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Home and away

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Home and Away: Place Appreciation and Purposeful Relocation in Later Life

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Abstract

Worldwide, people's attachments to places are typically ambivalent, and complemented by desires for mobility and scene-changing. So to understand relationships between place and wellbeing, we need to look beyond the simple idea that some kinds of place, local characteristics and place attachments make people's lives go better. Places matter, but wellbeing is not environmentally determined, it is a complex outcome of lifelong interactions between people and places. Some of these are conscious and deliberate, and some involve deliberate relocation as well as processes of attachment. This article supplements the environmental determinism of 'good place' theories, and the social constructionism of 'healthy place attachment' theories, with recommendations for a systematic approach to mapping and analysing how wellbeing happens. It pays particular attention to deliberate 'place appreciation', which refers to these dynamic interactions through which people actively derive value from places. Ethnographic examples of deliberate ecological self-improvement in later life are explored to highlight three kinds of place-related wellbeing strategies: place-making, local mobility and relocation. A simple analytical system is proposed to highlight the potential relevance to policy and practice of a systematic sociocultural ecology of wellbeing.

Introduction: Place Attachment and Place Transcendence

> All of man's miseries come from one thing: not knowing how to sit quietly in a
> room. (Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*)

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We are plain quiet folk and have no use for adventures. Nasty, disturbing uncomfortable things! Make you late for dinner! I can't think what anybody sees in them. (Bilbo Baggins, in J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit)*

Our experience of place, and especially of home, is a dialectical one – balancing a need to stay with a desire to escape. (Edward Relph, *Place and Placelessness,* 1976: 42)

Don't fence me in. (Bing Crosby)

For Pascal, exasperated by the militaristic masculinity of seventeenth-century France, the idea of being grounded sounds appealing. But to understand the human ecology of place-making, a basic requirement is to remember that we are not plants. In many languages, we use plant metaphors to refer to our place attachment – 'roots' for local bonds, 'uprooting' for displacement. But since we're not plants, our physical and psychological health requires frequent mobility, and a good life course allows plenty of scope for voluntary detachments and reattachments to places. Our species is strongly placebound, but also restless and curious: *homo parochialis* but also *homo peregrinabundus*. Even if we are nomads, our connections to places, like our connections to people, are emotionally charged and important for our wellbeing. They are also potentially toxic. To live well, we must develop ecological intelligence and environmental flexibility. These capabilities allow us to combine place attachment with a variety of deliberate dislocations. Personal growth requires a judicious mixture of linking and delinking, to and from people and places. Just as learning a foreign language gives us new understandings of our mother tongue, so too are our home attachments and our excursions mutually implicated. And so we all, to some extent, experience irresolvably ambivalent or multivalent place attachment. Homes can be dearly loved but also

simultaneously feared as traps (Marcus 2006). Forced settlement can be as upsetting as forced migration (Fratkin and Roth 2009; Salzman 1980; Smith and Greenfields 2012).

This being the case, any viable theorising or mapping of the links between place and wellbeing must attend not simply to place attachments and environmental goods and services but to the dynamic interactions – through the day and over the life course – between attachments and local embeddedness on the one hand, and detachments and mobilities on the other. We can learn a lot about these dynamics from anthropological studies of personal and collective deliberative mobility choices – from cross-cultural studies of ascetic and ritualised uprooting. This article will therefore focus mainly on *deliberative, voluntary* mobility choices, rather than on forced migration or traditional nomadic livelihood strategies.

Throughout all human lives, temporary relocations are important in our pursuit of wellbeing. Strategic scene-changing, by individuals and groups, is involved in mood management and in interpersonal relationships as well as in livelihoods. This article offers some simple analytical tools that can promote systematic understanding of how and why people deliberately combine place attachment with frequent detachments. It illustrates this through ethnographic explorations of how older people in Western societies combine place-making, local mobility and longer-term relocation, in their pursuit of late-life flourishing.

Old age, in theory and in practice, expresses perhaps more clearly than any other life stages the ambivalences of place attachment, and the complementary desires for place transcendence. Gerontologists have since the early 1960s debated the relative importance of social and ecological engagements and disengagements in the lives of older people (Bengtson et al. 1999/2009). The deliberate pursuit of late-life thriving by economically secure individuals is peculiarly instructive: we can learn a lot about people's implicit or explicit theories of wellbeing by witnessing unforced ecological choices that are enlightened by a

lifetime of experiences, and that are not mainly driven by traditional norms, doctrines or the pursuit of careers or family responsibilities or livelihood requirements.

