours' roof, which had once been part of a single building, was already higher than the original level. The inspector sympathetically explained to the newly arrived couple that earlier regulations were not so strict: back then, one could build without a licence up until neighbours began to complain. Then, of course, the town hall would react and take some steps to bring the project back to the outlined conditions. Catherine was not very satisfied with the inspector's vague answer.

Catherine and Neil soon realised that one of the major problems with many local bureaucratic arrangements was the absence of documents where rules and regulations would be clearly outlined. Many of these regulations were passed through word of mouth in the British community.

According to such reports, those who were renovating houses in the old part of the town were not allowed to use window frames made of white aluminium. It was quite logical to see how modern details such as this might ruin the image of the town that the municipality had made an attempt to create a framework for. Yet at the same time, Catherine and Neil were allowed to use wooden frames painted white, as they matched the house's interior. Moreover, on the second floor they were permitted to use wooden-looking aluminium frames so that their colour would blend in with the exterior façade.

There were certain rules that existed regarding renovation within the town, and their logic could be followed to a certain extent. What could not be followed, according to the British living there, were the parameters according to which inspectors decided to inspect – or look away from – certain renovations that were 'outside of the allowed framework'. For example, according to the local regulations, terraces could not occupy more than one-third of the roof to make sure that the old part of the town did not lose its look of authenticity. Moreover, homeowners were required to construct small roofs outside of their terraces so that when they were viewed from the street or from far away, they would maintain the illusion that these roofs were still intact. However, Catherine pointed out two building sites next to her house that had just recently been completed, both of which had obviously defied those regulations with terraces covering 70 per cent of their roofs. Clearly, certain addresses and surnames caused inspectors to look away instead of doing their jobs. The existing double standard that the British saw themselves subjected to created a certain level of frustration. Such a mood, which prevailed among a large number of the people that I met, led them to widen their limits in exercising their rights of private ownership: many people got the courage to bypass local laws, reinterpret them or even create their own ones.

According to my British informants, some of their Spanish neighbours did not show much respect for those regulations and hence did not set a very good example. Although many of the British were prohibited from installing air-conditioning units so as not to ruin the historic face of the village, their Spanish neighbours not only installed new air-conditioning, but were also putting in white plastic doors and windows to better isolate their crumbling dwellings.

Instead of obeying the rules, as a lot of the British had done in the beginning of their renovations, the Spanish were reluctant to use recommended materials such as wood, as it was frequently apt to swell and shrink with the humidity and temperature fluctuations in the area. Nor did the Spanish use older tiles from authentic roofs, as they were prone to leak, instead opting for a more modern version spray-painted black instead. Such observations and stories circulating among the British completed the portrait of the Spanish 'imaginary' that lifestyle migrants resided next to. This lack of communication on such vital everyday topics revealed the unarticulated dialogue that was mentioned in the previous chapter.

The whole system did not really reinforce that owners of town houses needed to change certain aspects of their buildings. Inspectors often came and asked people to redo them, but once the British paid a fine they were not bothered again. Catherine and Neil only applied for renovation permission because their neighbour was not happy about the work that was done on the walls of the house, fearing that some walls might fall down; nevertheless, they did make the effort to go in and apply for a renovation licence.

After living in the town for some time, Catherine and Neil learned from their neighbours and others about different ways of reinterpreting renovation rules and, in some cases, creating some of their own. For example, instead of reinstalling old tiles that had been taken from the original roof, they installed new terracotta tiles spray-painted black. This technique made the new tiles blend in with the rest of the neighbours' houses, the roof tiles of which were covered in real fungus.

Although following rules and regulations was a big part of British identity compared with the more relaxed terms of rural Spaniards, this opportunity to overcome legal restrictions and enjoy the self-proclaimed freedom to exercise one's will was part of an amazing process that a lot of the British, including Catherine and Neil, willingly joined. This allowed them to exercise the power to do whatever they wished with the house they owned.

The British experienced a sudden ability to change and shape their present, the agency that they discovered and talked about. Of course, they could have

received this impression because in the UK they did not really have the chance to define their dwellings in such major terms. Usually their houses in the UK were already fully built; if they needed any renovations, these were usually on the level of redecorating. Additionally, however, the migrants referred to their lack of agency and inability to change things in the UK when everything had been predetermined for them.

At the same time, one could argue that in their new destination country the appearance of their newly renovated houses was also majorly predetermined. In fact, the end results of the renovations made by the British hardly ever looked different from the houses surrounding them. This was due to a variety of reasons. To start with, the builders hired for the jobs were usually locals, so they knew how best to restore the houses to their original state. Even when British builders were hired, they admitted that one could only buy certain construction materials in the local stores: tiles for floors, special plaster used for the walls and wood or concrete used for beams. I was pleasantly surprised to find this out, but later I realised it was logical that, over years and centuries, people had discovered which materials available from the area worked best. The floors were always covered with tiles due to high temperatures during the damp summers and the strong winds bringing sand from the Sahara. Wood was not an ideal material to be used; due to the frequent changes in temperature, it became alternately wet and dry, destroying the structures of the houses. Local techniques that had been proven for centuries kept heat outside during the summer and inside during the winter. These were just a few of the factors that predetermined how houses in the old town looked, regardless of who their owners were.

The only way one could visually differentiate between the houses that were owned by the British and those owned by the Spaniards were subtle, almost unnoticeable details like the double-glazed windows and Sky (digital satellite television and radio service) satellite dishes that were installed by lifestyle migrants.

The availability of builders, techniques and materials certainly limited the choices that the British had at hand. The general look of the old section of town

also undoubtedly influenced the goals behind their renovations. Yet however predetermined the look of the houses might have been, an undeniable grand fascination with the character of the houses as decaying ruins entered the lives of those British who moved to the old part of town. These were very special, unique places where they could build their new lives together, taking an active involvement in all aspects of construction and maintenance and having complete autonomy over how it would look and feel in their new home.

In this case, the character or authenticity of houses was not due to mere fascination with the 'ancient' quality of the buildings and the way their façades looked; rather, it concerned the processes and history they represented. Despite having very little knowledge about the previous owners of their new dwellings, the British seemed to connect their lives with those who used to live there through the depth of perceived time, to borrow a phrase from Daisy Froud (2004). She conducted research on British people who bought newly built but authentic-looking houses in the UK, examining the ways in which the owners bonded with their new dwellings. According to her findings, authenticity was understood 'through the shape of time, rather than through the look of surface space' (2004:231). From her point of view, the temporal qualities of a potential domestic space should be analysed alongside its imaginary ones. Dismissing the potential of a surface evocation of the past, one could focus on the constructed texture of elapsed time and the sense of narrative evolution that enabled new residents to write their own histories.

Fascination with authenticity was described by Froud (2004) as a need for a fundamental narrative in order to become complicit in the construction of one's home. Similarly, Kimberley Dovey (2000) proposed that authenticity was not an inherent condition of things and places, but a result of connectedness and processes. Experiential depth was gained from the authenticity of dwellings. Through relationships with their houses, lifestyle migrants were not forced to relate to something from the actual past of a house, but were instead able to perceive and remember aspects of themselves, their new home and their relationships that could be played out with a backdrop of old and decaying dwellings.

A younger couple with children: on a never-ending project

Taylor (43), Penny (40), Stanley (15), Sarah (10)

Taylor and Penny Brown wanted to move to a more 'authentic' area of Spain, somewhere they referred to as a 'typical neighbourhood' in a local village. The Browns were very pleased with their chosen area, admitting that it had a great resemblance to the area in the UK where they grew up back in the '70s. It was a place where people knew their neighbours, never locked their doors and were truly friendly to each other. These young parents were sure that by an immersion in this environment, their children would not only quickly learn to speak Spanish, but would also learn to appreciate a rural environment that was farther away from the 'big consumerist world'.

When they arrived, the view of the town, with the church on the hillside, simply took their breath away. It would be fair to say that Taylor and Penny were swept by enthusiasm when they came to live in the area. Interestingly, such a drastic relocation abroad allowed them to make quite different choices than they had may have done in the UK. If they had remained in Britain, they would probably have chosen a modern house with a garden to satisfy Penny's passion for gardening. In Villar del Río, however, they followed their hearts instead of their minds, as they later told me. Similarly, a lot of other British people made completely atypical decisions: they bought houses without the evaluation of a professional surveyor, and they spent all their savings on one house, not 'keeping eggs in different baskets' as they had previously done. This reported tendency of the British to act differently in their new environment was hardly the result of being completely overwhelmed by opportunities; many had been watching different TV programmes and reading articles in magazines regarding Spain and thus knew what to expect. Rather, a creative vacuum seemed to be created by a drastic change in environment, which allowed the British to exercise their capacity for decision-making to its maximum. They were willing to find that special place and make their 'nest' there to concentrate on the relationships they cared so much about.

One has to admit that the whole atmosphere in the village inclined toward thoughts of smaller communities – children were playing in the streets, people bought their groceries from small corner shops and drank their daily coffee in tiny local cafés; oil boiled in the pans where mothers prepared lunchtime meals for the whole family when they came back from work and school. Yet it was interesting how some of the British, including the Browns, assigned different characteristics to people who lived in certain areas of the town, although they were not necessarily acquainted with any of these people. In many cases, the British who moved to the area arrived with only minimal knowledge of the Spanish language, so usually such impressions were collected through observation and only very rarely through direct participation. A common understanding of the locals usually included descriptions of them as more laid-back, farther away from a world reached by advertising and more family-orientated, gathering every Sunday for lunch. By moving to the area, some of the British, including the Browns, considered themselves to have a lot in common with the locals, even though the only words they ever exchanged were formal greetings.

When the Browns arrived in Villar del Río, it was love at first sight. They fell in love with the town and the house that an estate agent showed them. It was an enormous house which was falling apart, yet this didn't scare them. On the contrary, Taylor felt like he could do so many things with the house to bring it back to life. This was his chance to build their very own dream house, and he would enjoy every part of it. It was a lovely, big old house with wooden beams and other original features. The house seemed to flow: one could travel through the house and feel how it had once appeared when it was still intact. His heart really bought it.

The house itself was a large dwelling, which in reality was a combination of two older houses that in some point of history had been connected to each other. Nobody had lived in the house for years before the Brown family decided to move in. The house was unfurnished and felt like a labyrinth of rooms, widening and going on and on. Sometimes the stairs that were in place did not fit the gaps between different levels of the house, which created a sort of constant lottery to see if one would fall down or bang one's forehead while

running up the narrow stairs. Two rooms in the house did not have any windows at all, since that part of the house faced the hill that it had been partially carved into.

The house had its own character, a feature that the Browns greatly valued. They said that one could not put character into any house; that it could not be specifically created. Character was found in the niches in the walls that took the place of wardrobes, round walls, warped window frames, dark brown beams on the ceiling and many other features that made this house so special for its new inhabitants.

Taylor and Penny hired some local Spanish and British builders to help with the construction aspects of the renovation process. Taylor really enjoyed learning different building techniques: after a while he knew every inch of the house, every bit of wiring, every bit of plumbing. Even when local builders showed him some of their tricks, Taylor carefully observed them and then adjusted his techniques to achieve what he wanted as the end result.

Taylor had a special vision for the house: it should flow throughout all the staircases and archways. He rejected the idea of installing doors in all the doorways, as was usually done by locals to make rooms cosier and keep the warmth of a fire in the room during the winter. Taylor discarded this idea, insisting that he would put more heaters and fleece blankets in the house instead so as not to sacrifice his vision of its character. All of his renovated walls were made to be 'not perfect', and hence authentic. Taylor and his family appreciated the aesthetics of a more natural look, rather than modern square rooms and straight lines.

As for construction techniques, however, Taylor had a much more practical perspective: unwilling to sacrifice convenience, he found the perfect mixture of renovating solutions. When constructing new walls, he used new isolating material instead of making them from stones and mud in the traditional way. This made the walls much thinner – 20cm instead of a metre – and enabled them to keep the heat outside during the summer, but inside during the winter.

To keep the house warm, the Browns opted for a combination of different heating methods. Modern gas heaters were used for general heating during the winter in addition to a log fire to create a cosier atmosphere. Similarly, traditional tiles were used for floor surfaces; during the summer they provided a fantastic surface that remained cool and was easy to clean. In the winter, they found a few nice rugs to cover the floor next to the sofas to cuddle up on during the longer winter afternoons.

Some of the rooms in the house were quite small and dark, so the Browns used modern light tube technology. Made out of polished aluminium, the tubes were installed to extend from the roof of the house into the darker rooms at the back on different floors, as these rooms did not have any windows at all. This new technology allowed children to use their cosy rooms at the back of the house, with their curved uneven walls and rustic beams; the privilege of daylight made their experience more enjoyable.

Seeing how creatively Taylor and his family chose different techniques to improve the feel of the house without affecting the character of it, their fascination with the house's authenticity was evident. However, their method did not follow the ultimate goal of reliving the house as it had been a few centuries ago; rather, it was a creative process through which the Browns found their new home and different ways of using it in line with their aspirations.

After a while, the Browns began to come to terms with their new physical environment, trying to make sense of what they had expected their dwelling to be like and what it had turned out to be. For example, they revised their understanding of the sun and sunbathing, as exposure to the sun for long periods of time made them rethink their perspective. Unlike times spent on holiday, they no longer considered the sun to be a tanning device; rather, it was a heat source. The terrace at the very top of their house, which they had originally planned to be their 'hangout spot', was quickly transformed into a 'solarium' where they dried their laundry like hundreds of their neighbours.

After four years of living in their house, the Browns' renovation works had not yet been finished. The original intention of the family was to live in the house for some time anyway and to 'feel' it in order to better understand how they

wanted it to look. Another reason for the delay in the works' completion was, of course, the financial side, as their growing children's needs were limiting the family's budget. Yet there was a certain anxiety or ambiguity for them related to 'finishing the house', which I happened to observe among many other British people who were still renovating their ruins into houses some ten years after first moving to the town.

Undeniably, continual renovation projects were a way to beat the unsettling feeling of living in one place for a long time. Starting in the 1970s, many British people were introduced to the idea of a 'property ladder', in which each house was yet another step toward one's future self. As has been discussed in Chapter 3, such motivations led to a lack of attachment to houses as such; people instead treated them as dwellings on a temporal basis. As the average relocation period back in the UK among my informants was seven years, the idea of staying somewhere for longer and not actively considering other options was a new one. Their never-ending renovation projects, however, created a feeling of constant involvement with the project and gave way to more possible projects in the house that would still need to be finished before they could become preoccupied with thoughts of other places to live.

Moreover, such an active engagement with the decaying houses could be seen as a certain comforting process that every British person had to undergo once relocating to the old town. While engaging with renovation, the lifestyle migrants were creating a space that would be convenient for them. They possessed the agency to influence their built environment, defining their 'present' in their own terms.

Temptation of an old town house: Why buy a ruin?

The British had never lived in Murcian houses before their move. They did not automatically appreciate the structures of the houses: those traditional annoyingly high, small windows that kept the heat outside during the summer also hid all the beautiful outside views. The lifestyle migrants could not

immediately create a sensual bodily memory within these houses, the logic of which they would still need to get to know and try to understand.

Interestingly, lifestyle migrants were willing to write their own pasts into the history of the houses, although they were not familiar with these histories in the first place. They were not looking for a sense of continuity, as in general they had a very vague idea of what life was like for local Spaniards centuries ago. This inability to connect emotionally with the history of the place that these houses represented aligned with the original aspirations of the migrants as mentioned in the previous chapter. For them, the move was not really about Spain; rather, it was about finding that special, unique place where they could commit to their relationships farther from the gaze of others.

The presented cases, as well as multiple stories that I came across during my fieldwork, suggested a lack of interaction between the different external environments of the local Spaniards and the British migrants. The lifestyle migrants did not seek to become closer to the Spaniards in their town. With neither knowledge of nor interest in the lives of the Spaniards who had resided in those houses centuries ago, the British did not aspire to create these links with the past and the continuity that the local Spaniards from Los Olivos and Galicia found so productive. Why, then, would they want to buy a ruin?

Since many British people were unable to buy beautiful old mansions back in the UK, the opportunity to finally reside in one of these special old houses was considered a luxury. They finally could dwell in a house that, unlike the many identical houses in UK neighbourhoods, was not cookie-cutter made. Their houses had souls; they had their own characters shaped by generations of inhabitants who had resided there for centuries. Such unique houses became perfect backdrops where they could finally invest time and effort into the relationships they cared about so much: their partners and families. Allocating space for terraces where they could sit during the warmer winter months, deciding on sources of heating that would contribute to family TV nights and finding means of bringing light to previously unused rooms where family members could enjoy their privacy were all different ways in which lifestyle migrants planned their daily activities. In turn, these activities would define

their further relationships as families or couples. In terms of negotiations, choosing the right shade of yellow for the house was on its own a therapeutic experience for a couple or a family.

However, the decaying state of the houses played an important role in the choices made by the British and the types of relationships constructed both with and within those dwellings. Lifestyle migrants were delighted and fascinated by the character of their houses; each small detail united to form the special atmosphere that they valued so much. However, the forgetting/remembering dilemma faced by the locals did not preoccupy the new inhabitants, since the memories that could be reflected upon by the locals were not available to a majority of the British.

The vital aspect for lifestyle migrants in their new surroundings, however, was the fragmented and unfinished nature of their dwellings. These decaying houses provided fertile ground to shape their new environments in different ways that particularly attracted them. For many migrants who were unable to influence the construction of their houses back in the UK, this experience of supervising renovations and having a personal say in a house's final look and feel was a profound experience. Lifestyle migrants finally felt like they could change things – like they had the ability to shape the present that many of them had lacked in the UK.

Moreover, because of the decaying nature of these buildings, lifestyle migrants expressed a willingness to restore something that was no longer intact and needed some work. Perhaps they valued the productivity that resulted from working on and renovating their dwellings, discovering structural flaws and making them look like houses one could truly live in. The labour and time they invested in recreating these houses resembled the labour and time they were willing to invest in the relationships that took place in their new destination environment. Many of the migrants referred to the process of 'giving a house another chance': old beams and niches were reopened to be used and seen inside the house, and people were living there once more with all the windows intact and walls plastered properly. Giving a second chance to a new house and

a new partnership was a fundamental element of lifestyle migrants' experiences in the old town of Villar del Río.

In some cases, these home renovations were 'never-ending', involving constant improvements. Yet such continuous engagement with their newly purchased houses changed lifestyle migrants' perceptions: they came to view them as 'home' instead of 'just another house' as in the UK, where every house was merely another step in the property ladder.

Chapter 6

Houses in the Spanish countryside: old traditional vs. new traditional

Moving into an old *finca* is a widely spread stereotype of idyllic life in the Spanish countryside. A *finca* is a term used for a house in the countryside with a large plot of land, sometimes as old as 300 years and usually occupied by local farmers and shepherds. Throughout travel and lifestyle literature, one encounters numerous narratives of northern Europeans coming to live in similar buildings 'in the middle of nowhere' in Spain as well as in France and Italy (Browning 2005; Innes 2004; Fry & Fry 2006; Kerr 2010; Stewart 1999, 2002, 2006; Webster 2010). In such literature, the migrants often eagerly engaged with the renovation processes of their new dwellings. In their stories, the houses they came to reside in were somewhat similar to the old town houses described in the previous chapter: simple dwellings with walls made of mud and stones and roofs consisting of wooden beams and plaster. The writers documented their difficult journeys in learning old-fashioned techniques and restoring the 'old traditional Spain'.

The British lifestyle migrants, however, who arrived in Murcia with such inspirations had to face a harsh reality check. In many cases, extremely old *fincas* were left to decay by those who had either migrated or stopped their farming practices, which made it difficult for real estate agents to offer any standing buildings to their British customers. In general, the farmers in the area tended to live in towns surrounding their land, with only a small shedlike structure on their property to store their tools in. These houses usually lacked a kitchen and sometimes even a toilet, let alone a connection to electricity or gas.

For the past 20 years, despite the constant attempts of the Spanish government to revive local agriculture by subsidising it and investing in research and technology, the profitability of local farmers has continued to decrease. In the context of global trade, local farmers had to face competition from the rest of the world, and prices for their produce became lower than their production costs. Depending on the fertility of land and regularity of rain, farmers chose not to grow any fruit on their land during some years, which meant that they were often better off even with empty fields and orchards. As for the farm buildings, Spanish families usually used these summerhouses as weekend getaways where they met with their extended families and cooked meals outside during the hot summer months.

It was perhaps not surprising, then, that when some British lifestyle migrants came to the area and expressed interest in buying these old houses and their hardly profitable land, many of the local farmers saw a business opportunity. Those old traditional small square sheds of grey colour with triangular roofs, however, did not resemble the 'finca' imagery that the British lifestyle migrants had been familiar with before their move. Despite being the oldest constructions in the countryside, these dwellings were usually referred to by my informants as 'less authentic' than some of the new villas that had been built in the past couple of years.

The fashion for country houses in the new traditional style came to Murcia from the coastal areas. According to local estate agents and architects, these new types of houses were a mix of the Toscana style and some Mexican hacienda variations, combined with Andalusian motifs of Arabic ornamentations. The

‘invented Spanish style’, or ‘the new traditional Spanish’ (Figure 9 and 10), began to spread in popularity throughout southern and coastal Spain. Such ‘dream houses’ were originally constructed for golf courses, hotels and *urbanizaciones* – in short, residential areas for northern European visitors.



Figure 9:
Old
traditional
houses



Figure 10:
New
traditional
houses

The new style incorporated organic shapes into the house, opting for a more flowing structure instead of rectangular forms. More natural colours of beige, yellow, and red were used as opposed to grey and black, which would be considered a more modern colour scheme. Materials that were chosen for the *new style* had to have a natural and authentic feel to them, giving the impression that they were handmade. However, texture was more important than material as such, so tiles that were shiny or in bold colours were not chosen.

Interestingly, such a style achieved international popularity; it was incorporated into the designs of houses in Turkey, the USA and even Costa Rica (Fu 2012; Janoschka 2011a; Nudrali & Tamer 2011). Albert Fu (2012) reported that Spanish-colonial revival architecture in California was valued for the sense of timelessness and permanence that it contributed to the renewal of a regional identity and the shaping of the local landscape. Romantic notions of California's 'Spanish' heritage, filled with picturesque missions and palatial haciendas, were promoted by realtors and translated into three-dimensional space by architects and builders. The materials used in the buildings were the means of communicating the aesthetics of this timeless myth. As these materials were so vital to the structures, some of the brick and tile companies went so far as to name their products 'Granada' or 'Ramona' to express the romance of the Old World and even published their own books to educate the public on the beauty and quality of terracotta tiles.

In the case of Villar del Río, the new style was a mix of multiple elements. Some of them were borrowed from the Arabic-influenced house designs of southern Spain, such as white borders around the windows, chimneys in the shape of minarets and traditional railings (*rejas*) on the windows. The local architects reported that many other components, like arches, balustrades, roof terraces, towers and multi-levelled structures had very little to do with the old traditional Spanish architecture of the countryside houses.

The imaginary of the Spanish countryside rose to the surface when British migrants moved into the area and began to renovate the small dwellings that were already standing or, in some cases, constructed brand-new houses on the plots. According to one of the local architects who had been working with the

British in the area for the last ten years, the British usually requested their houses to be built in this so-called 'typical Spanish' style, despite having very little 'Spanish' about it. Only after these interviews with professionals in the construction industry I realised that the 'traditional' style that the British lifestyle migrants living in the countryside were referring to was different to the 'traditional' style that had existed in the countryside for centuries. Thus, to communicate the importance of the new style and its value for the lifestyle migrants as 'traditional', I introduce the term *new traditional*, which will be used throughout this thesis.

After facing such unexpected demand for new traditional housing from their clients, some of the architects who were hired for the job bought and copied already existing house plans from coastal developments to satisfy their customers. Moreover, some of the more entrepreneurial local farmers and developers began to construct this new type of housing on empty lots for sale so that when the British came to the area, there were houses already standing and ready to move into.

Interestingly, this fashion of building houses in the new traditional style extended to the Spaniards themselves. A large number of Spaniards, mostly from the northern parts of the country, bought summerhouses in the Murcia region, which was consistent with the widespread phenomenon within the Spanish housing market of having a second house, usually in a more recreational area (Barke 2008). According to local estate agents, the Spaniards were attracted by the same 'newly invented traditional Spanish' houses, as they found this type of house to be more prestigious than restored traditional barns. This appeal was not really due to the fact that the British were living in these houses. Rather, it was caused by their appealing aesthetics when compared with the ultra-modern geometrical forms of villas usually constructed for very rich individuals along the coast or those 'old traditional' sheds that still needed to be restored in their decayed state.

Returning to the house purchase dilemma of British lifestyle migrants, buying a house in the countryside usually included dealing with the accompanying farmland. Many farmers came to the point where their land was no longer

profitable when used for agricultural purposes, so a trend arose of dividing plots into measurable parcels and selling them to developers to erect new villas. This was a dangerous situation that could already be observed in the coastal areas, where landowners had split their estates into thousands of small parcels in order to gain maximum profits from housing construction on them, dramatically changing the landscape and the whole appearance of the area. In 2005, therefore, the local authorities of Villar del Río increased the minimum size of a housing plot from 5,000 m² to 20,000 m². Consequently, people willing to buy a house in the countryside were bound to engage with urbanising regulations of the area, which often translated to the obligation of buying a big plot of land with it in order to protect the rural quality of the area. This was a considerable requirement one had to commit to in order to reside in the Spanish countryside (Figure 11).



Figure 11:
Houses in
the
countryside
with plots
of land

On average, the people who decided to relocate to the Spanish countryside (roughly one-third of all lifestyle migrants in the area) were 51 years of age, older than those who moved into the old town houses. Usually these were older couples; it was very rare that families with children would choose such new dwellings. Interestingly, a passion for gardening was not an obligatory hobby

for people who moved to the countryside. The major factor in the move was the type of imaginary they possessed before their relocation to Spain: some valued the very fact of owning land, while others cherished the thought of a view without many houses to ruin the nature idyll. There were also a few people who appreciated the 5-10 kilometres' distance from the town – that secure gap to protect them from the gossip and 'society' there.

A further three portraits of the British living in the countryside will be drawn on to illustrate the different ways the British became engaged with the complex materiality of countryside living. Some additional cases will be looked at in which couples did not succeed in creating a new home together and were on the verge of another move. Finally, the British migrants' engagement with their physical environment will be looked at in the context of the kinship relationships that they committed to.

Discovering old traditional country houses

Patrick (64) and Blair (52)

Patrick and Blair were very passionate about moving to Spain. Blair had taken care of her ill husband for the last 20 years and dreamt of buying their own country house somewhere in southern Europe as a sort of compensation for herself.

Blair was looking forward to living in an old farmhouse with some character, full of different unique features, marking qualities and a distinctive personality. Once they started looking for a farmhouse, they quickly realised that such buildings were almost nonexistent in this part of inland Spain – at least not in any semblance of a modernised condition allowing people to readily move in. Yet they still considered finding a house that had been standing in the countryside for a longer time than the brand-new, new traditional villas in the area, the paint on which had barely dried.

Patrick was quite happy to satisfy his wife's passion for authenticity by considering an older house, as at the back of his mind he had been constantly

worried about vaguely defined Spanish modern building regulations and sometimes-unreliable local developers. Hence, he was convinced that some of his insecurities would be overcome by purchasing an older house.

After a few days of travelling throughout the area and looking at different locations, they came upon their house-to-be. It had been standing empty for the past eight years, as its owner was living in Barcelona at the time and a field manager was overseeing the land. Some distant family members of the owner who were still living in the town occasionally came there to use the country house for weekend family gatherings; this occasional use also extended to the house next door, the land around which was completely overgrown. Yet for Blair and Patrick these were not great obstacles, as what they were really buying was the land that came with the house and the views. And they were magnificent. From the top of the hill one could absorb lush green meadows, an ancient mysterious monastery on the hill and a plantation of apricot trees in even rows in the valley.

In this place, they could fully appreciate the relative remoteness and the vast amount of space surrounding them. It was the first time in their lives when they could afford so much land, as in the UK an equal amount of property would have come at a great premium that was surely out of their reach. Such an expanse of openness embraced them, with their own land on all four sides of the property. Patrick mainly viewed this land as security, as they could guarantee that nothing was going to be built next to them. Of course there would be some people wandering around their area, picking wild asparagus next to the river and snails for their Sunday paella, but this did not really bother Blair and Patrick. They had two pairs of binoculars on either side of the house to be able to observe all the cars and people that were passing by from a distance.

This feeling of relative protection was what that sold the house to them. It appealed to their nature, as they tended to be quite private people who did not have an open door all the time. Blair and Patrick were extremely happy with each other's company; on some days, like Sundays, they kept their doors shut as a sign that even their Spanish neighbours who sometimes unexpectedly came

by should not be tempted to come in. The space was their relational vacuum, where they were accessible to each other and could spend some time together. It was a place to rediscover the beauty of living as a couple, to relive their marriage vows and redefine themselves. Moreover, it was a perfect opportunity to relax in the absence of old friends and extensive kin relations they had become part of, as each had been married a couple of times before their current union. It was a kind of luxury for Patrick and Blair not to be obliged to respond to all of the social requests from people who wanted to be in touch with them on a daily or weekly basis. They finally found a place to achieve their peace; more importantly, they did not feel pressure anymore to be what, in the UK, they were supposed to be (strict parents, supportive friends or spoiling grandparents), but just to be themselves, exclusively for themselves.

Of course they soon discovered that there some neighbours surrounding their property, but these people came very rarely to their weekend houses. The loud Spanish gatherings of rumbling refrigerators, screaming kids and adults conversing on a stadium-volume level just added to the local character of their serene dwelling. However, no matter how much they actually enjoyed their one-and-a-half-family surrounding community, they preferred keeping everybody at arm's length, avoiding situations where they would be expected to go and socialise with their neighbours whenever they were there, or where the locals would come by at the drop of a hat.

Another aspect of their new environment that Patrick and Blair were initially worried about was the fact that a road passed relatively close to their house. However, soon they realised that the only traffic during the day was a local tractor and a herd of sheep. Moreover, they saw a bright side to it, as the local passersby provided an excellent opportunity to create a controllable interaction environment with the local community.

Such relative remoteness (20 minutes' walk into the village) allowed Blair and Patrick to establish an almost physical detachment from the local British community, which was well known for the intrigues and gossip that were constantly shared. In fact, the so-called 'cliques' were such that, for instance, if

someone failed to invite another couple for a barbeque or for tea, they were shifted into the 'untouchables' group.

No matter how trivial these political games were, Blair and Patrick could not be bothered to be constantly talked about, so the physical distance between the village and their house allowed for some welcome space and privacy for the couple.

Yet all the privileges that came with their large amount of land also brought a greater vulnerability to the couple's property. Blair could not stop worrying about the 'land grab' problem that affected some of her friends and others on the coastal part of Spain (Jones 2010; Torne 2010), despite the fact that such laws were not usually endorsed in the Murcia area. Such laws necessitated involuntary relinquishment of private land for public use in case some of the national or local projects demanded the land for highways, pipes, public buildings, etc. These 'hot' cases were well regulated and dealt with on the level of the Court of Human Rights and the European Commission, who strongly advised freezing European funds to Spain until the country dealt with these unlawful demolitions (Brereton 2009). Blair lost sleep over the issue nevertheless, a worry that was mainly rooted in the ambiguities of home and land ownership she and Patrick had become a part of.

Due to its remoteness, their house did not have any electricity when they were about to move in. All that Patrick could find in the way of a connection were some holes in the walls and a few wires hanging out. As it later turned out, the previous owner did not have any legal contract with the electricity provider. As a temporary solution, the couple bought two power generators and addressed their neighbours about this problem. Unfortunately, none of their neighbours had any electricity either, so they joined efforts to act as a group in the hopes of bringing power pylons to the area. It took almost a year of struggling to make their predicament understood, but when after eleven months they saw some teams approaching from the power company, they felt extremely relieved. However, this relief lasted only until the moment when they saw how these teams were installing the pylons - by sight and with hardly any measuring instruments. Blair told me that it looked like the workers were trying to make a

big picture hang correctly: a little to the right, a little to the left. One way or another, by facing the local authorities and trying to fight their way through, it seemed that Patrick and Blair had established themselves as rightful landowners who took great effort in managing their property. Moreover, they took pride in it – they had attained the agency to visibly improve their lives, participate in the organisation of their property and define it in their own terms.

Yet it was a long and steep learning curve for them. In the case of the electricity, they soon realised that the cable provided allowed for very limited voltage; not only that, but there were only five sockets in the entire house. It turned out that most of the locals did not possess many electric appliances, and if they did, voltage consumption was set to a minimum, so no electricians made extra precautions. Limited power voltage was difficult to get used to; when Patrick plugged in some of his equipment, the fuse just flickered out. Subsequently, the couple had to adapt to their new way of living in the countryside by buying equipment with lower electricity consumption, forgetting about their electric kettle for tea and other ‘fruits of civilisation’ they realised they had become so attached to.

Nor was it easier to get a source of water into the house. Patrick and Blair hired workers to install pipes and connect their house to the main supply. When going to the town hall to apply for a licence to do this, the local engineer told them that none was needed. Not surprisingly, when representatives from the water company came to fix on a meter, they refused to do so because there were no legal papers regarding the pipes installed. Angry and frustrated, Patrick went directly to the mayor of the town, who after listening to him made a few calls and issued a licence for it retrospectively. When the winter months finally came, Patrick and Blair did not have any water at all for almost two weeks, which turned out to be the result of builders burying the pipes insufficiently in the ground – only ten centimetres deep. Subsequently, the water in the pipes froze, and the couple did not see a drop come out of their tap for weeks.

Moreover, before they installed central heating in their house, they had to learn the art of making a fire in the log burner as well as what wood to use and how to manage it. In that way, they got to know that the local apricot trees burned at

higher temperatures, so they could use some from their own land. Although it was lovely and cool in the summer, their house was like an ice block during the winter, mainly due to the fact that it had not been intended for use then and lacked basic insulation such as double brick walls or airshafts. At first, it was sometimes hard for Patrick to manage the unstable construction of the log burner; the smoke from the fire went directly into the room and they had to open all the windows, defeating the whole idea of lighting a fire to get warm in the first place.