Place attachment – the belief that our identity and wellbeing are rooted in a particular location – is a specific subcategory of topophilia – place-loving. Place-making has recently become a major theme in the design of built environments, particularly regarding the facilitation of successful 'ageing in place'. The pains of uprootedness have long been recognised in research and policies relating to migration. Wellbeing is often believed to require secure attachment to a particular home and to the associated community. Conversely, deracination and insecure place attachment are commonly assumed to be psychologically damaging. However, people can also become pathologically home-bound, just as they can be unhealthily attached to specific people or to material possessions.

And so *place transcendence,* going beyond your comfort zone as an aspect of self-transcendence, is widely recognised as vital to mental health and to personal and 'spiritual' growth. In most cultures, although there are rituals that reinforce and celebrate place attachment, there are also renunciatory or escapist cultural elements that deliberately disrupt it and question its value. No human grows up without being subjected to a variety of religious or ascetic theories and practices, collective rituals and myths, that encourage or celebrate at least temporary detachment by valorising excursions into the wilderness, permanent wilderness residence and even permanent vagabondage. By analysing these, we can access a diversity of traditional beliefs and implicit theories of ecologically intelligent place appreciation – of how people should achieve balance or harmony between the will to localise and the will to explore.

As we grow up, our social education inevitably involves poignant connections to and detachments from other people. Our relationships to places similarly involve dynamic shifts

and oscillations that are often tinged with bittersweetness (Scannell and Gifford 2014). Our pursuit of wellbeing inevitably involves compromises and complementarities between enjoying the comforts, stillness and predictabilities of home life on the one hand, and satisfying our need for adventures and excursions on the other. In the contemporary jargon of cultural ecology, we are situationally 'topophilic' (place-loving) and 'topophobic' (place-hating, see González 2005) or, more specifically, 'claustrophobic' (fearful of confinement). We get attached to places, but we also hanker for periodical displacement. By force of habit or circumstance, we can suffer from too much homeliness or from too much rootlessness.

Before looking at some ethnographic examples of late-life place-related life choices in the later part of the article, we will first explore some possibilities for developing systematic analytical approaches to further our understanding of the complex interactions between people and places in the pursuit of wellbeing.

Modelling the Ecodynamics of Wellbeing Pursuits

The vast efflorescence of writing on environment and wellbeing over the past four decades has raised important new awareness of how our pursuit of wellbeing and therapeutic recuperation is often a matter of sociocultural ecology – that is, of interactions between minds, bodies and lifeworlds. However, research and policy on place-making often seems to indulge in at least implicit environmental determinism. The main problem derives from implying that the wellbeing benefits of environmental factors flow in a relatively simple manner from places into people. Perhaps the best-known example of this is the chapter titled 'The right place' in E. O. Wilson's popular but ineptly titled book *Biophilia* (1984). Despite its catchy title, the book is not really about liking life, or even about liking particular kinds of life form, but rather about hardwired biological curiosity. While some environments may more readily stimulate or satisfy this curiosity, our so-called 'biophilic' satisfactions are

clearly a product of interactions, and they owe at least as much to the versatility of the human mind as they do to any particular environmental affordances.

There is a growing interest in how environments influence wellbeing, captured in catch-phrases like 'therapeutic landscapes' (Williams 2007), 'salutogenic environments' (Antonovsky 1979), 'biophilic design' (Kellert et al. 2008) and – for older people – 'age-friendly cities', and even (counter-intuitively!) 'dementia-friendly' design. In these important and well-intentioned discourses, it often seems as if the idea of environments as causal factors tends to detract attention from people's own agency. People who use philosophically untenable phrases like 'healthy cities' or 'environmental wellbeing' are probably dimly aware that they are anthropomorphising, but such concepts are a slippery slope towards one-way deterministic thinking. Much of the causal theorising is speculative, and when there is a semblance of science involved, it is common to find elementary blunders where correlations between geographical factors and wellbeing indicators are reported as if they showed the 'place effects' of environments on wellbeing (see e.g. Conradson 2012: 22).