Furthermore, at the time that I left the town, they were still in the process of getting a telephone line in their house. Despite a public line only three kilometres away, they had been struggling with their telephone provider four years and counting. Patrick admitted that he thought he would have been more upset with all the difficulties that they had to face as a couple, but surprisingly, these ultimately made their bond stronger. Before their move, they had frequently fought; this was the third marriage for Patrick and the second for Blair. Going through the experience of 'becoming' land and property owners in Spain showed them that despite all of their differences, their basic needs and values were the same – that was the reason they had come together in the first place. It was the ultimate process of 'becoming': 'becoming a couple'. Patrick admitted that just after moving to Spain and living in the valley they began to focus on things that really mattered, like the people they loved, the fantastic nature surrounding them and the feel of relaxation and tranquility that they seemed to 'catch' from the locals.

Such gradual 'acclimatisation' with the realities of the rural Spanish countryside helped Patrick and Blair come to terms with what they wanted out of their experience by facing a number of difficulties. They were ready to face such challenges in order to see if any of them would bring them closer to the level of happiness to which they aspired.

The last time that I saw Patrick and Blair, they invited me to their house for an early dinner on the terrace. Patrick prepared a fantastic curry, and later we were spoilt by an incredible selection of local cheeses and a plum brandy that Blair had made from her own plums. It was early March, and we sat outside trying to

take in all the beauty of the surrounding hills. It was incredible – one could hear birds singing all around, and the light, sweet smell of orange blossoms made one intoxicated by the serenity of the moment. It was just beautiful. I could begin to grasp the therapeutic nature of their new dwelling that they had earlier referred to. They joked that they had no desire to travel any more, or to go on vacation. I understood: this was *it* for them, for the moment...

A couple spellbound by the land

Vivian (55) and Liam (57)

Vivian and Liam had been climbing the property ladder for the past 30 years, starting with a small rented room on the outskirts of London and ending up with a four-bedroom house in an upscale area of southern England. After their children left the nest to go to university, the house felt big and somewhat empty. At the same time, after being offered an extremely prestigious job at an art gallery, Vivian realised that even though the job was great, it demanded that much more effort was given to the gallery's administrative organisation than to the painting and creating she would have done herself. She wanted something new – some drastic change that would allow her to break away from the obligations that she and Liam had surrounded themselves with. As they were no longer financially responsible for their children, Vivian and Liam could take a risk in moving. Luckily, Vivian's husband agreed with her, and they decided to go to Spain to look for a house.

Many of their friends did not understand their desire to move: if they had worked until their official retirement age, they would have received 100% of their pensions. Now they would end up with only 60% of their pensions, which was a significant cut in a large amount of money to live on. However, even such a large financial incentive was not enough to stop Vivian and Liam from moving.

In general, they were looking for a house that would situate them in the middle of the Spanish community and allow them to work there at the same time. They

were not attracted by any of the houses on the coast, as they looked 'all the same', according to Liam. Neither did they want to live in an *urbanización*, so the choice of a house in the countryside came as a natural response to all their aspirations.

The house they found was in a great location not too far from the town, and the space it occupied aligned well with what Vivian and Liam had envisioned. The dwelling itself was built some eight years previously by a local Spanish couple on their land, which had an orchard. Yet because the previous owners mainly used it on weekends in summer and to store their tractor in it, they registered it as a farm building. Because of this, Vivian and Liam were officially buying a garage with 'all modern cons' instead of a proper registered dwelling. However, it did not really bother Liam, as he mainly came to the area for the land and the plantations of fruit trees.

Back in the UK, Vivian and Liam did not really have much experience with gardening. Even though it was a very popular hobby in England, Liam never felt excited about mowing the lawn every Saturday, as many of his neighbours did. Rather, he preferred the gravel version of a garden, complete with some potted plants that their elderly neighbour ended up looking after. When their children were small, they left a part of the garden growing wild so that the children could go exploring, do some excavation and enjoy other outdoor activities.

Yet coming to Spain and managing a big plot of land was very important to Liam. He felt compelled to 'go native' and rejected the idea of having pretty flowers or green bushes for aesthetics, as many of the British did, since he felt his land had to be used for fruits and vegetables, just like the land owned by the local Spanish. He was one of the few lifestyle migrants who really wanted to commit to the productivity of the land they had bought. He related to this local discourse and was somewhat proud that he understood it; he wanted to make an attempt to manage his land as the locals did. He took his hundreds of peach and apricot trees quite seriously, as well as his olive grove where some trees were more than 200 years old. He went to register as a farmer in the town hall and signed an agreement with the local cooperative enabling him to bring his

fruit there. Liam was convinced that once the locals realised that he and Vivian were not so different from them, the locals' attitude toward them would change; they would be more respected and would not be viewed as another British tourist couple that amused themselves in Spain with local fiestas and tapas.

The previous owner of the house was happy to help Vivian and Liam begin to understand how to manage their land - he showed them how to water their trees, fertilise and prune them. Their neighbours, who sometimes passed by, were also very generous when it came to advice. It was in the neighbours' best interests to help keep Liam's trees in order; if newcomers failed at their duties and did not take proper care of their trees, the plants could catch diseases and spread them to the neighbouring orchards.

With the huge volume of work that needed to be done, Liam had to employ some local people to help him with pruning and fertilising. He felt that he was helping local labourers to maintain their jobs, and in that way, he was supporting the established social 'ecosystem' of the countryside.

Thanks to the considerate advice of local land overseers, Liam bought all the necessary tools to take care of his new household: power hedge saws, shears, a cement mixer, a Rotovator and even a tractor. This was a big step for Liam, considering that back in England the only 'toy' he could boast about was a lawnmower. Vivian did not really mind his newfound interest, as she knew it made her husband happier. Also, it created a special image of Liam in the local community; the couple always had something to talk about with 'the local boys'.

Yet despite Liam's initial enthusiasm about farming, after a year it became one of the greatest disappointments of their experience living in Spain. He tried extremely hard: he learned how to position nets underneath the olive trees to collect olives; he sorted peaches into categories of first- and second-class fruit, choosing the biggest and ripest (one received twice as much money for first-class fruit), and carefully transported them in special vans. At the end of the season, when they received money for their fruit six months after delivering it to the cooperative, it turned out that their net profit was 56 euros. It had taken

them so much time and effort, as well as money, to take care of the trees and pay for water, fertilisers and labour – in the end, their profit was not nearly as rewarding as they thought it would be.

At some stage, Vivian convinced her husband that taking care of the whole plot of land was not really worth it, since they had not been spending as much time together as they had planned to. The subsequent year, they cut down a significant amount of the trees and used the logs in their wood burner. As a result, they had not bought any logs in the past four years, and Liam could still enjoy his farming duties on a sufficient amount of land.

As for the other portion of their land, Vivian also took on the new role of gardener and started to learn some secrets from her neighbours regarding the best vegetables and fruits to plant in the area and the most suitable ways to care for them. As the orchards were Liam's area of occupation, Vivian took command of her vegetable plot and some 32 trees in her 'small' garden. Such a well-defined separation of power ensured that they would not argue too much about their land; instead, they left the right to decide what to do with a certain piece of land to the one in charge of it.

In comparison with Liam's orchards, Vivian's garden really took off – perhaps because there had never really been an aim of getting any profit from it. It brought them a lot of joy, as they were truly overwhelmed with the generous abundance of their land. They collected 45 kilos of cherries from their three cherry trees and gathered 110 cauliflowers as well as broccoli, Brussels sprouts, onions, peppers, melons, watermelons, strawberries, raspberries and almonds.

When all of their vegetables and fruit began to ripen at the same time, they could not physically eat it all, so they decided to engage in the local system exchange and sometimes even trade their goods. Vivian took great pleasure in making peach brandy, jams and chutneys out of their own fruit, which added to the fantastic feeling of hominess that she had created at their new house.

Their routines changed as well:

We spend a lot more time at home. We have a larger house and garden to look after. We wake up in the morning and decide what we want to do. We have

that lovely choice – what to do every day, which is heaven on its own, as we have been working very hard in our lives for what we've achieved. Your priorities change so much. Your days are really occupied. It takes us the whole day to do it. You can hardly quantify what you have done. The older you get, the faster the time goes. What have I done? But it does not really matter. We do shopping, invariably meet someone, go for a coffee or menu, come back to the house and do some pruning. We enjoy our English TV; sometimes we do baking sessions. When you spend 30 years working, you have got to do this and that, chasing your tails; don't have a minute to call your own. We did all that, and now we just enjoy the rest of our lives. Not really having to do anything – that's the gift that you get once you're retired. (Vivian, 55)

By separating their 'working' activities in the garden and the orchard, Vivian and Liam kept some territory for each of them, where they could command and 'rule their land'. They found in this land a source of reflecting their identities and personal goals, such as Liam's willingness to become a 'Spanish farmer' and Vivian's enthusiasm about being a more engaged housewife. They said that this system of land management outsourced their entrepreneurial and leadership ambitions, which resulted in less 'arguments and unpleasantness' at home.

Also, being further away from their large extended family allowed them to feel less stressed in terms of their familial obligations; instead, they were content in just being themselves, being happy good with each other. Just as they found a way to enjoy the Spanish countryside in their new traditional manner, they also found their own new way of 'being a couple' using different delegation tools that they discovered in their new home.

A self-sufficient idealist couple

Eleanor (38) and Kevin (44)

It all started for Eleanor and Kevin as a big adventure. With a very stressful job in the public sector, Eleanor was an extremely dedicated professional who had very little time on her hands for any private life. Yet when she met Kevin, her life was turned upside down. They went through a lot together, becoming extremely close in a way she never had imagined her relationship with a man

could be, and the idea of going away with him was born somewhere in her subconscious. She sold her house, bought a caravan and went with him into the sunset, travelling across Europe until they came to the Spanish countryside to build a house in the middle of nowhere with a lot of land and no neighbours.

Eleanor was happy to start with a blank canvas, bringing new emotions into their new place, and Kevin liked the idea of building a house. By that time, he already had experience in renovating five houses and knew that it would be easier to build a house than to renovate one, especially since they both had a strong vision of how they wanted their new house to be.

They wanted this new place to be just about the two of them. They did not plan any extra rooms for visitors or family members, as they were happy to arrange any accommodation in the nearest town's hotels. Perhaps this was a bit selfish of them, but having made this big step of moving out of the country, they wanted to indulge their choices. In fact, when I was interviewing them they seemed quite proud of how they managed their new life: they shared the same interests, and they were very comfortable together. Surprisingly, many of my other informants told me how hard it was for some of them in the first few months to get used to the idea that their partner was always with them. In many cases back in the UK, they had worked long hours and rarely saw each other except on the weekends. Especially for couples that had taken early retirement, the sudden change of being together 24 hours a day was not an easy adjustment. Eleanor and Kevin, on the other hand, felt very comfortable together. They did not really encourage potential guests to come, since when they did, their holiday moods did not translate into Eleanor and Kevin's workaday routines:

We don't really encourage [visits] that much, particularly 'cos it's our life, and if people from the UK come here to visit, they are on holiday; we are not. This is our life – we have things to do, so when people come to visit, you feel obliged to entertain them, to take them to see places, and it's difficult when you are running your life. When they come for a week – it is a long time when you don't know someone particularly well. It's hard work! (Eleanor, 38)

As for the house as such, they both wanted a detached house with a lot of open space. They wanted it to look rustic from the outside, blending into the rural

landscape without disturbing it. They also wanted the house to blend into the environment from a structural point of view in terms of low pollution and the recycling of energy, water and other resources.

Eleanor wanted the house to be rustic and natural, as though it had been there for a long time; as if it belonged there. From her standpoint, it needed to complement the area and not appear abrasive, so she chose local materials like wood and stone. She had such a vivid image of how the house should look that she created a watercolour painting of the building she saw in her mind. When compared to how the house looks now, one could say that this painting was so exact, it looked like someone had taken a photo of the house. Her vision became materialised in a very detailed way.

Eleanor's general goals were to embrace the area and be sympathetic to it, trying to make their new house as environmentally friendly and energy-efficient as possible. This was a very big step for both of them: coming from a country where water and electricity supply had never been in shortage, going to a new place with the intention to rely on alternative sources was quite scary. In hindsight, Eleanor admitted that they were not as brave in their choices as they might have been. Nonetheless, they installed solar panels on their roof to keep their domestic water hot and included underfloor heating. They also put in a recirculation system to run their hot water so that it did not need to be warmed up every time one would turn on the tap, which saved a lot of energy. They insisted on building double walls to better insulate the house and installing double-glazed windows to reduce electricity consumption in heating. They collected rainwater for household use; this was quite strange to the locals, who usually did not even have drainage systems. Moreover, they put in a canalisation treatment plant, which purified 95 per cent of sewage into pure water suitable for gardening, unlike some of the locals who dumped their sewage directly into the river.

Most of these systems were not available for installation unless one was building one's own house. Even though Eleanor and Kevin found providers of those systems, it was a hard process to convince the local builders, plumbers and other workers who came to install them that such variations were possible

in the first place. For example, instead of using *rejas* (traditional iron screens) on the windows to protect against robbery, Liam wanted to install special unbreakable glass to bring more light into the rooms and eliminate the 'prison feeling' the *rejas* created. Yet for the builders who installed them, it was difficult to see how this would work against robbers, who were unfamiliar with the new technologies of the British. The workers mainly made fun of the British, who were 'fresh to the countryside'.

The workers were not the only ones who found it hard to grasp why the British would install all these systems, spending so much money on them, when they could get away with using the methods that local families had been using for decades. Even their neighbours thought that Eleanor and Kevin were completely strange: to begin with, almost no Spanish people in the area actually lived in the countryside full-time. Most of the locals held land for yielding crops in the country, but they lived in the neighbouring towns. The people who lived in the countryside area were usually very poor, whereas Eleanor and Kevin knew that in the UK, the opposite was often true. Having a nice country property was a sign of upper class for them and, hence, a luxury. The plot of land that they purchased had not been lived on for ten years before they came, so a lot of the neighbours used it as a 'no man's land', throwing old car parts, dead dogs and anything else they wanted to dump into the long grass.

Eleanor and Kevin found themselves in the position of creating their own 'new traditional Spanish', with new aspirations for good living and an opportunity to redefine their life goals with a life partner by their side. They received another chance to work on their relationship, focusing on something that brought them together: their vision of a new life, where instead of being pushed into the suggested roles of children, siblings and parents, they could be who they truly thought they were - a happy couple in love.

**It was not all smooth and happy,
but it was always worth a try...**

Such a move to a different country required a great commitment from both partners, who were trying to create their new world in the destination environment. There were certainly those for whom the whole experience turned into a slow form of torture, or those who ultimately required such a dramatic move to understand what they really wanted. My informants who decided to move away from the area were those whose relationships, after a certain time of living in the area, did not stand up to the challenge. The sun and the beautiful Spanish countryside were still there, together with *siestas* and endless summer nights. But it was no longer the same. I met these people in the moments after they had taken a setback and were reflecting on their actions before another attempt to become happy was made – yet another move, yet another try.

Monica wanted to live in the beautiful countryside to escape from her stressful job back in the UK. Together with her new partner, she found a nice, cosy house with a big swimming pool and a huge piece of land, which they referred to as an ‘oversized garden’. At first, Monica really liked the remoteness of the house, as it provided a chance for her to be with her new partner without being bothered by the stress of the outside world.

However, she gradually began to realise that for a strong and outgoing character like hers to thrive, she needed to meet people she could trust and with whom she could build meaningful and trustful relationships, get a job with income and, ultimately, some decision power in her own house. Her partner started to take over all of her crafty and DIY (Do It Yourself) projects; according to him, they all had to be done perfectly. At first, she argued against this, trying to stand her ground and defend her point, but at some stage she just gave up.

She found herself in a lonely bubble where the man of her life could not understand her anymore, and there was no one to share her disappointment with. Soon, this sense of remoteness turned into an isolation that she could no longer stand. She was in the process of analysing herself and her relationship over and over again when she realised that at the core of her frustration was the

fact that she had distanced herself from who she really was. She realised that she was missing her independence as a woman and her favourite activities: going to the cinema and theatre, dressing up and going dancing. She missed her friends, her son – all the things that she could not survive without. The move to such a remote location allowed her to see more clearly that she really was an independent, very sociable woman and was not ready to become a housewife; she was losing her voice in the relationship in which she had become mentally involved. Monica decided to leave her partner. She was looking forward to selling the house and setting herself 'free'. She realised that she was unable to be a part of the perfect relationship she was longing for. She was just not ready for it, and even a perfect house in the countryside could not resolve such a mismatch.

Similarly, Trey went through a difficult time of misunderstanding and emotional loneliness in his life. After being cheated on, he decided to give his marriage another chance; he and his wife moved from the UK to a new location to start 'from scratch'. They had been living in England and his job was extremely demanding, so he rarely went out to parties or even to places in the local town. He was extremely shy and not very confident, so the move to another country was a great effort for him to make his relationship work. It was a challenge he was ready to accept:

Coming to Spain has given me a lot more confidence, because even something like going to the bank to pay some money in, because it's in another language and so forth, you have to push yourself and become more outgoing. And that just kind of Mediterranean thing brings out a bit of character in you, I think. And certainly the reason I didn't leave my wife in England was that I didn't have enough self-confidence to go out on my own. I would have not known how to live on my own or anything like that. Only after I've lived with her for a few years in Spain I was able to turn around and say, 'Right, I don't want to live with you anymore.' I've never had the confidence like that, and as I came here I said, 'I can't leave you in England.' It was in the back of my mind that our relationship was doomed, but I didn't know how to get out of it because I couldn't have left her; I wouldn't have known how to survive, and it was only coming to Spain that gave me the legs to do that. It's been like sort of therapy for me. (Trey, 45)

The house Trey and his wife bought in the countryside became some sort of a reflection point, whereby in doing things differently, they could not agree on things or even agree with each other's opinions. They ended up living two parallel lives in that house. Their dwelling was big enough that the couple could have two separate bedrooms, as Trey was a sensitive sleeper and did not like his windows open during the night. His wife was always on diets, so Trey went shopping on his own and cooked at the times that were more convenient for his working hours. He started ironing and washing for himself, so when he made the decision to leave his wife, he hardly had to change his daily routine. Such a physical separation made their emotional departure that much easier. Interestingly, after a few years of living on his own, he met another woman and was looking forward to moving to her place in the hope of building the meaningful relationship he was longing for.

The physical labour of kinship production

According to Lévi-Strauss (1982), houses were defined by a system of kinship relations, in particular marriage. This was a powerful argument in which a central role was given to the processes of succession and descent: power and social relations, as well as personal identification, were based on inheritance and the lineal relationships that structured societies. However, while not all societies are based on such strict hierarchies as suggested by Lévi-Strauss, the concept of a house as a material means of bringing together people from different backgrounds has been supported by various anthropologists. Maurice Bloch (1995), for example, in his work on the Zafimaniry of Madagascar, highlighted the fact that the process of settling into marriage was closely defined by the process of making a house. The construction of a house began when a couple got married and was only finished when their first child was born. The house hardened and matured together with the people who dwelled in it: by carving wood and making the structure more stable, its inhabitants caused the house to develop a firmer character, from a temporal construction to a hardwood house that was 'acquiring bones'. It was through the physical labour of carving, digging and structuring the new dwelling that it gradually

turned into a beautifully carved house. This physical labour became a ritualised process through which relationships were worked on, negotiated and physically embodied.

Similarly, Monica Janowski (1995) reported on the 'coupling' process of the Kelabit of Sarawak, Malaysia. She showed that life in the houses was concentrated in the hearths into which the longhouses of the Kelabit were divided. As the central feature of a house, the hearth was not only a place where food was prepared and eaten, but also where kinship relations were negotiated. In addition to being a symbolic centre, it was an instrument of the transformation processes in which raw meat and vegetables became food and a man and a woman became an actual married couple. Different elements were mixed, blended and redefined – through this, two people were 'cooked' to be a couple. It was both a figurative and a literal place where these transformations became reality. Such a transformation, renegotiation and affirmation of the married couple's status took place on an everyday basis, as well as during ritual feasts. Janowski suggested that men and women were associated with different kinds of food that came into the house, since the gender kinship relations of each secured the provision of these different types of provision. Through the labour of cooking, hearth maintenance and eating, the couple's relationship was acted upon, bringing them together and officially objectifying their status as a prestige-holding unit around the hearth.

Correspondingly, Janet Carsten's work on houses in Langkawi, Malaysia (1995) outlined the process of two people officially becoming a married couple. Such a transformation included the preparation of raw food cooked in the house; the process was complete when this food was eaten together. The activity of co-eating created a shared substance of kinship that the partners were to share among themselves just like the food. Women's duties of household production contributed to their new status, as eating together implied sex; when they officially began a sexual relationship as a married couple, they were described as 'cooked'. The house was also associated with another act of transformation that relied on women's labour: bearing children. Such a process of childbearing and, later, feeding and nurturing, also provided a transformative capacity for

the couple's relationships with the parents-in-law to whom they became related.

One could identify great potential in the production, and productivity, of material forms through which couples were created and relationships were negotiated. Similarly, studies in Western societies, like those discussed by Judith Butler (1990), suggested the idea of 'performativity', in which spaces were assigned roles of generating relational identities of people that were both constructed and lived through on a daily basis. Other studies on the construction of homosexual couples in domestic spaces (Dupuis & Thorns 1998; Gorman-Murray 2006; Young 2005) argued that productive negotiation of the couples' relationships lay within the mediation of privacy, control and shared activities that took place within the house. Young (2005) argued privacy to be a necessary factor for the enacting of personal identity at home, as well for a feeling of security and protection from the disturbances of the outside world. However, as Munro and Madigan (1999) noted, a satisfactory mixture of privacy and interaction with one another required a process of negotiation. This took place through shared activities, such as eating or watching movies, when couples needed to make joint decisions about their house – how it was used, how it looked, how space was shared and how it represented the desires and tastes of both partners. Through that process, the two 'became a couple'. Here, the house as such became a productive means of relationship negotiation, just as it was in the case of lifestyle migrants in Spain.

Old traditional vs. new traditional

A willingness to reside in the countryside brought these British lifestyle migrants on a search for dwellings in the Spanish *campo*. Since the actual traditional dwellings in the Murcia area were somewhat different from the idealised image the British had in mind, they followed unique paths to redefine these new homes in creative ways, like Vivian and Liam, who were willing to embrace the fertility of their land and revive its farming potential, or Eleanor

and Kevin, who installed energy-efficient systems to create a house with minimal negative impact on the surrounding countryside.

In similar fashion to the houses in the old part of town, these country houses demanded an immense amount of work on the dwellings, coupled with commitments to the accompanying large parcels of land. These became personal projects, the management of which required exercising a certain power and command over space to create a nest for one's loved ones. The means of redefining one's idea of the 'new traditional' Spanish way were as different as the couples themselves. Each house was composed of a different combination of instalments that contributed to a notion of the countryside that the lifestyle migrants envisioned themselves living in. They exercised freedom to redefine traditional Spanish ways by coming to live in the countryside full-time, installing new and different systems in their houses and reengaging with farming and gardening to a level they felt to be rewarding.

In terms of personal relationships, the lifestyle migrants engaged in processes of renegotiation of the old or new partnerships they were in. By managing their houses and land, they created their own spaces where they felt comfortable and secure, participating in and deciding upon activities such as farming land or installing pipework and electricity. These were places where they could exercise control without unnecessary discussions or arguments with their partners. By negotiating with builders who installed innovative energy-efficient systems, arguing with officials about building permits, receiving information from neighbours about farming practices or simply growing their own gardens, it could be argued that these British lifestyle migrants engaged in the active labour of becoming a couple on an everyday basis in addition to communicating their status to the society.

My fieldwork research vividly showed that lifestyle migrants were willing to undertake the new roles of homeowners, farmers or homemakers that they desired to experience in the new environment. However, the roles that they played in their relationships were also enormously important: far from the gaze of family and friends back in the UK, they could rebuild partnerships at their own pace and in a new environment, giving them another chance. The

relationships that existed among these couples and families before moving had to be re-established in their new environment; the productive capacity of negotiation created space for discussion and dialogue that might not have taken place in their previous circumstances.

The British lifestyle migrants became engaged in the construction of their new traditional dwellings. Ultimately, they also became engaged in the construction of new traditional kinship.

Chapter 7

Urbanizaciones of the Spanish countryside: a dream villa just for two?

Unlike the common English word 'urbanisation', which denotes the growth of urban areas through their physical construction and the migration of people to cities, in Spain the word '*urbanización*' also relates to a type of housing development that started to appear near Madrid and Barcelona in the 1970s and later on the coastal areas of Spain in the 1980s. With the rapid development of the tourist industry, some of the local builders saw potential in constructing houses on specifically constructed estates outside of the towns and selling them almost exclusively to northern Europeans to be used as second homes. This phenomenon spread further inland, where the infamous golf courses were replaced by more conventional European suburb-style communities built outside of the local villages. The latter also became popular among the local Spanish, many of whom previously did not own houses in the countryside; for

some of them, houses in the *urbanizaciones* replaced the weekend countryside retreats where they previously went to spend time with their families.

These suburbs were not exactly similar to the gated communities so popular in the USA or to the golf courses in the coastal areas of Spain. The former, according to research conducted by Setha Low (2003), were the result of people's desire for secure housing, places where 'their children could learn to ride their first bikes'. Although they were originally constructed as luxurious settlements for wealthy white people, with gates and security guards, the gated community phenomenon later spread to the rest of the population, who valued safety, a community spirit and private governance. The specificity of such residences came from their perceived exclusivity, which allowed a large amount of privacy and a strong inside/outside divide that resulted from the erected walls and club memberships.

The *urbanizaciones* next to Villar del Río (Figure 12), however, objectified a different kind of settlement. From the outside, they were relatively well hidden and looked more like conventional European suburbs than the lush green oasis of copycat buildings that prevailed on the Spanish coasts. The *urbanizaciones*



Figure 12:
Houses of the
urbanizaciones
next to Villar
del Río



were planned to be satellite parts of the towns and villages they surrounded, sharing the same electricity, water and garbage disposal systems. These communities were not gated in the strict sense – there were no guards, gates or fences bordering the area. They were quite small in size – anywhere from 20 to 100 houses depending on the location. Most of them had a very limited infrastructure of bars, cafés and tennis courts, so not that many people from outside came to the area. Rather, their inhabitants were more likely to travel outside of their settlements to shop, work or seek entertainment. Here, one would not be able to find any signs of Britishness like ‘fish and chip’ shops, British pubs or Sky Sports viewing lounges. Around a third of all the houses in these *urbanizaciones* belonged to the local Spaniards, which contributed to the ‘suburban’ vibe of the developments. Moreover, the developers as well as some of the builders came from the neighbouring towns and took pride and responsibility in their work. Their families had been living in the town or its surroundings for generations and had established good reputations in their names; these builders usually intended to build high-quality houses to dwell in, not something to sell quickly.

Hence, when the British considered moving to the Spanish countryside, a house in the *urbanizaciones* was a third viable option to choose from. Statistically, among my informants who resided in the area of Villar del Río, the average age of the British migrants who purchased a house in one of the *urbanizaciones* was 56 at the point of their arrival, which made them the oldest group ahead of those who chose to reside in the old town houses and those in countryside dwellings. Unlike those who chose to live in true gated communities, the general motivation of the lifestyle migrants who moved to the *urbanizaciones* was not a fear of crime in the area or a desire to live in a self-governed environment (Blakely & Snyder 1997; Caldeira 1996b; Davis 1990; Dillon 1994; Dixon & Reicher 1997; Low 1997). Rather, the newcomers were drawn by the promised comfort of a neighbourhood with a high percentage of English-speaking neighbours. Given that, on average, it was the oldest group of British lifestyle migrants moving to the area, one could understand the heightened potential stress of learning a new language and trying to manage one’s life on a daily basis in the new destination country. Additionally, all of these houses

were sold through a contract with a building company, which further decreased the level of engagement demanded of the new residents with the local built environment. As there was no need for individuals to seek bureaucratic negotiations or building licences, this ensured that no part of a buyer's experience would be lost in translation and the event would be a great deal less stressful.

Out of the three available housing options, the dwellings in *urbanizaciones* were the only ones actively promoted in the UK. Following in the footsteps of developers from the coast, builders and landowners from Villar del Río signed contracts with promoters in the UK. The latter arranged hotel presentations and sample promotional visits and outsourced all of the legal paperwork needed for a house purchase. In this way, they received regular client visits, invited them to see 'show houses' (the three or four housing options that were available) and, in many cases, signed purchase contracts there and then.

This was an attractive option for potential buyers who were attracted by the area but did not want to buy a 'pig in a poke'. Some of the people who eventually bought houses first visited their friends in one of the *urbanizaciones*; since the 'show houses' were openly available to visit, the thought of purchasing a house ultimately crossed their minds.

It was a relatively secure house purchase for those who did not appreciate the hustle and surprises (sometimes quite unpleasant ones) of renovating houses like those in the older part of town or the countryside. It was also one of the more 'straightforward' options: as plans were already submitted, materials chosen and builders hired, the British simply had to agree on the number of bedrooms and the colour of the house, which would be ready in twelve months' time.

The houses in *urbanizaciones* were the 'new traditional' types mentioned in the previous chapter: 'Mediterranean'-style dwellings in quaint shapes and earth colours, made from 'natural' materials of stone and fake wood. There were four types of houses offered to new buyers, which were essentially just variations in size, colour and shape.

Although all of the houses were initially fitted with the same window frames, staircases and terrace railings, the lifestyle migrants always customised their houses in accordance with their style and to satisfy the daily activities they valued. Those who owned cars constructed garages and proper driveways on their plots. Some dedicated themselves to their new gardens, others to proper barbeque areas, and many people built swimming pools next to their houses for the ultimate gin-and-tonic time in the afternoon.

Following the pattern of the previous two chapters, this section will shed some light on the third type of housing available to the British lifestyle migrants: houses in the *urbanizaciones*. A further three informant portraits will present new and different ways in which the British engaged with their built environment, since the majority of these occupants were older and perhaps not as eager to rebuild houses as to rearrange them according to their tastes and preferences. Despite the lack of major renovations, those living in couples as well as singly managed to redefine themselves according to their understanding of ideal or normative kinship relations. Finally, the home-creation process will be looked at in relation to the move in general. I will question if the move was the result of an individualistic urge to escape from the UK and all the kinship commitments therein, or if it was in fact a different way of redefining these relations: by creating a distributed habitat, the British lifestyle migrants constructed a different framework in an attempt to commit to meaningful kin relations without the stress of a daily routine.

A 'spontaneous' retirement Jane (59) and Jeremy (60)

Jane and Jeremy were very hardworking people. Yet when their last child left home, they found themselves considering buying a house in rural Spain:

We never really sat down and thought, 'What should we do when we retire?' 'Oh, let's immigrate to Spain'. We were aware that we would spend more time in Spain and less in England. We just came to have a look, loved it, stayed here.

[T]here was a former colleague who decided to move out of England, and they asked if we would like to come down and see where they were moving to. We drove up here. The area was very beautiful. I was extremely impressed with the show house, particularly the large living room. Those were really well-built houses.

And I liked the area. So very impulsively... He [her husband], who never does anything on impulse, said: 'Shall we buy a plot of land up here?' And I went: 'I'm sorry?' There were three plots left... and he would go: 'Look at that pine forest!' And I would go: 'Look at that mountain!' (Jane, 59)

At the time when they viewed the show houses, most of the other buildings were non-existent – there was a field with green hills surrounding it and a few houses marking the boundaries of the future *urbanización*.

All the factors seemed to come together for their purchase, as Jeremy admitted that he was not very capable of do-it-yourself projects. He never had time for it when he was working and never really took an interest in it, so buying a house that would be built and renovated for them seemed like a 'more sensible' solution. The finished and polished look of the newly designed house appealed to Jane foremost because of its space and a feel of openness. Jeremy remembered how he had dreamt of owning a beautiful 16th-century farmhouse in Spain, but renovating the house would have resulted in one job after another, which Jeremy was not ready to commit to. The possibility they saw in the *urbanización* provided everything they were longing for: a comfortable house to fully enjoy their life as a couple.

At the back of their house, they cultivated a beautiful garden and installed a swimming pool, which created a lovely area for the couple to spend time together as well as a place to invite guests. During the evening, their gazebos and trees were lit by spotlights, which gave the impression of being surrounded by very special pieces of art. In some sense, they were, as they helped to create a place that Jeremy and Jane could enjoy in private without the constant gaze of their neighbours.

A home out of a 'standard house package'

Ervin (64) and Jessica (56)

Similarly, when Ervin and Jessica came to see the site of their future home, it all went surprisingly fast: they came, had a look at the plan, chose the plot and type of the house out of four that were on offer and signed the contract: in one year it was ready, and they moved in.

Besides buying a villa that was entirely ready for them to move into, they also bought a complete furniture pack for the house that was on offer from the developer. They bought all the furniture for the kitchen, including all the appliances like the oven and fridge, all the crockery, even curtains – it all came in a package. The same day that they moved in, there was an installation team working on the house – everything was connected in one night, and it was all functioning the next morning.

As for the general feel of the house, however, Ervin admitted that when they first came to their new place, it felt like a semi-traditional boxed house. Only when they had their plot landscaped and completed the driveway did it start to feel like home. Even though the company had arranged the house's basic layout and furniture, Ervin and Jessica brought some photographs and other small things that mattered to them. It was something personal, not everybody's style, but when those small things were installed, it clicked, like music playing in their heads: just how they had imagined it, just how they liked it.

It was through this continuous interaction with the house that Ervin and Jessica achieved the state of mind they had been dreaming of. They were finally enjoying the comfort of their new home, which they rarely had back in the UK when they were busy working and taking care of children. Ervin and Jessica created a distinct feeling of their own household, one that they had to take care of; this deeply satisfied Jessica and allowed her to enjoy all of her household duties:

Jessica: Definitely, I never cooked in the UK. Didn't have time. My son would come back home and say, 'I'm hungry!' 'Well, there is the kitchen, go ahead. I am busy, I am in the office, I've got this to get out and I've got lots to do and I've got

to fax this and blah blah... go away.' But no, I didn't cook really, did I? I could, but I didn't really get the opportunity.

Ervin: It seems to me that the only thing you do now, what you do, what I do, Hoovering, polishing, in the kitchen washing up... it feels nice to do because you are in a nice environment. You know, you look through the window and it's nice scenery... you might say you didn't cook or you didn't take pleasure in cooking, but now because you've created this to what you want, you feel at ease in a way.