This kind of environmental determinism is part of a broader pattern of what we might call 'default externalism' in governance and in causal theories worldwide (see Ahuvia et al. 2015 for a fuller explanation). 'Externalism' here refers to the usually implicit assumption that wellbeing (including psychological happiness) is caused by living conditions, and therefore that the duties of governance and care are primarily about the provision of external goods. This 'outside-in' approach to wellbeing can be contrasted with the polemical *internalism* or mentalism of the self-help movement, which tends to exaggerate the independent power of individual minds to build happiness 'from the inside out'. To plan better lives, however, and to understand how wellbeing happens, we need an 'interactionist' approach. We need to observe and analyse dynamic interactions, over time, between minds,

bodies, sociocultural processes and physical environments, as depicted in rudimentary form in the diagram below (Figure 1)

Figure 1: A dynamic interactionist model of how wellbeing happens

<<FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE>>

Explicit discussion of wellbeing has massively increased in academia and in policy and practice in recent decades, and there is no shortage of guidance on analysis of wellbeing-related components, factors and meanings. There have, however, been remarkably few attempts to develop simple tools for mapping and analysing people's deliberate pursuit of wellbeing. Yet systematic analysis really matters as a way of understanding people's habits, decisions, activities and experiences. People's experience of wellbeing or illbeing is in constant interaction with their implicit and explicit beliefs about what is needed to achieve it. In personal lives, and in the running of organisations and operation of projects and policies, people could benefit from a clearer appreciation of the full range of factors and options involved.

So let us try to map out, as simply as possible, sociocultural ecology of wellbeing pursuits. What are the main factors that interact, over time, to produce wellbeing? If, as an individual, you want to adopt a systematic approach to assessing your room for manoeuvre, your options consist of some combination of the following: change yourself (your mind or your body); change your environment (your relationships, institutions, culture and physical habitat); reposition yourself (mentally, bodily, socially, environmentally). The ways in which these options interact, over time, amounts to a set of psychosomatic and socio-ecological transformations. To understand these, you need to ask four main kinds of question:

1. Which will you emphasise more: mental or environmental adjustment?

2. Which environmental (or 'lifeworld') factors will you try to change: your body? Relationships? Sociocultural environment? Physical environment? How could these factors interact in synergetic ways?

3. How will you change your lifeworld – adjust what you have, or move to a different lifeworld?

4. Are the changes you are considering good for the short term, or the longer term, or both?

The first question presupposes a conception of the mind as to some degree a free agent that can work on itself as well as working on its habitat. *Mental action* consists of cognitive reframing and attention shifts, and deliberate transformation of such things as life goals, everyday motivations, thinking habits and emotional responses to situations. Apart from mental adjustment, the rest of your life improvement options are about changing your lifeworld. This is where 'place' thinking becomes paramount. The most obvious component of your mind's habitat is your body. So you can try to change your body's capabilities and habits to make more fit for whatever your purposes and preferences are. Or, conversely, you can adapt your ways of thinking to the body you have – for example, you can reconcile yourself to being skinny, or decide that you actually enjoy being a clumsy dancer.

Your mind is also in continuous interaction with social and cultural factors, such as relationships, institutions and collective belief and learning systems. As with your body, you can change your relationships, or change the way you think about your relationships. But the higher the sociocultural level, the less scope you have for independent agency. And similarly with your physical environment: you can change some aspects that are within your control.

And so when we reach the limits of our control of our immediate environments, we shift to the third question: if local adjustments are unsatisfactory, should you move to

different sociocultural and physical environments? These options are not mutually exclusive, because you can make everyday or longer-term shifts between different environments. Note that although you cannot physically leave your body, humans have always been able to translocate mentally through the imagination (and associated phenomena such as deliberate trance and lucid dreaming). And our mental versatilities are becoming much more compellingly evident in our current era of online existence and virtual reality, so that we can to some extent move to different sociocultural and perceived physical environments without moving our bodies.