Jessica: You really create that dream that you didn't quite get in the UK. But there is an enjoyment, because we are more relaxed. I am sure my husband's life with me couldn't have been very nice, 'cos I was... I couldn't relax never, ever. I was always, like, on a pitch; stress. (Jessica, 56 and Ervin, 64)

Just like many other retired people, the British in the *urbanizaciones* were in the process of discovering new passions in line with how they wanted to lead their lives. Ervin, for example, found that he had a passion for working in the garden and being with the animals he had come to love so much:

I wake up in the morning at seven o'clock, see to the cats and dogs, let them out, feed them, get my wife a cup of tea. I would see to the fire, get the ashes out, put more wood on. Have a breakfast of cereal and then I am outside [in the garden] and you don't see me. I have the coffee about 11, a Spanish coffee [with Anis Seco and Brandy]... Sometimes I go to the bar with the neighbours; and then get called to have a lunch. Then there is a rest. (Ervin, 64)

They were able to create new and unique spaces that they could occupy: for example, because they were able to spend more time outside, they could more fully enjoy the comfort of an 'extended' home. This was exactly what Jessica and her husband had been dreaming of:

It's just we have room outside now, as opposed to inside. We've got a terrace. We've got armchairs; we've got table chairs. So we eat outside a lot; we sit outside a lot. So we feel that we've got extra rooms, because the house is smaller but you take into account outside rooms. (Jessica, 56)

As was the case with many other British couples, Ervin and Jessica ended up hardly using their swimming pool at all. Usually the water was too cold during the winter months, and by the time it got warmer, the cold winds arrived, which did not make swimming very enjoyable. When the summer came, the

sun was so hot that Jessica and Ervin sought refuge in the shadow of their house.

During the first three months, they used their swimming pool every day, but the exciting 'honeymoon period' soon ended, and the exoticism of the swimming pool disappeared. Yet the area around the pool remained vital throughout the following months: they frequently sat around it, read next to it, invited guests for meals prepared in their outside kitchen and enjoyed sipping cold drinks standing next to it. The pool created a kind of social uplift and ambiance, which, by merely being there, added a subtle taste of luxury to otherwise normal activities.

They also got to know some of their new neighbours, and visiting them became one of Jessica's favourite things to do. As most of the people living in their *urbanización* had more or less the same type of house, Jessica was fascinated by the different ways every couple personalised and improved their dwellings. Her interest was not due to a feeling of 'keeping up with the Joneses'; rather, she was interested in different, smart little ways that other people enhanced their homes, such as putting curtains in between rooms to keep the heat inside or turning the solarium on the top of the roof into a dining room, a gym or simply a meditation space.

Undergoing the ordeal of becoming single Edith (67)

Edith and her husband, who was in his late 60s and in poor health, had been considering the idea of coming to Spain for a long time. When they reached retirement age, they became restless and started to feel unwanted by their children, who by that time had their own families to take care of.

Every time that her husband experienced a relapse in his condition, they were very thankful that they had not actually made the move, but when everything seemed fine, they were tempted again and again to buy into their dream. At one of these times when they were getting itchy feet, they went over to have a look

at the plots on offer in the inland areas and ended up buying a house off the plan.

Edith was hoping to buy an older, more traditional house, but the practicality of the *urbanización* finally convinced her: they didn't have to engage in any rebuilding of the house, it had a lot of space for Edith and her husband to work on their hobbies and, most importantly, there were many British people living nearby, so that in a case of emergency she could rely on them.

They ended up designing their own house, choosing tiles, colours for the walls and fixtures and fittings for the bathrooms and kitchen. Suddenly, about five months into their new project of planning their house, Edith's husband died. She was heartbroken. Yet she had been waiting for the move for so long that she decided to move anyway. She felt that she had to do it for her husband:

I was doing it for him, but every step of the way I would be talking to him, and saying, 'What do you think, what should I do?' In my mind, he was with me and I hope through me he did experience it.

That was a big decision. I haven't even driven a car abroad. So I just packed the car with my belongings, left 30 boxes to be collected in England and headed over here. I took a ferry, went around the roundabout the wrong way first time around – which of course you always do – and started driving down... I did think quite often on my journey, 'What am I doing? I'm in the country, where I can't even make myself understood.' I didn't know anybody. (Edith, 67)

Thankfully, she found herself in a situation where her neighbours were willing to help her and builders worked extra shifts to give her a hand; sometimes they even 'took her under their wing'. Surprisingly, she didn't feel lonely; on the contrary, she discovered that she could be quite sociable, getting to know new people and establishing relationships with them.

In general, the move made her feel very different about herself; she suggested that if she would have stayed in the UK, she would have probably 'gone more into her shell', relied on her family and friends and aged far more quickly 'in a rocking chair and knitting'. Instead, she came out on an adventure and got 'a complete lease of life'; she became more adventurous, and something inside her just came alive.

About six months after she moved to the *urbanización*, she gathered her courage and enthusiasm to re-style her house and make something different out of it. She met a retired interior designer living a few houses away from her who was willing to help her with putting together the new scheme and choosing new colours and furniture. She relied on his professional opinion and his taste as a designer, ending up with what she called a 'minimalist showroom' type of house. After living in it for a while, she came to regard the interior as

very impersonal, something that people would see in a magazine and say, 'Isn't that beautiful!' Would you feel comfortable there enough to take off your shoes and curl up? It's just a piece of artwork that I created, but it's not home.
(Edith, 67)

Some four years after she moved to Spain, she met a British man on the Internet who lived in the south of Spain. Initially, she felt quite strange when he offered to move in with her, but once he did, she knew it was one of the best decisions she had ever made. She finally felt complete again. Her large house allowed them to have separate rooms for their activities, like singing karaoke and reading French novels. They also redid one of the living rooms into a games room, so when their friends came to visit they could play a game or two of darts.

As for the house as such, Edith started to consider redecorating it again in a cosier and warmer fashion. She realised that she missed rugs on the floor, and she wanted the wood burner to feel like a greater part of the house – the feeling that had been created there didn't match her emotional state anymore. She wanted something more like an English country cottage, something comfortable that she was quite familiar with. Her new relationship had reminded her of how close she used to be with her children. And when I asked her if she would go anywhere else if she could, she replied:

As I'm getting older, the pull to go back to England is getting great. And I get angry with myself about it, because I have a very good life here. I don't like what is going on in England, so why would I go back? I think it's the pull of the family, and as you get older you want to go back to your roots. I didn't realise it. The option is not there at the moment, as the houses are not selling, so I am not getting excited about it. What I would love to be able – because I love this house and I would hate to give it up – I would like to be able to afford

a little flat back in England near my family, my daughter and her family... [My partner] has got his flat [in the UK], so we could just go between the three. (Edith, 67)

Such notions of distributed habitat and constant redefinition of kin relations seemed to lie at the basis of the move of British migrants in general.

A case of thriving individualism?

When one thinks of the migration strategies of different people around the world, one of the most heart-breaking outcomes are the fragmented families that are left behind or scattered across the globe. These are the families that could not get asylum in a new country, but still collect money for the visas and education of those who are able to leave (Joseph & Hallman 1998; Stafford 2005) and the relatives looking after the children and parents of migrants while the migrants are working abroad (Baldassar et al. 2007; Litwak & Kulis 1987; Matthews & Rosner 1988; Moss & Moss 1992). In this particular case of lifestyle migration, however, the choice to relocate was made quite deliberately, with migrants well aware of the outcomes of such a decision. As has been illustrated in the last two chapters, lifestyle migrants found different locations for their new homes; they worked hard to recreate their dwellings, and in the process they worked on their relationships, found love and discovered new senses of self. Yet did they never look back? Did they not regret leaving their loved ones back in the UK? Were they simply egoistic, trying to escape troubles with their kin and defining their partnerships in very individualistic terms outside of their kinship networks?

While living with my informants, I learned a lot about their understandings of kinship and their ways of maintaining it. Many of my informants told me about their families back in the UK, and interestingly, the notion of cohesiveness was generally missing as a childhood memory:

Our father kept moving on contract work all over the place to try and earn some decent money. So we never had what you call routines, because we

always moved around so much. We're not a very close family, really. (Lena, 51)

Such a 'dysfunctional' nature of families in the UK, as one of my informants put it, was quite evident – houses were regularly swapped for ones in more convenient locations because of schools, jobs and the areas in general. Once children finished school, they were generally expected to leave home. Parents eagerly encouraged their children to become more independent by going to the university of their choice or getting the job of their dreams. In general, such separation was referred to as a natural way of doing things; once they had moved apart, only certain holidays, like Christmas, held the status of bringing families back together – although even this was not always the case. Many of my informants told me that their children were spread out across the country and they did not speak with one another that much or that often.

Such a social dynamic called for specific forms of handling direct and distant kin. In line with my findings in this research, Marilyn Strathern (2005) noted that 'Western kinship regimes take to extremes the idea of bringing up a child to be independent, not only as an independent "member of society" but also as independent from family and relatives' (2005:27). There was a strange dynamic in these parent/child relationships, as parents felt themselves responsible for teaching their children to be independent and strong in order to survive in the world 'out there'. This was quite difficult for parents, as in many cases they felt unease in letting their children live their own lives and did not get very involved when their children had children of their own. This created a strange sense of distance, but many parents continued to suffer through it; even when they became older and would have benefitted from the help of their children, they were reluctant to make the call. One needed a very specific frame of mind to understand the rather extraordinary nature of British family interaction.

The distributed habitat

One of the other specificities of British kinship, besides its basis in notions of independence, is that it is sometimes argued to be very individualistic. As has

been suggested in Chapter 1, people in the UK tend to relate to each other as individuals rather than by virtue of their genealogical position. In such kinship relations, as described by Macfarlane (1978) and later by Strathern (1992), persons are presumed to 'create' a family and not simply 'join' one, as there are no preexisting kinship networks to start with. By knowing who one's blood relatives are, people are in a position to activate relationships depending on their personal connection with someone in particular. At the same time, other potential links could be easily ignored because that person does not feel affectionate toward them.

In her study *Kinship, Law and the Unexpected* (2005), Strathern noted that, by choosing to disappear from their relatives' lives and learning ways of 'valuing or devaluing their relationships', people became aware of the way they were 'connected and disconnected' (2005:26).

With that in mind, one might have not been so surprised to hear about British people moving to another country. Since the majority of the lifestyle migrants were in their 50s, they were often in a position where their children did not need mentoring anymore and their elderly parents could still take care of themselves. What was surprising, however, was how much lifestyle migrants' relationships with their family members improved after they relocated to Spain.

Many of my informants suggested that they would have not seen their relatives as often, or spent more time with them, even if they had stayed in the UK:

They say they miss me. When I come here [Spain], I am unsettled for a while, but I need to remind myself that if I was back in England I would have been in a place on my own anyway. So I just need to get on with it. (Catriona, 75)

In fact, many lifestyle migrants started to interact with their relatives more often compared with when they still lived in the UK:

I maybe miss my sisters and my brother, but when I was in England I didn't see them a lot because they lived in different parts of England. In fact, since I've moved to Spain I probably speak more to them than when I was in England. Because I am their brother, they want to make sure I am OK. So if I were in England, I would maybe speak to them 3 or 4 times a year. But now every week they ring me: 'Are you alright, you still alive?' (Shane, 50)

Regularly. Everybody does. All my family uses Skype. I probably speak to my family more now than I did when I was in England. I think they think because I am in Spain they need to ring me regularly. When I was in England, I lived within maybe 20 miles and it might take two weeks before I see each of them. Now I see them every day, more or less. (Egor, 31)

I find that Facebook is particularly good for this. I mean, my nephew uses Facebook an awful lot, and I know what he was watching on television last night; I know when he's had a really hard journey back from work or he's been cycling and it was raining. I know all these things because he puts it on Facebook, and it's a much better way to keep in touch with someone, I think. Insignificant parts of someone's life give you a much better picture than those annual anecdotes. (Trey, 45)

My findings of migrants actively maintaining and enhancing their kinship relationships with the help of new communication technologies corresponds with other research on transnational family relations in Australia, Iran, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, New Zealand and Singapore (Wilding 2006). Using the Internet, mobile phones and digital cameras allowed lifestyle migrants to connect with people they really cared about, building deeper and more meaningful relationships with their kin. Being thousands of kilometres away enabled them to stop feeling threatened by the authority and advice of their relatives; instead, they had a 'safe' distance in between, where relatives had the power to define how deep the 'intervention' of their kin would go and an opportunity to 'pull the plug' on certain conversations, creating boundaries.

Communication with family back in the UK was usually held in specific rooms, also known as working rooms or guest rooms. These guest rooms are worth further examination, as nearly every dwelling of British lifestyle migrants had such a room for visitors. Moreover, they became a vital objectification of migrants' willingness to maintain kinship relationships: these relationships were taken into consideration when choices were made about the purchase of a new house. One of the main conditions for a new house or apartment was usually an extra bedroom or space for parents, children or grandchildren:

There was a lovely sitting room, dining room. It meant that my teenage grandchildren could come out with their friends; they will be totally self-sufficient down there. I would cook them an evening meal, but they would look after themselves for the rest of the time. It was that opportunity - that I could

share this with the family to give them somewhere to run to when they needed to chill out. (Edith, 67)

Indeed, having such extra rooms allowed my informants to maintain their roles as caring parents, or rather gave them an opportunity for such maintenance. Despite these intentions, most of my informants were more moderate in their enthusiasm when it came to actual visits from their family and friends. Many of them admitted that they received visits extremely rarely – in fact, this was almost the opposite of what they had been expecting. Some tried to explain the phenomenon by suggesting that living inland was not as attractive of a destination for their relatives: there was not as much accessibility to beaches and the sea as their relatives might have been expecting. Yet others admitted that when someone was visiting them, it turned into a full-time job.

However, despite the fact that these guest rooms were very rarely – and in some cases, never – actually used by visitors, they were still vital for the relationships that the lifestyle migrants were trying to build with their relatives. The rooms' existence created a certain buffer zone that marked the potential for relationships and acted as the base for actual relationships that were further developed through Internet communication and rare holiday visits.

Such a potential for relationships was also created through the '2.5 hours away' rhetoric. The fact that Spain was 'only two and a half hours away from the UK' seemed to be a viable explanation of why the country was chosen to reside in – children could come and visit. Also it was easy to fly back to elderly parents as well as in the cases of an emergency. However, as it turned later on, quite a few people very rarely took advantage of that great offer – an opportunity to go home more often. In fact the majority of them barely made it to the UK once a year, if that, with the exception of a few people who still worked part-time in the UK and those grandmothers who were babysitting for their children. It is not that the British did not miss their relatives while living in Spain; some of them did, especially those younger grandmothers who felt determined to help their daughters and daughters-in-law through the difficult phase of becoming a mother. Aside from those instances, however, the widely shown and expressed readiness to visit relatives in the UK was mainly feigned at its core. Largely,

what the '2.5 hours' rhetoric brought was the feeling that even being apart from their relatives, lifestyle migrants could still maintain their kinship roles.

Having extra spaces where these relationships could take place while maintaining one's privacy was an important factor, even when the roles of visiting and taking care of relatives were switched. Some of the lifestyle migrants I interviewed bought small houses or apartments back in the UK specifically to have their own place when visiting their relatives. As one of my informants put it:

It's better than trying to stay with one of the children, because they've got families as well. So it's not that we don't want to be with them, it's just that we would be a burden to them; I'm sure we would be, because they have small, not very big houses. And it means, you know, they go off to work, they come back, and it's somebody else's house, and you wouldn't do what you would normally do in your own house, would you? (Jane, 59)

By distributing their habitat through the purchase of apartments and houses back in the UK to use when visiting family and the creation of space for guest rooms in Spain – both of which were occupied extremely infrequently – the British created the presence of absence, which had a great productive capacity on its own. In some instances of kinship that were based on the presence of ancestors who were absent (Carsten 2004), current generations usually referred to a genealogical, lineal representation. Here, however, kinship relations were dispersed throughout this distributed habitat, which carried the capacity for occupation and created a reference to the possible kinship relations it represented.

Jane Jacobs described similar instances in her 2006 research on Chinese migrants in Australia. According to her findings, these migrants consciously defined their houses to be part of the kinship networks of other relatives living in Hong Kong, Germany and Australia. To borrow from Elspeth Probyn (1996), a set of 'surface shifts' was embodied in the houses: overseas communications, faraway memories, long-distance travelling and reinventions of traditions. In these ways, the houses of newly arrived migrants became parts of these distributed habitats, where they were also understood to be spaces for wider kinship connections that came to 'reside' in the newly acquired houses.

Dimitrios Dalakoglou (2008), on the other hand, described how Albanian migrants in Greece created closer bonds with their empty houses back in Albania. In this particular case, migrants made and shared photos of their houses, ultimately looking through these photo albums alongside the photo albums of their children. Additionally, they called their houses on the telephone as if they were calling people. All of these actions signified the vital part that their Albanian identity still played in their lives; they engaged with this on an everyday basis by looking through their photos or giving their houses a call. This was a part of creating and negotiating the self through the productive capacities of connection with their distributed habitat.

In the case of the British lifestyle migrants in Spain, a necessity arose for empty spaces to be filled and for a materiality to be enacted, continuing the production process of kinship relations. Bille et al. (2010) suggested that absence produced a powerful longing for that which was not present, which represented one of the fundamental driving forces behind human action. In the case of lifestyle migration, rooms became a proxy for relationships; they represented the possibility for these relations to take place. This was a placeholder, an empty fossil, but a very important one. Together with other memory holders, such as photographs and material objects from the past, these empty guest rooms created a phenomenological closeness to faraway kin members. A physical connection to these rooms endorsed the possible connection that was maintained and later enacted through phone calls, video chats and Christmas cards. Through these creative enactments of presence though absence, a sense of proximity with vital kin members was made possible, along with the opportunity for future maintenance of such connections. Perhaps the lack of obligation for interaction, which was instead ensured by physically and symbolically marking these kin connections, was what made these interactions so genuine.

Spatiotemporal redefinition of kinship relationships

One could say that British lifestyle migrants came to actively define their relationships by relocating to a different country and, furthermore, that this act had a spatiotemporal dimension. In her study of the Massim society in Papua New Guinea, Nancy Munn (1986) suggested that relationships with others were formed through acts and practices and influenced in terms of time and space axes.

By relocating themselves on the horizontal dimension of space and moving farther away geographically, many of the lifestyle migrants released the intensity of kinship relationships back at home, bringing them to a different level. Many older women found themselves in a position where they looked and behaved like their 30-year-old daughters, in some sense co-opting their roles, activities and age behavioral models. Moving away was a means of resolving potential conflicts - not temporally, by accepting prescribed roles of older ladies and gentlemen such as giving advice and sitting in rocking chairs, but geographically, by placing themselves in new environments where they were not expected to participate in these intergenerational dynamics. Thus, British lifestyle migrants attenuated possible confrontations by bringing them into a different dimension.

Additionally, by creating increased scope for their relationships through the '2.5 hours' rhetoric and a distributed habitat, the British increased the potentiality of their relationships on the time axes; in changing the spatiotemporal characteristics of their relations, lifestyle migrants increased their value. In the case of the Gawans, as described by Nancy Munn:

[V]alue may be characterised in terms of different levels of spatiotemporal transformation - more specifically, in terms of an act's relative capacity to extend what I call intersubjective spacetime - a spacetime of self-other relationships formed in and through acts and practices. The general value of an act or practice is specified in terms of its level of potency, that is, what I sum up here as the relative expansive capacities of the spacetime formed (Munn 1986:9).

By committing to a move to Spain, it can be argued that the British contributed to the relative expansive capacities of their kin relations, ultimately improving them.

In general, such a counterintuitive situation – moving away to maintain better relations with one's kin – might not be all that obscure. On some level, all ancestral relationships are about moving away, segmentation and re-establishing oneself in a different environment. One can think of a 'classical' marriage situation in which a new wife moves out of her parents' house to live with the family of her husband, re-establishing herself in a new environment while maintaining relations with her relatives. Such a move is highly valued: parents actively create dowries for their daughters to be able to facilitate the move, taking on roles as 'wife givers' by enabling continuity, regeneration and creative networks (Goody & Tambiah 1973).

The aforementioned situation seems to be about material circumstances, where one breaks from the original context of one's home in order to produce another one. This is why another environment is vitally important, as it enables the productive generation of the new self – such processes are unviable when one remains stagnant. Children are moving to big cities from villages to define themselves – they move. People always have. It is an inevitable circle of producing, sustaining, breaking, segmenting and creating something new. The move to Spain, and the productive capacities for kinship relations produced by such a move, was in a way a true assessment of these relations.

As was suggested in Chapter 1, kinship in the UK could perhaps be reflected through this movement, as people who leave the country do not abruptly stop their relationships and kinship connections, but instead become engaged in their negotiations. Such findings go against research indicating the weakening of kinship relationships in the UK, in which families were defined as 'vague social groupings' and essentially experimental rather than guided by given principles (Rosser & Harris 1965). Moreover, the flexibility of kinship relationships suggested by such anthropologists as Carsten (2000), Firth et al. (1969) and Strathern (1992) could be addressed as creative ways of reaching for formal and normative kinship, as suggested by Miller (2007). Having certain

high expectations of how relationships should be despite their actual state, it seemed that lifestyle migrants tended to aim to do 'what is appropriate' – to enact a certain idealised version of a kinship relationship. In that way, the presumed flexibility and negotiated experiences were a direct result of people's efforts to bring consistent, highly normative kinship relatedness into their everyday lives.

Despite the fact that our societies experience a great variety of types of kinship relatedness, Miller (2007) argued that they are underlined by 'an often almost desperate desire to repudiate experience in order to remain consistent with the imperatives of that formal order' (2007:3). Miller suggested this to be a type of a 'formal kinship', as 'there remain highly explicit formal roles with powerful normative foundations, that are largely unresponsive to change and experience' (ibid.).

Such a normative understanding of kinship suggested that people tend to aim to do 'what is appropriate' – a certain idealised version of any kinship relationship. Miller's analysis showed the great lengths to which people are ready to go to implement principles of fairness, love and other family values, often under complex conditions. In that way, the presumed flexibility and negotiation experiences were a direct result of people's struggles to bring consistent, highly normative kinship relatedness into hustle of their everyday lives.

The lifestyle migrants wanted to become the best partners possible by investing time and effort into building their relationships through the construction of their dwellings in the destination environment. At the same time, by moving away, they could finally reflect back on their relationships with their parents, siblings and children. Having the security that came with distance and the potentiality of their empty guest rooms allowed them to re-engage with these relationships in what they thought was the best way: by becoming caring children, compassionate siblings and devoted parents.

In summary, it could be argued that the British, by making the move to Spain, left the established roles of parents and grandparents assigned to them by societal consensus, but as the conducted fieldwork suggests, the move was just

another way of managing them. Of course, by moving to a new place in Spain and buying houses, British lifestyle migrants could be seen as fleeing in order to give in fully to their own desires, rediscovering their weaknesses and passions. Yet this does not mean that they cut all of their connections to the kin they cared about. Instead, they discovered very creative ways of managing and redefining them.

Chapter 8

Legally bound: A sneak preview into the future

The chapters so far have outlined the background of lifestyle migrants, the concept of the move and the process of making a home in the new destination environment as well as the productive capacities of this process. In this chapter, I will look at lifestyle migrants' plans for the future and how they see themselves in relation to their partners and other family members back in the UK through the prism of their wills and intergeneration contracts. By finding out what their wills include, we may receive a sneak preview of how lifestyle migrants see their futures.

First, the concept of testimony freedom will be outlined, discussing what it really means to write a will in the UK. Subsequently, I will examine the difficulties that lifestyle migrants face when they become subject to the more traditional Roman Catholic-based inheritance law in Spain. I will investigate the participation of lifestyle migrants in transnational intergeneration contracts, how they see their roles and what is expected of them. For the British, who generally have relatively independent and individualist kinship relations, writing a will and constituting these relations through a legal framework is a demanding experience. Finally, I will discuss lifestyle migrants' choices of whom they consider worthy of mentioning in their wills and how this affects other relationships they consider themselves to be part of.

Testimony freedom:

what does it really mean to write a will in the UK?

The notion of will writing is an important issue that sheds more light on the legal and anthropological aspects of inheritance in relation to the wider social and kinship structures that people are engaged in. Ultimately, inheritance is a system of reciprocity that Marcel Mauss (1990[1925]) defined as 'the gift'. Using examples found in small-scale societies, Mauss illustrated how total gift systems were introduced in order to maintain 'mutual respect and safety, stay in negotiations and have means by which once problematical, the issue can be resolved' (1990:viii). This was a system in which every gift was always required to be reciprocated, resulting in a perpetual cycle of exchange within and between generations. Such notions of complementation and honor recurred throughout archaic forms of contracts, including intergeneration contracts. This 'contractual morality' represented the logic of materials and services exchanged within kin groups. However, knowing the values behind such gift systems, it was always up to the people to define themselves in relation to these kin networks. The work of Joan Goody (1962) discussed the dynamics of power and inheritance, using the examples of the Nyakyusa people of Africa transferring

rights of chiefship and Irish farmers passing the control of their land to their married children. Goody cautioned that in many cases, handing over land automatically transferred the right of ownership and decision power to the next generation, acting as a form of 'social euthanasia' before the physical death of the older relative. Hence, inheritance is seen as a vital part of the anthropological definition of self, in which a person locates his- or herself within a complex power negotiation and kinship definition.

The notions of bequeathal and, ultimately, inheritance have become quite an important measure of defining kinship relations in the UK, especially because the rapid increase in homeownership has enabled a larger amount of people to acquire actual property to pass on and, hence, a greater means of negotiating relations (Finch & Mason 2000:2). In fact, Finch and Mason suggest seeing inheritance as a process through which families are constituted and not simply reflected, as these relatively flexible notions of kinship relations are marked with material endowment and therefore redefined for the last time.

Indeed, inheritance was defined as a process of reproduction of social systems (Goody 1976:1), but additionally, and most importantly, as one that did so through 'consolidating family relations in particular forms and shapes across generations' (Finch & Mason 2000:3). For the British, the main factor in the exercise of power in actual relational definitions is relative testamentary freedom. This implies that the British are in a position to freely decide who will receive their property after their death. In fact, a testator and his or her recipients theoretically do not even need to have any legal or blood kinship relations (Finch et al. 1996). In this way, a person can write a will that bequeaths everything to his butler, or even the dog of his butler.

With the ever-growing frequency of divorces, separations, partnerships, repeated marriages and 'common' children in the UK (Office of National Statistics 1999:46-47), the notion of family has become more complex and somewhat fragmented (Smart & Neale 1999). By looking at the situations of children with divorced parents, Smart and Neale noted that family members undertook the difficult task of refashioning their 'family' relations across different households, where parents often remarried and children had to cope

with the multiplicity of origins and contexts in which such relations were played out.

Hence, it seemed like a difficult task to actually outline and classify these relations and their level of emotional proximity, as that was essentially what the process of writing a will entailed. Besides being a very difficult task on its own, it provided quite an interesting tool. Not only did it allow a person to consciously define the boundaries of kinship relations, confirming and dismissing certain connections, but more importantly, it provided a reason to think in advance about doing this, causing a previously 'evidential' and perhaps 'self-existing' group of relations to be reflected and ultimately acted upon (Finch & Mason 2000:11).

By outlining an inner circle of people as inheritance receivers, the process of writing a will also necessitated a definition of the quality of relations that were reflected upon. This allowed certain memories, characteristics and roles played by testators to be passed on to future generations through the property/objects that were bequeathed. Additionally, this provided an opportunity for one to make a statement about his or her commitment to the continuity of certain relationships. This could be argued to be an especially important factor of bequeathal, as in the context of highly mobile and often fragmented families in the UK, '[p]ossession of objects previously owned by someone who has died potentially gives the living access to a continuing relationship with that person through the phenomenon of memory' (ibid.:14-15). Indeed, it is a collection of shared memories that in many cases defines a group of people as a kin group. In the absence of these memories, the claimed connections often have nominal value in being legally- or blood-related, but have no common past to refer to. In such instances, passing on certain objects of value or sharing particular knowledge provides a sort of compensation for the lack of shared memories.

Despite having such a great tool with which to constitute lineal relations and sometimes retrieve lost continuities within families, recent studies of inheritance in the UK show that people rarely use their wills to stabilise kin connections and create links of lineal or ancestral character (Finch & Mason 2000; Izuhara 2005). The concept of 'patrimony' was not employed or seen as an

objective. Instead, people used bequeathal as a tool to construct a narrative of good parenting and devoted partnership, rather than committing to the 'family wealth' notions of redistribution. Correspondingly, receiving inherited properties and holding them 'for the family' was rarely a priority, and usually no sense of power or advantage was reciprocated by accepting the responsibility of having control over these family assets (Delphy & Leonard 1992:157).

Bequeathal was commonly understood as an act characterised by flexibility and choice, but moreover, it was sometimes regarded as an optional practice. Due to growing social insecurities and rising medical care costs, many families considered that one's inheritance should actually be spent while still alive instead of passing assets on to children or partners.

This rationale was supported by the fact that people live longer nowadays, which inevitably delayed the transfer of wealth between generations. Life expectancy in Britain in 1901 for males was only 46 and for females 49; by 1996 these ages increased to 74 and 79, respectively (Izuhara 2005:328). The likely consequence for bequeathal, reported by the International Longevity Centre in Britain, was that inherited wealth skipped a generation and went straight from the estates of older people to their grandchildren (ibid.:329).

As they became aware of this longer 'waiting time' before an inheritance, elderly people tried to compensate for it by investing in their children's lives when it was needed by helping them buy a first house or take out a mortgage, sending their grandchildren to college or simply making annual cash gifts. What was interesting about such transfers was that older people tended to make them with liquid assets, like cash, at hand while keeping their residential property in case of future uncertainties like long-term health care.

However, this complicated decisions about owning and financing property. On one hand, English people, especially among the middle class, were more frequent movers, and sometimes had very little attachment to a particular piece of land or house. Hence, Finch et al.'s (1996) study on wills indicated that in England, residential properties were often treated as part of a person's overall

assets in wills; these properties were expected to be sold and the money divided equally among children.

These newer trends somewhat undermined the 'generational contract' between care and inheritance. Previously caring relationships rested on a delicate balance of reciprocity: affection and inheritance from parents and duty of care from the children's side. Indeed, changing conditions leading to longer lives required longer and more expensive health care. Interestingly, issues of personal responsibility were raised as the British government presumed and promoted the elderly to take on individual responsibility for the costs of their care. Policies in Britain encouraged people to 'age in place' through the National Health Service and Community Care Act of 1990. The necessity of selling one's home in order to move into a care home became the source of considerable media concern, obviously reflecting the public label of such an act as a personal failure. Yet older people frequently did not want to appear as burdens to their children (Izuhara 2005).

A growing sense of independence and responsibility to manage one's own costs of medical care for the future meant that children no longer had the right to expect inheritance and parents were not obliged to leave any assets. In their work, Finch and Mason found that parents were viewed as free to spend everything during their lifetime if they chose to and share whatever was left from it with their new partners (2000:60). Indeed, such expectations were in line with those promoted by the government's notion of investment when homeownership became encouraged in the 1960s and 1970s. People viewed old age as a time to draw upon the investment of the house, use it as a secure deposit and enjoy the rest of their lives, reassuring their dignity, self-determination and presence of choice (ibid.:136).

As for the obligation to be good parents, this fit relatively well with these newly defined notions of bequeathal. Passing on one's assets was considered a good act of will, but more frequently, handing down 'not that much' or, in some cases, nothing at all aligned with a role model in which parents maintained intergenerational independence while allowing their offspring to have a clean start in their lives. This powerful tool of bequeathal - originally seen as a means

of maintaining kinship continuity – could also be used as a strong message in redefining what the notion of kin was really about.

The legal redefinition of kinship relations in Spain

A large number of my informants began their narratives about interaction with their kin members with the concept of distancing. Some of them drew on experiences of their children encouraging them to go to Spain and spend their money on themselves:

We're not really worried about leaving anything to our children. Now they have houses, so they want us to have a good time now. But we're trying to save a little bit of money so that when we go, we can leave some to the children. We could do what we want within reason, but I still want to keep some back for the children. But my children say: 'Spend the money, have a good time, just spend the money!' With five children, a little bit of money that we have got is not going to be a lot to each child. (Marla, 62)

Yet coming from the UK, where the inheritance system allowed people to hand over their property to whomever they wanted, there was a fundamental difference to the Spanish system: Spanish law obliged one to give two-thirds of assets to one's children.

Spain still has a traditional Roman Catholic agricultural law, dating back to 1880, at the basis of its inheritance law. This law was enacted in order to protect land from separation and to keep it within the family. It was expected that houses would be given to children in exchange for their care of elderly parents; the eldest son would receive the privilege and the obligation to live in the family house and continue the family business. The south of Spain was a very fertile area, so the laws there were not as strict; it was quite clear that every child would receive enough and roughly the same steady income from the land they would inherit. During the Franco regime, and until 1981, there was no divorce law in Spain. Hence, the Spanish were not well acquainted with cases in which couples separated and assets had to be divided among children from first, second and sometimes third marriages.

I interviewed a number of lawyers from the area who dealt with inheritance laws and helped British people who moved to the area to manage their properties according to Spanish law. They noted that for their British clients, who came from a background of British Empire law based on individual choice, it was rather difficult to get used to a system that obligated them to share their assets with children and relatives from previous marriages and relationships.

According to these lawyers, additional complications arose when it came to the question of which system to use. According to Spanish regulations, the law has to be applied in accordance with the nationality of the person, i.e. where the person is registered to vote and where their official residence is located. According to that framework, the British who reside in Spain theoretically remain subject to British law if their official residence is still in the UK. On the other hand, with so many British citizens residing in different countries around the world such as the USA, Australia and other Commonwealth countries, British law suggests that the laws of the residence country have to be applied. This legal loophole sometimes resulted in a constant game of Ping-Pong between one's local Spanish lawyers and those in the UK. This became especially problematic because a large number of migrants wished to get Spanish residence cards, which provided access to local medical services and allowed them to participate in local elections to vote for their representatives. Hence, most of British who came to reside legally in Spain fell under the jurisdiction of the Spanish law.