A final consideration is the balance of emphasis on short-term versus long-term adjustments: some kinds of deliberation are aimed at the present moment (e.g. going outside to improve your mood), while others are clearly long-term projects (e.g. migrating). Many are short-term changes that amount to long-term habits over time (e.g. cultivating a lifelong habit of savouring environmental joys through multiple momentary attention shifts). Table 1 below provides a simple tabular structure for analysing the key factors involved in life improvement, in relation to comparisons between in situ versus relocational strategies ('here versus there'), and short-term versus long-term strategies ('now versus then').

Table 1: Options for Life Improvement Over Time, Home and Away

	Home (In place)	**Away (Relocating or replacing)**	**Short term**	**Longer term**
Mind	Reframe interpretations; focus on positives;	Wander in the imagination with or without 'virtual reality'	Shift present attention towards	Cultivate appreciative attitudes and mental

	savour;	technology; use drugs, trance techniques or deliberate 'lucid dreaming' to change consciousness	positives	versatilities; adopt more realistic life goals
Body	Cultivate health and bodily capabilities to suit purposes	Use prosthetics to compensate for bodily short-comings	Change emotions and moods through movements, postures, expressions, foods, drugs	Cultivate bodily capabilities with/without prosthetic aids
Relationships	Cultivate more compassionate, trusting and constructive relationships	Use technology to maintain or adopt new relationships at a distance	Adjust conversations and other interactions	Cultivate better relational habits with specific individuals and in general
Society and	Try to modify social	Move (physically or	Modify immediate	Aim for long-term

culture	institutions and cultural values, your roles in them, your attitudes to them	virtually) to sociocultural contexts better suited to your purposes	sociocultural phenomena such as collective moods	sociocultural changes
Physical environment	Make environmental changes – e.g. declutter, cultivate plants, create natural views	Move to environments that better suit your moods, preferences and goals	Adjust environments, or move to new environments, according to present needs	Make lasting adjustments or move permanently to more suitable places

What this model emphasises is that from a human wellbeing perspective terms like 'local wellbeing' and 'environmental wellbeing' don't make sense, since wellbeing is derived from multiple complex interactions between people and places – interactions which include evaluative engagements, modifications and mobilities between different places. To understand wellbeing, 'salutogenic environments' and 'place attachments' do not in themselves tell us anything much about how wellbeing happens. It is the interactive appreciation of places and mobilities that is important and interesting.

Place Appreciation in Practice

The above analytical approach outlines the core principles of interactionist analysis, which we can now apply to enrich our understanding of 'place appreciation' – namely the processes

by which people value and add value to places in relation to their beliefs, preferences and goals. People do not just sit passively and let the goodness or badness of their environments flow into them. Humans are constantly interacting with their environments with their minds (developing feelings, meanings and narratives); their bodies (using all the senses, moving around, adjusting bodies over time); and through sociocultural processes (other people and cultural resources in the enjoyment and modification of environments).

Yet until the recent surge of interest in 'place-making' and 'place attachment', planners worldwide have tended to show inadequate interest in place appreciation. As Jedrej and Nuttall put it in their ethnographic analysis of various evaluations of counter-urban migration in rural Scotland, planners tend to adopt a 'scientific' or 'decentred' (i.e. de-humanised) description of place which 'does not consider how human knowledge of the environment is actually constructed, or that people imaginatively create their environments and attribute meaning to and draw significance from the landscapes in which they live' (1996: 205). In a more recent collection of essays on rural ageing, a combination of 'human ecology' with 'critical gerontology' is proposed as a way of ensuring that planners go beyond the traditional technocratic approach to environments, and instead notice the ways in which older people actively interact with environments and culture over time to generate their own meanings and experiences (Keating and Phillips 2008: 5–6). Planners need to appreciate the diversity of people's responses to environments, and the ways in which wellbeing outcomes develop through long-term multifactor interactions.

So what, then, can our practices and studies of uprootedness teach us about wellbeing? In ethical and legal discourse, and in disciplines such as environment psychology, geography and urban planning, secure place attachment is widely regarded as a vital prerequisite for psychological health. Place identification is a salient theme in most accounts of personal authenticity and self-development (Proshansky et al. 1983). Conversely,

pathological outcomes from deracination of involuntary displacement, from the environmental alienation of 'placelessness' (Relph 1976), and from the increased time people spend in 'non-places' (Augé 1995) or in places to which they feel no long-term bond, are among the more significant themes in declinist critiques of modernity. The assumed pain of displacement is used as the basis for compensatory claims and therapeutic remedies, and in cost-benefit comparisons in personal decision-making and collective planning.