In fact, however, local lawyers shared with me that not a single British person who had used their legal services in the last 10 years actually wanted to become subject to the Spanish system. Such a traditional inheritance system did not fit the complicated kinship structures the British had become part of when still living in the UK. Some of my informants had very complex relationships with their previous partners and children. The general aim of moving to Spain was usually to have a clear start with a new partner, creating a new place one could call home farther away from one's previous obligations and engagements. In other cases, some of my informants had complicated relationships with their parents. Either way, not that many British lifestyle migrants had an intention of

becoming subject to a more traditional inheritance system and having to include all of their 'obligatory' kinship members in their wills.

The problematic aspect of such arrangements was that, according to Spanish regulations, it was virtually impossible to exclude a blood parent from one's will. One of my informants had a very bad relationship with her dad and wanted to exercise her power to decide who would receive her assets. She was told, however, that in Spain a mere case of poor relations with a parent was not a valid reason to ignore a family member in one's will. The only way of doing this was to file police reports stating acts of violence and, hence, requesting the withdrawal of that person's parental rights.

In general, the British who came to Spain had other intentions: they wanted to mark and benefit their relationships at this particular stage in their lives. In this way, some of my informants did not want to include their parents or children back in the UK in their wills, but instead new partners whom in many cases they lived with but were not officially married to. Without a well-defined blood or legal relationship, however, it was impossible to name these partners as main beneficiaries. Many lifestyle migrants suggested that their family back in the UK could not always benefit from their property in Spain, as none of them had any intention of moving there. Their partners, on the other hand, could continue living in their houses without having to change their established routines:

The tax here is really high, so some houses are left for the time because people can't afford the inheritance tax, so it bothers us a lot. Also, the car: you can't have it on two names, so if he [my partner] dies, I would have to buy it off. What worries us is that our children might not have that money to pay the tax; they might need to sell their own houses for that, so what's the point? (Bailey, 74)

In order to overcome such legal constraints, local Spanish lawyers suggested that their customers create a false residence in the UK that could be legally recognised. For that matter, lawyers produced a list of assets and addresses to prove their customers' connections to the UK: a bank account containing some £1200, a good friend with an address where a person was still keeping his or her furniture, a car, a bike, pictures, tape recorders – basically any item for the

lawyer to list and, hence, claim that his client was still a resident in the UK so that British law would have to be applied. The length of the list was more important than its actual content. The more items on the list, the better – even objects, such as old record albums, that did not have any great monetary value. Such items did not have to be physically large or occupy much space – it was solely the number of things that needed to be convincing for Spanish officials. What mattered to these officials were one's different types of relationships that existed to things and, ultimately, to people who still resided in the UK. This distributed imaginary habitat allowed the British to claim a potential for relationships that still could take place – hence, an inclusion in imaginary networks of relations in the UK – that allowed them to be subject to British law.

One could argue that British migrants' willingness not to include certain relatives in their wills and their rejection of being subject to a more traditionally constructed inheritance system showed that, as much as they adored the local Spanish way of managing kinship relationships, they did not consider themselves ready to commit to such familial relationships.

Anthony Giddens has provided a modern definition of the necessity for intimate relationships by suggesting that they are only able to take place when relations are evaluated to be satisfactory and fulfilling, and only last as long as they fit the offered criteria (Giddens 1992). A mover, hence, would be seen as a central figure who constructs his or her own biography as a 'reflective project of the self' (Giddens 1991). It has been argued that personal interests and a desire to break away from familiar ways of maintaining kin relations underline the modern project of constructing the self. However, in a similar manner to Finch and Mason (2000), I must state that such theoretical extrapolations are at odds with my data, which points to my informants' continued efforts to find new and creative ways of managing their kin relations, improving them, creating a new status for them and thereby changing their personal ideas of themselves to be more 'kinship orientated'. This was a process in which they engaged with different means and tools to redefine their kinship relations in order to better fit them into their lives, finding new, flexible ways of relating to those people they considered family and to be part of their lives without directly intervening. As can be seen in the case of legal boundaries and the negotiation of obligations,

the British undertook a project of redefining kinship through eliminating certain parts of it that they no longer considered relevant. In that way, the concepts of inheritance, elderly care and intergeneration contracts seem to be archaic means of kinship maintenance that are now somewhat invalid and, consequently, are chosen not to be used anymore.

Transnational intergeneration contracts: extinct or still existent?

Academics conducting research on transnational caregiving (Ackers & Stalford 2004; Baldassar et al. 2007) suggest the existence of intense 'kinship doing' across borders that extends in both directions: 'parents provide their adult children with extensive financial, emotional and other support across the life course, and adult children usually begin to reciprocate as their parents get older' (Baldassar et al. 2007:2).

What Bengtson and Roberts (1991) have dubbed 'intergenerational solidarity' is a widespread phenomenon in which adult children care about their aging parents while, on the other hand, these parents continue to provide care and support to their adult children and grandchildren (see also Finch & Mason 1993; Grundy 2005). However, there exists an assumption that geographic distance has a negative impact on such transnational intergeneration contracts, reducing physical presence and, hence, the opportunity to be there for family members in need. Similarly, Rossi and Rossi (1990) suggest that:

Across all types of help, geographic distance reduces frequency of social interaction; and hence the opportunity to inform or learn about needs and problems; consequently geographic distance reduces the actual incidence of all type of help flows between the generations (1990:422).

In line with such suggestions, one can see how the British lifestyle migrants who moved to Spain tried to maintain a certain separateness and detachment from their families so as not to cause too much trouble for their children and

other family members. When they went to visit their relatives back in the UK, many of them reported that they preferred being able to afford a place of their own. They at least tried to organise separate living arrangements in order not to disturb the existing lives of their children, who by that time often had children of their own.

Healthcare was, of course, a big issue for lifestyle migrants. Some studies suggested that existent regulations allowing British citizens to use the Spanish healthcare system free of charge were one of the major pull factors for so many British in relocating to Spain (Monreal 2001, Rodriguez Rodriguez 2008). It was not quite that simple, however, as only people who reached official retirement age and those in full-time employment in Spain were eligible for such benefits. The biggest problem for many lifestyle migrants was the aftercare of the Spanish health system – or, to be more exact, the absence of it.

Due to the more family-orientated societal structures of rural areas like Villar del Río, it was presumed that family members would take care of those who had fallen ill. It was not unusual for multiple cousins, sometimes as many as half a dozen, to show up at a relative's doctor appointment. In the case of parent-child relationships, one child would usually be designated to take care of elderly parents and other relatives, especially in instances when other siblings had moved away from the town. With the existence of such a strong family support system, the Spanish medical services delegated much of the aftercare to family members or, in some instances, nursing homes. It took British lifestyle migrants only a few visits to local hospitals in the Murcia area to realise that the majority of care was undertaken by family members – numerous cousins who accompanied their sick relatives at all times.

Although this was not considered to be such a crucial factor at first, it soon began to bother many of the migrants, especially those who lived farther away from town and those who were reaching the critical age when aftercare and home care might become necessary. A few migrants reported strong worries about the state of care in Villar del Río and shared thoughts of going back to the UK if it became too difficult for their partners to take care of them. Yet they did not expect their children or other family members to take care of them in the

case of their return, but rather planned to rely on NHS stay-at-home services. This was not very surprising, as studies have already shown that certain European countries like Denmark, Norway and the UK have very individual-orientated healthcare systems in which most caregiving is highly organised and administered through government-provided services (Blackman 2000).

Yet does this mean that, by trying to detach themselves from transnational intergeneration contracts and excluding family members back in the UK from their wills, British lifestyle migrants completely withdrew themselves from interaction with their kin members?

The research I conducted in Villar del Río showed that, despite their aforementioned worries of being burdensome to their children, almost all of the British lifestyle migrants continued to take care of their adult children and elderly parents back in the UK. Of course, as in other transnational caregiving situations, in comparison to the ones who migrated the kin members who stayed in the home country were more aware of the health concerns of their elderly parents and were the more likely providers of 'routine' care (Baldassar et al. 2007). The non-local kin who moved to live in another country, however, were more likely to see the cumulative effects of their parents' aging and provided irregular care that had more of a 'backup' function, similar to the findings of Matthews and Rosner (1988) and Moss and Moss (1992). In such a transnational context, Litwak and Kulis (1987:650) suggested that 'geographic proximity is not a simple dichotomy' in which local kin provide care and non-local kin withhold care. Rather, this distance was taken into consideration regarding the type and amount of care provided.

Indeed, it was not only physical help, such as bathing, shopping, cooking and ironing, which counted as care. In many cases, lifestyle migrants expressed their care through regular phone calls and video chats, travelling over to join on vital and difficult visits to hospitals, general advice and support and occasional help with household repairs, sometimes even through major purchases like cars or houses. They were happy to support their children when they needed help with student loans or funding for weddings; often, they gave expensive gifts when grandchildren were born to alleviate the pressure during such significant

moments. The Internet, as well as phone calls, became widely available means through which their care, advice and concerns could be expressed.

Seeing these multiple and, perhaps, sometimes unconventional ways of maintaining transnational intergeneration contracts allowed me to appreciate the different creative means by which lifestyle migrants became involved in maintaining their kinship relationships. When they lived in the UK, they had to remind themselves of these unspoken obligations. However, being farther away from their relatives allowed them to become more relaxed about such requirements; seeing big events and issues from a greater distance brought them closer to their relatives. This distance made them feel as though it was their choice to contribute to these relations; when they did, it brought them a great deal of satisfaction and improved those relations they truly cared about.

So who is family?

Will writing helping to define priorities

It has been previously suggested that will writing is a means through which the reproduction of the social system is carried out (Goody 1976:1). The existence of testimony freedom in the UK is perceived to be a great opportunity for people to outline who belongs to 'the family' in the legal sense; it provides a chance to consolidate family relationships in particular shapes and forms across generations. However, since British kinship tends to have a more individualistic structure in which kin members connect to each other through personal relations rather than pre-existing blood or legal relations, outlining important relations is particularly important.

Lifestyle migrants are different to other types of migration familiar to us; hence, their transnational care differs as well. British lifestyle migrants are unlikely to send a large volume of remittances back home (Blion 2002; Kane 2002; Salzbrunn 2002; Van Dijk 2002); they are not engaged in structuring home care for their children, as these migrants have not been forced to move abroad to

earn money (Erel 2002), nor are they torn between the choice to maximise nuclear family welfare in the host country or help extended family members back home (Al-Ali 2002).

However, despite these differences, Bryceson and Vuorela (2002) suggest that all people, on certain levels both conscious and unconscious, work at making their families succeed as social units, sharing emotional interdependence and affections. Indeed, lifestyle migrants continually supported their kin members back in the UK – when their children came up with crazy business ideas, wanted Hollywood weddings or decided to study for another degree, when their parents needed organ transplants, when their siblings required professional healthcare, when their nephews had accidents and needed immediate transportation and operations – they were always there for them. Their wills, however, were not a means of expressing such relations anymore. Due to an increase in life expectancy, migrants instead communicated their love and affection in more immediate ways that could be appreciated there and then.

The cases of these lifestyle migrants correspond with the Third Age rhetoric previously discussed in Chapter 4 as one of the underlying trends of the move. According to Peter Laslett (1996), after the 1950s the gradual increase of life expectancies in such countries as Britain and the USA allowed for a revision of attitudes toward aging and achievement. This largely affected people in their 50s, who, after their children left, felt that they were not ready to accept the roles of grandparents sitting in rocking chairs. These people denied the label of ‘elderly’, as they could still hope for a good 30 years before they would become completely dependent on others. Instead, they set some achievable goals of self-fulfilment, giving purpose for the years to come. Indeed, these people of the Third Age no longer fit the established kinship relationships, as they came to view themselves somewhere between ‘caring parent’ and ‘dependent grandparent’. They had new aspirations, new paths they could take. In these particular cases, their goals were steps toward the romantic relationships they often found themselves engaged in.

Will writing, therefore, was given a different role. After moving away and starting a new life in Spain, lifestyle migrants demanded a new testimony that

privileged the current partnerships they were involved in. Their children, therefore, did not expect much inheritance, and the will-writers did not feel a great responsibility to leave any major assets. They could spend that money themselves, with the new or old partner they had chosen, to 'build family' at their new destination.

[M]y mother, she is 90 now; she's got Alzheimer's, so she is... she recognises me when I go to see her, but she is not my mother anymore. She is just a shell there. So if she dies tomorrow, it would be a relief actually, as far as I am concerned, because all my family back home – we can't look after her anymore. I know it sounds hard, but you know... the most important thing to me is [my wife] Sally. And that's it. I say, we've had to battle a lot together, haven't we, dear? So if I see her, it's fine; if I don't, doesn't matter. (Ernie, 63)

Previously in this thesis, it has been suggested that people from the UK tend to have a highly formal understanding of kinship. In this way, many different creative paths were taken to rectify ambiguous situations among kinship members according to what was 'the right thing to do'. When British lifestyle migrants fought to become subject to British testimonial law and bequeath their houses in Spain to their current partners, they were resolving this balance, bringing the relationships that mattered to them to a formal level. Writing a will, therefore, was a means of expressing and constituting these relationships.

Chapter 9

Lifestyle migration!

In this final chapter, I will outline the major conclusions to be drawn from the research that has been presented in this thesis. I undertook an examination of the phenomenon of lifestyle migration, trying to find out more about the means of settling in a destination community, making it one's own and ultimately creating a place that lifestyle migrants could call home. Given the fact that these people who chose to relocate to another country were still largely misunderstood – mistaken for tourists in destination communities and considered welfare drainage among sending countries – it was important to see what their actual lives were about further away from the cultural misunderstandings and stereotypes constantly communicated by the media in the search for a hot topic.

The presented research sought to contribute to the knowledge of the material culture of migratory movements. I examined how the lifestyle migrants became engaged with their destination environment: how they took advantage of the productive capacity of ruins to define their new selves through processes of redefining the materiality of traditional Spanish architecture. Moreover, by physically engaging with their material environment, lifestyle migrants

undertook the difficult task of renegotiating relationships with their partners and families, re-enacting them in the materiality of their dwellings. Also, this research illustrated how, through moving away from their family and friends in the UK, lifestyle migrants changed the spatiotemporal dimensions of their relationships, improving their potentiality and resolving intergenerational conflicts by transferring them to a different spatial axis. In this way, lifestyle migrants were able to create a safe space between them and their kin members, which eased tension and allowed for a greater productive capacity within their relationships, ultimately improving them. Finally, this research shed some light on newly defined roles of will writing, in which migrants were able to benefit their current relationships with their partners, and sometimes families, in Spain. Instead of designating their children and other kin members in the UK as recipients of their inheritance, as had traditionally been the case, they gave these family members gifts and money and in this way continued to contribute to the intergeneration contracts between them.

The findings of this thesis have allowed for a deeper understanding of lifestyle migration as a phenomenon: instead of being highly mobile or 'in flux', people actively engaged with the physical destination environment, renegotiating and improving their kinship relationships – both in their new location and back in the UK.

Finding materiality to mobility: redefining destination environment

One of the primary aims for this research was to uncover the materiality of lifestyle migrants who, as was explained in Chapter 1, were generally viewed as people in flux, subject to modern migratory movement and, hence, a decreasing need to settle somewhere in the first place. My personal willingness to investigate the interaction of migrants with their material environment was inspired by the work of Émile Durkheim. 'To express our own ideas even to ourselves, we need to attach those ideas to material things that symbolize them,' (1995[1912]:229). According to his idea of moral/material dualism, such material things - anything from a totem to a house - needed to surround

people, as they made shared ideas more tangible to all and transformed them into 'reality'. They brought the members of a group moral unity, making ideas and relationships more durable. For Durkheim, the dual aspect of the material and moral was undividable. At different stages in his academic life, he claimed material to be a signpost – a marker of the moral – and later an embodiment and even a measure of it (Schlanger 2006). He argued that the social life materialised itself to the point of becoming an element of the external world (i.e. a house). Moreover, he hypothesised that once ideas were embodied in a house, its construction became autonomous reality, influencing its inhabitants in return and reminding them of their own ideas. This moral/material dynamic outlined by Durkheim became the basis for understanding of the processes of appropriation of the destination environment by the lifestyle migrants. Those were not the complex structural notions of lineal relatedness suggested by Lévi-Strauss (1982) that were transferred and related to, rather it was the potentiality of the dwellings that created deeper engagement with the built environment and allowed to objectify personal notions of home and family, which every lifestyle migrant had a personal understanding of.

The old town houses in Villar del Río were one type of dwelling that the British came to reside in. Because of their decaying state, much work needed to be done to rebuild, renew and redefine them to a point at which migrants could call these houses their own. An important question arose: how would lifestyle migrants relate to these dwellings without previous knowledge of Spanish architecture or local ways of inhabiting such houses?

The abandoned buildings and structures were important means through which local people related to their pasts, redefining themselves in relation to the built environment and finding a connection with it. These were the places in which the difficult dynamics of remembering and forgetting took place, where certain memories were relived and celebrated and others dealt with and surmounted by the local Spaniards.

In the particular case of Spain, a town's complex past was dealt with by the locals in different ways: some detached themselves from the actual houses, but continued to relate to certain histories that took place in these dwellings. In this

way, people redefined themselves from 'being traditional' to 'having traditions' (Fishburne Collier 1997). Others perceived decaying dwellings to represent the pre-modern peasant identities that they were ashamed of, so by reusing them as basements for new houses or simply constructing their residences next to these ruins, people celebrated a triumph over the dreadful past, symbolically getting away from it (González-Ruibal 2005). The past was modified and reflected upon through altering a house's materiality.

British lifestyle migrants, on the other hand, were not very familiar with the history of these dwellings, nor did they have any personal memories related to such houses. However, it seemed that the British were not particularly looking for a sense of continuity, as in general the historical backdrop of Spain was not a main factor in their relocation. Moreover, despite a general fascination with the authenticity of these dwellings and the character embodied in each and every one of them, the British were not able to engage with the complexity of the past that they represented. The conducted research, however, revealed British migrants' need for a decaying past based on the fragmented and unfinished nature of these dwellings. Their decaying state provided fertile ground for shaping their new environment in different and meaningful ways. As many British were unable to influence the look and the feel of their houses back in the UK, where building one's own house was considered more of a luxury, the British migrants enjoyed their newly discovered agency while creating a new place they could call home. As Chapter 5 vividly illustrated, lifestyle migrants engaged in numerous activities to negotiate the feel of their houses through the materials that were used and old or new techniques that were employed as well as to manage the functionality of these new dwellings, aligning them with their own tastes and preferences.

Moreover, because of the decaying nature of these buildings, the British migrants absorbed themselves in restoration projects. In some cases, when the older features of a house had been covered by more modern walls or ceilings, its new inhabitants broke these concealments and 'released' the original characteristics of the house. This was an engaging process in which lifestyle migrants displayed a willingness to restore something that was no longer intact and needed some work done on it. The British were happy to invest time and

money in working on these houses, as they were also willing to make an effort in working on the relationships meant to take place in the dwellings once they were restored. One could note the productive capacity of these ruins: by giving another chance to their dwellings, the migrants similarly gave a second chance to the relationships they became a part of in their new destination environment.

Throughout my research, it also became quite evident in many cases that once the British engaged with the renovation of their houses, their projects never really ended – certain rooms always needed to be renewed and worked on. Although such situations always involved a number of extenuating circumstances, such as limited budgets, unreliable builders or an owner's inclination to live in a house first and 'feel' it before making any final changes, it seemed like the notion of 'never-ending' renovation was also productive for lifestyle migrants. Constant engagement with these projects meant that the British were not wondering about other potential places to live, as they had done back in the UK. There, many British people considered themselves to be a part of the property ladder, where every house was just another step toward a better future in real estate. By concentrating on one house in Spain, however, the owners of old town houses could 'become' the new selves they aspired to be, in relationships they were ready to work on, without a constant gaze toward the next available opportunity.

The purchase of farmhouses in the countryside required physical engagement with the dwelling as well as the land that came with it. Despite what many of the British lifestyle migrants had imagined, old, charming farmhouses (also known as *fincas*) were virtually nonexistent in the Murcia area. The old sheds that the locals used for storage of farm equipment and crops were simple, square dwellings that lacked the charm of small Andalucían houses with curved tiles and distinctive white walls. The new houses that were offered for newcomers were usually so-called 'new traditional Spanish'-style dwellings, which could be described as a mix of the Toscana style and Mexican hacienda variations, combined with Andalucían motifs of Arabic ornamentations. This was a new type of dwelling that the British needed to redefine as their own, which became a personal venture requiring the exercise of certain powers and command over space in order to create a special home for their loved ones.

The means of redefining 'new traditional' Spanish were as different as the couples themselves. For some, this was achieved through a process of farming and cultivating the land; for others, gardening was what allowed the British to engage and connect with local ways of doing things; some redefined 'new traditional' by installing new and different systems in their houses to make them more environmentally friendly. People undertook these different activities to bring themselves closer to the notion of living that they had aspired to experience. These goals and aspirations required gigantic effort: obtaining building permission, bringing electricity and water to dwellings and negotiating reconstruction and instalment with local builders and authorities. The migrants' processes of creating and managing their new houses in Spain resulted in the existence of their own space, where they felt comfortable and secure. This provided the decision power to form their built environment in the destination country and, consequently, to shape their 'present' in their own terms, sometimes in more extreme ways than they would have done back in the UK. They were able to achieve their ultimate aspirations: farms with thousands of trees, ruins restored to be lived in, houses complete with dozens of systems to help them be environmentally neutral.

The potentiality of these new dwellings - perhaps more than their exact characteristics, history or aesthetics - was what attracted the lifestyle migrants. In line with the findings of such anthropologists as Jean-Sebastian Marcoux (2001), one could highlight the therapeutic nature of the experience of moving: movers receive an opportunity to reconsider the importance of their relationships and memories and see themselves in relation to them. Indeed, one could suggest that in disconnecting from one's usual habitat, one becomes more reflective of the self. In this particular case of lifestyle migration, such reflexivity was combined with a productive new built environment in which lifestyle migrants could actively become engaged in the construction of their new habitat, redefining themselves and their relations through such processes. In that way, to borrow from Robert Ginsberg (1999), their new homes were less about 'where you are from' and more about 'where you are going'.

Such engagement with the destination environment ultimately became a way for lifestyle migrants to manage relationships with the people with whom they came to Spain – their families and partners.

Produced notions of coupling: the physical labour of ‘making relationships’

This thesis presented a case in point of the creative activity of redefining kinship. Farther away from the gaze of family and friends in the UK, lifestyle migrants came to a new environment where they could re-enact their partnerships or family relationships at their own pace using their own criteria. Becoming engaged in the construction of their new houses was a mean of entering a dialogue whereby re-establishing a new environment was negotiated in tandem with the roles of people involved in the process. One could point to the productive capacity of negotiation, creating a space for discussion that in other circumstances might not have taken place. This could be considered a process of migrants ‘making relationships’ through their houses.

Although anthropologists have long emphasised the systems of kinship and marriage as two of the defining factors of house construction and maintenance (Bloch 1995; Janowski 1995; Lévi-Strauss 1982), in this particular case the concept arose somewhat unexpectedly during fieldwork. Although I had been focusing on notions of migration and re-establishment of the self in the new destination environment, I realised that some three-quarters of all my informants were residing in couples, many of whom were newly developed ones – people who already had one, two or, not uncommonly, three marriages behind them.

Since almost all of the newly acquired houses required physical engagement with the way they felt and looked (perhaps more in the cases of old town houses than in *urbanizaciones*), it became a fascinating process of interaction and negotiation that was regularly referred to by lifestyle migrants, but could also be easily observed on a daily basis. They became involved in discussions of

how walls needed to look, which elements of houses were to be saved and the final touches that made their new environment feel like home. In a couple coming from two different backgrounds, usually at later stages in life, it was not always an easy task to find a compromise that would satisfy both parties. Yet this experience seemed to be very valuable for lifestyle migrants, as it was through physical engagement with their dwelling that they became closer to one another. Of course, this was not always the case, as a few examples illustrated in Chapter 6, but its potentiality seemed to be worth the effort.

Just like the Zafimaniry of Madagascar carved their new houses out of wood to make their houses and family sturdier and long-lasting (Bloch 1995), and in a similar manner to the Kelabit people of Sarawak, Malaysia, who transformed the different relationships of wider kin into sources of societal power and recognition through cooking on the hearths in their dwellings (Janowski 1995), lifestyle migrants renegotiated their relationships through the activities in their houses. This was achieved by a number of arrangements that each of the couples and families chose for themselves, mediating power and control over privacy as well as common activities. In some cases, lifestyle migrants chose different areas of the house for themselves where they could practise hobbies such as farming, gardening, playing musical instruments or darts, reading, quilting, taking private dance lessons or where they could simply spend time in a carefully created environment where their computers, cameras, and favourite books were within reach. This constructed privacy was a necessary factor in the enactment of one's personal identity at home. However, it was a mixture of these activities, together with shared ones – like eating food, watching movies and cleaning the house, in which couples needed to make joint decisions about their house in order to accommodate the tastes and desires of both partners – that redefined the dynamic of the dwelling and ultimately contributed to the 'coupling' effect.

However wonderful and beneficial these processes were, one could begin to think about these couples within the larger scope of the kinship relationships they were part of. The singling out of certain relationships in favour of others who still lived in the UK seemed to be rather elitist. On one hand, this was not surprising due to the more 'individualistic' nature of British kinship

relationships. As was further elaborated upon in Chapter 7, British people tended to relate to each other as individuals within the framework of kinship, not by virtue of their genealogical positions (Strathern 1992). Such 'egocentricity' was acted upon by personally relating to different kin members and not joining pre-existing lineal kinship systems, where people were connected by proxy of blood or legal relationships.

On the other hand, however, prioritising certain relationships and physically moving away from some kin members could be seen as a personal preference toward affectionate relationships instead of ones that imposed obligations, such as taking care of children, siblings or parents. Such observations correspond with the suggestions of social scientists like Smart and Neale (1999), who highlighted the ever-increasing 'fragmented' notions of family in the UK by citing increasing divorce rates, and people's keenness to find their perfect partners without taking into consideration the increasing amount of kin members after multiple marriages.

The research I conducted for this thesis, however, revealed that for British lifestyle migrants in Spain, this fragmented or flexible nature of kinship relationships was employed in playing more normative roles of good partners or parents. The different activities that lifestyle migrants undertook in the scope of their own particular family situations seemed to reflect more normative notions of kinship and the urge to implement imperatives of a formal order. This was due to the high expectations for kin roles that people hoped to achieve: for example, becoming a good partner through relocation to a different destination environment (in this specific case, Spain), engaging with the relationship, reflecting on the marriage and ultimately connecting more effectively with one's partner.

My research revealed the lengths that lifestyle migrants were willing to go to implement principles of fairness, love and other family values in frequently complex conditions. The reported flexibility of British kinship was represented by migrants' different negotiation experiences of personal attachment, through which they brought highly normative kinship relatedness into the activity of their everyday lives. What at first glance might have appeared to be a way of

escaping from kin relationships in the UK actually resulted in improving these relations through spatiotemporal redefinition.

Spatiotemporal redefinition of kinship relationships

I began to pay more attention to the nature of the spatiotemporal characteristics of the British lifestyle migrants' relationships with their kin in the UK because of the empty guest rooms that existed in almost every migrant's house, be it an old town house or a house in an *urbanización*. Upon further examination, it became clear that these rooms were ready for friends and family from the UK who might come to visit lifestyle migrants. However, they were essentially never used.

Interestingly, despite their 'unused' status, these rooms played a very important role in the relationships that lifestyle migrants were trying to re-establish with their relatives. Those rooms were proxies for potential relationships that could take place. Regardless of the fact that no one actually visited these spaces, their potentiality served as a catalyst for relationship negotiations, which were further acted upon through Internet communication, Christmas cards and rare holiday visits.

Similarly, some of the lifestyle migrants purchased small houses and apartments back in the UK to live in during their rare visits so as not to bother their relatives with their constant presence. These empty rooms, both in Spain and the UK, were forms of a distributed habitat, which ensured the possibility of the kinship relationships they represented. Such presence of absence had a productive capacity: these empty spaces had to be filled, creating a necessity for communication with those for whom the rooms had been made ready.

Creating such rooms was a means of initiating these relationships. Because of the lack of stress that could have otherwise resulted from the everyday authority of kin, control and intervention in each other's lives in the UK, these relations were conducted on a 'voluntary' basis, and perhaps that is why they were reported to be more genuine. The fact that Spain was 'only 2.5 hours

away' from the UK also created a sense of connectedness, whereby both parties knew that these relations could be acted upon when someone was in need – which, in fact, almost always remained the goal.

It could be argued that a key reason why moving away had such a productive character for the British people in terms of kinship relationship negotiations was the 'individualistic' nature of kinship relationships in the UK (Macfarlane 1978; Strathern 1992, 2005). Such an argument presumes that people tend to connect to their kin members in personal terms, rather than by virtue of their genealogical positions. Individuals are not members of given groups by definition, but take an active role in managing those relations – choosing to disappear from someone's life or returning to become closer. In this way, people constantly manage the states of being connected and disconnected at the same time.

One could redefine lifestyle migrants' move from the UK in more common anthropological terms using the work of Nancy Munn (1986) and suggest that they became engaged in creating a new spatiotemporal transformation. In her study of the Massim society in Papua New Guinea, Munn examined different means of creating relationships. In her analysis, she formulated the concept of 'intersubjective spacetime' – 'a spacetime of self-other relationships formed in and through acts and practices' (1986:9). This focused on an act's relative capacity to extend intersubjective relationships in time (a potential relationship) and space (across multiple persons and households). It was not the simple description of an act – 'constitutive features of social systems', as suggested by Giddens (1991) – but people themselves who constructed a different formation of spacetime.

By relocating to another country and extending the spatial dimensions of their relationships, lifestyle migrants created favourable conditions in which their behaviour did not have to be addressed on a temporal or generational axis. As has been noted, lifestyle migrants were generally around 50 years old and thus represented people in the so-called Third Age, in which people were not ready to accept the roles of 'ancestors' who did little more than 'share the wisdom', but instead wanted to experience new things in life. Hence, their behaviour

might not have always been completely understood by those of the following generation, who were already adults themselves but could not accept corresponding roles because their parents were not yet ready to let go of certain behavioural models. Resolving potential conflict in spatial terms allowed for less intervention into each other's lives, and virtual communication lessened the intensity of these relations.

By relocating to Spain, the British contributed to the relative expansive capacities of their kin relations, ultimately improving them. Through acting counterintuitively in moving away, the British actually became closer to their kin members, using the cosmological code of connecting and disconnecting familiar to participants of all such kin arrangements.

Inheritance and intergeneration contracts: aspirations of lifestyle migrants

Notions of inheritance in general have been viewed as important means of benefitting certain relationships, defining whom one was particularly grateful for or valued the most and characterising these relationships for the last time. This was certainly the case throughout the past 50 years in the UK, as people began to acquire more wealth and consequently had more power of relationship approval – or, rather, disapproval. Moreover, inheritance law in the UK guaranteed one's freedom to announce heirs, in which any person who was not a legal or blood relative could inherit one's property.

In coming to Spain, however, such conditions were altered: residents were obliged to transfer two-thirds of their wealth to their children. Interestingly, lifestyle migrants took every possible step to ensure that British law would still apply and their freedom to announce heirs would be maintained.

Yet further examination revealed that these steps were made to benefit partners who resided together in Spain, not to take one's siblings, parents or children from previous marriages 'out of the equation'. Despite the geographic distance

between lifestyle migrants and their relatives in the UK, migrants continued to actively participate in their relatives' lives, giving gifts, care and advice. As was previously suggested, people from the UK tended to have a highly formal understanding of kinship. In this way, many different creative paths were taken to rectify ambiguous situations among kinship members according to what was 'the right thing to do'. Hence, these relationships were acted upon immediately, without waiting for wills to be opened and the value of these relations revealed to the public.

Although it may have seemed that, in withdrawing from certain relationships and not demanding any care from their children, lifestyle migrants also withdrew from their intergeneration contracts, this was not the case. Geographic distance influenced the types of interactions that took place: instead of cooking meals and taking grandchildren for walks, lifestyle migrants opted for long-term advice and participation at the vital events of their relatives, gaining a better overview of the cumulative effects of their parents' aging and children's growth and performing more of a 'backup' function in their lives.

Lifestyle migrants employed multiple, and perhaps sometimes unconventional, ways of maintaining transnational intergeneration contracts in order to continue their kinship relationships. When they lived in the UK, they had to remind themselves of these unspoken obligations. However, being farther away from their relatives allowed them to feel more relaxed about such requirements; seeing big issues and events from farther away ultimately brought them closer together.

A new perspective on lifestyle migration

The goal of this thesis was to examine one of the latest trends in global migratory movement: lifestyle migration. It seemed like a challenge to understand what was actually going on among these people, since the move was usually described as a collection of potential predispositions - age,

education, cheap airfare and low real estate prices – or by a number of stereotypes widely spread by the media. However, an anthropological perspective posed a challenge to see how lifestyle migrants understood their mobility – if they were really so fluid that they no longer required a bond with any specific communities. This research illustrated that in some senses, the British could be categorised as the type of ‘undesirable’ migrants who did not wish to assimilate completely into the Spanish environment by speaking the language perfectly and having constant contact with different social groups. As was explored in Chapter 4, lifestyle migrants’ interaction with the local Spaniards acquired the nature of an ‘unarticulated dialogue’. In this way, knowledge about ‘the other’ was gathered through daily short encounters, rare cases of neighbourly advice and interactions with local authorities, who conveyed regulations regarding life in the town.

The lifestyle migrants in Spain with whom I conducted fieldwork were a typical case of an ‘imagined’ or ‘simulated’ community according to Carrington (2002) and Albrow et al. (1997). These were people whose immediate environment was constituted not by their next-door neighbours, but by people to whom they felt emotionally connected despite being separated by hundreds of miles. What these people had in common were constructed identities rather than shared locations. Lifestyle migrants connected with their friends and family in the UK regardless of fractured physical presence. In fact, moving away from them was a way of getting closer and re-establishing a connection with added space between them, which in general resulted in the formation of deeper and more meaningful relationships.

This move was not really about Spain; rather, it was about finding that special, unique place where, further from the gaze of others, lifestyle migrants could commit to relationships with their partners or families – ultimately rewarding them by naming them as direct heirs of the property in Spain that they had come to dwell in together.

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