Yet we should also give careful consideration to contradictory discourses that advise us that it may be good for our wellbeing if we deliberately uproot ourselves and fight our inbuilt and/or enculturated parochialisms. These should not surprise us. Just as with interpersonal attachments, our bonds with specific places can prove unhealthy or unduly restrictive. Ritualised displacement is a common cultural feature worldwide, in recognition of the personal and collective benefits of taking people out of their comfort zones – periodically, occasionally or for long periods. In India, for example, newly married women and older people are advised (and ritually assisted) to abandon their attachments to particular places, and embrace either new places (in the case of new wives) or peripheral places (in the case of older people in general, who are expected to remove to the edges of compounds or villages), or peripatetic existence (in the case of wandering sadhus). In other words, disciplined dis-attachment from hearth, home and village is recognised as essential for both personal and collective wellbeing (Lamb 2000).

Ritualised and culturally endorsed dis-attachment can be value-confirmatory, or it can be more transformative. By analogy, if ritualised periodic fasting mainly offers people reminders of the need to be mindful and appreciative about food, longer-term ascetic fasting can be a much more challenging project designed to bring about major and even life-threatening transformations. Similarly, temporary ritual displacements such as mountain-top or forest festivals may do little more than reconfirm people's place attachment – a kind of

tokenistic re-racination akin to the way children's swinging and see-sawing confirms the importance of balance and the value of terra firma. More ambitious pilgrimages and long-term ascetic removals to wild places, however, can be challenging attempts at radical self-transcendence with a view to self-transformation. This is why, as emphasised in the analytical framework above, temporal concerns are an important aspect of the analysis of place appreciation.

Current Trends and Policies in Movement and Stillness

In our era of rapidly increasing levels of travel and relocation, we are also seeing a global epidemic of bodily immobility (WHO 2015). Although it is the migrations of younger people that attract most of the research attention, there are interesting mobility trends among elderly populations too, particularly in those societies that have afforded both massive longevity gains and provided economic securities for people in this newly gained 'third age'. Policies and practices in support of successful ageing, supported by disciplines such as environmental health and geographical gerontology, currently emphasise the importance of healthy place attachment, as in promotion of 'ageing in place', together with community-building and social inclusion (Andrews and Phillips 2004; Andrews et al. 2007; Atkinson et al. 2012; Burton et al. 2011; Wiles et al. 2012). But excursions and mobility are also recognised as crucial for wellbeing, and are promoted under rubrics such as 'active ageing' and assisted transport and mobility (Avramov and Maskova 2003; Boudiny 2013).

Moreover, as people pursue adventures in their later years that were previously inhibited by work or family commitments, various forms of old-age seasonal migration have appeared in several parts of the world, particularly in North America, Europe and Australia. There are also, in many parts of the world and in diverse cultural traditions, many examples of purposeful late-life relocation associated with optimistic self-reinvention projects. These

different approaches conform to panhuman patterns of ambivalence towards the feeling of being comfortably settled: to live healthy and full lives, people should enjoy attachments to places but not become so attached that they fail to get out and about. By exploring ethnographic literature on place attachment and on deliberate place detachment and mobility, we may facilitate more intelligent conversations about how both successful place attachment and mobility can be facilitated in policy and practice.

In the headline quotation above, Pascal's utopian and claustrophilic yearning for a peaceful society of unambitious stay-at-homes is understandable in view of the tragically high costs of soldierly exploits in his day. In some respects, it still seems relevant today: a rapidly growing cacophony of 'new mobilities' research is telling us that people are travelling more than ever, and often with problematic results – 'the earth seems to be moving' (Cresswell 2010: 550); an increasing proportion of humanity is today a 'society on the move' (Gustafson 2014: 37); and as people become more mobile through the life course, the character or 'spirit' of places becomes more elusive and transient (Day 2002). This restlessness is not necessarily good for us. Global nomads spend, perhaps, too much of their time passing through 'nonplaces' (Augé 1995; Kannisto 2015). Voluntarily or otherwise, people do a huge amount of journeying and relocating for work or leisure pursuits, and many could perhaps benefit from travelling less and from enjoying a more settled existence in one community and one place.

On the other hand, in terms of exercise, and even getting out and about, modern urban populations are undergoing an epidemic of domestic immobility, in light of which Pascal's complaint sounds strikingly outdated. Perhaps there have been people who have lived happy housebound and placebound lives, but generally it is a fair bet that good living is associated with a reasonable amount of displacement to meet both daily requirements for mobility and periodical requirements for variety, recuperation and exploration.

These apparently contradictory trends – the epidemics of restlessness on the one hand and morbid sessility on the other – seem to be linked in three main ways. First, people's mobility (for work, study, marriage or lifestyle change) leaves their older friends and relatives more socially isolated and consequently housebound. Second, as vehicular mobility increases, opportunities for pedestrian mobility have decreased: in the absence of deliberate pedestrian-friendly design, in many parts of the world it has become harder and more dangerous for people to walk around for everyday purposes such as social visiting, shopping and exercise. Immobility, like mobility, can be involuntary. Third, in the new digital era, virtual mobility complicates matters further: people can be both absent and present, enjoying the semblance of free roaming without actually moving. Why bother getting up from the chair if the screen lets you travel mentally, wherever you wish, with no effort? Screen attachment has for many people greatly reduced the motivation for everyday place detachment.

On the face of it, the fairly recent fashion for 'mobility' or 'mobilities' research in such disciplines as sociology, human geography and urban planning seems to offer good potential for new insights into global trends in people's ways of meeting their needs for both attachment to places and detachment from places. The rapidly growing scholarly and policy literature on 'mobilities' is prolific and diverse. Most of this so far offers little by way of systematic analytical clarification of the varieties of mobility, and those texts that do so seem to extend the scope of the concept of 'mobility' beyond coherence. For example, a recent collection which includes under this rubric not only daily bodily mobility but all global travel, lifetime displacements, and all forms of communication and virtual travel (Grieco and Urry 2012). Another review article had tried ineffectually to borrow the term 'motility' from biology to add conceptual rigour, ending up failing to distinguish this from 'mobility' and focusing mainly on technically assisted long-distance transport to the exclusion of basic local

and bodily mobility (Flamm and Kaurmann 2006). A recent review essay on 'wellbeing and mobility' focused on older people (Nordbakke and Schwanen 2014) presents robust critiques of the lack of wellbeing analysis in 'mobility' research and devotes many pages to this analysis, yet bizarrely neglects to say anything substantial about the meanings and analysis of 'mobility'. Many of the texts on the ethics of contemporary mobility are predominantly pathological, emphasising social exclusion, stress, hazards and unsustainability more than the benefits of mobilities (see e.g. Bergmann and Sager 2008).

In short, there is a need for more appreciative approaches to mobilities research. In philosophy and postmodernist cultural studies, the idea of the free nomad has been a popular trope for experimental forms of freedom (Sutherland 2014), though with surprisingly minimal reference to the many anthropological accounts of real long-term sociocultural traditions of nomadism which offer crucial insights into not only the challenges but also the adaptive intelligence of nomadic livelihoods in many parts of the world (Barfield 1993; Salzman 1980), as well as appreciation of the distinctive contributions that nomadic culture has made to civilisation (Cahill 1998). The intriguing concept of 'place elasticity' – a kind of techno-environmental versatility linked with new information technologies and labour mobility – has recently been invoked as an emerging form of cultural adaptation that may become increasingly valuable (Barcus and Brunn 2010).

Three Vignettes on Late-life Place Appreciation

To illustrate the potential value of ethnographic accounts of place-making and mobility for policy and practice, and the added value of reasonably systematic analytical approaches to deliberate wellbeing pursuits, I offer here some brief ethnographic examples of deliberate ecological self-improvement in later life. Although there are many strategic options in the pursuit of late-life wellbeing, I highlight here three general kinds of place-related wellbeing

strategy: place-making, local mobility and relocation. These examples highlight both place and mobility, though there are of course many more psychological and sociocultural aspects of these processes that would need to be further explored to offer a full ecodynamic account of how wellbeing emerges from interactions over time.

Place-making: House and Garden Retirement Projects in the U.S.A.

Anthropologist Mark Luborsky interviewed thirty-two retiring workers (one-third female) in the U.S.A. before and after their retirement, which was voluntary and not brought on by illness. He found without any particular explicit source of guidance on how to conduct themselves through this critical life transition, most chose similarly ritualised patterns of behaviour to make symbolic statements about their self-reinvention. There was a strong emphasis on strenuous reorganisational and rebuilding projects in their homes or back yards. Luborsky found it hard or impossible to persuade them to articulate explicit self-interpretations of their understanding of how retirement was changing them, and so these environmental self-expressions seemed to be filling an expressive requirement that words could not satisfy. There were common sequential patterns, involving major creative physical reorganising, followed by activities directed at 'reshaping the social relationships and routines outside the home that mark the completion of the transition into retirement' (1994:412).

Luborsky understood their intentions and meanings to be 'polemical', addressing hitherto neglected places such as back gardens; challenging the bodily aging process by appearing youthful; contrasting with the normal expectation of retirement as a leisurely life phase; and challenging decline and death by symbolising generativity, in that they were altering places visibly in ways that might be expected to last beyond their lives.

Local Mobility: Elderly Cyclists in Italy

Elizabeth Whitaker (2005) conducted an ethnographic study of twenty-two older (mainly male) Italian cyclists whom she described as 'positive deviants' who maintain extraordinary activity levels in a nation that largely shuns regular exercise, especially in older age.

Her observations and interview summaries made it clear that the cyclists do not see cycling primarily as a means for staying healthy. Their motives, she says, were often social, psychological and aesthetic. Their deliberate everyday long-distance mobility through the countryside in groups gives them the social benefits of companionship, the psychological benefits of stress reduction through endorphin release, and the multiple aesthetic benefits that appreciation of natural landscapes affords. The fact that this is mainly a group activity highlights the importance of looking at how place appreciation is supported by social relationships and networks.

Relocation: Lifestyle Migration and Long-distance Mobile Place Appreciation in Later Life

Relocation is often not just undertaken for simple pragmatic reasons such as the search for employment or leisure, or for sorting out health problems, but rather as part of a more complex and ambitious deliberate process of self-making. 'Lifestyle migrants recognize the essential role of place in creating a lasting sense of self' (Hoey 2009: 34). As the philosopher Alain de Botton argued in *The Art of Travel* (2003), there are many happiness promises in the prospect of travelling to escape from home environments, to enjoy better weather, to take an interest in foreign customs and foods, and to be inspired by unfamiliar landscapes. But these anticipations and memories tend to exaggerate the importance of the places people travel to, and underestimate the realities of factors such as our health and our relationships with fellow travellers. Again, we generally need to enlist the support of other people in our pursuit of beneficial place appreciation.

Among the many strands of wellbeing research, social gerontology has perhaps been the most generative (Thin 2012: ch. 16). With the astonishingly rapid gains in longevity worldwide there has been dramatic expansion of possibilities for new 'third age' wellbeing pursuits, and for retrieving this life stage from its residual dog-end status to establish new opportunities for creative life transformation on a massive scale worldwide. Consequently, there has been a proliferation of self-reinvention in those parts of the world where large numbers of older people are lucky enough to reach the post-householder years with their health and wealth intact. Post-work and post-parenting years, previously understood as largely a life phase of quiet decline, are being reinvented in more positive terms as a distinct life phase in which mind, body, relationships and environment are implicated in creative self-making projects. It has not gone unnoticed that the pursuit of late-life renaissance often involves migration or adoption of transhumant or semi-nomadic lifestyles.

The sociocultural phenomenon of 'grey nomads' in Australia is one of the more dramatic instances of deliberate late-life lifestyle transformation involving relocation, ongoing residential mobility and active engagement with diverse environments (Higgs and Quirk 2007). Grey nomads are said to 'embrace the travel ethic' as a deliberate strategy of self-reinvention (Hillman 2013). Though younger Australians are renowned for globe-trotting, grey nomads adopt a campervan or caravan lifestyle in an effort to get out and about and familiarise themselves with the Australian continent. In collective conscious efforts to 'age successfully', they form 'postmodern communities' of regular travellers who travel long distances but also regularly return to the same spots each year. What is distinctive about the grey nomads compared with late-life seasonal travellers in other parts of the world is a strong emphasis on independence and a resistance to the comforts and routines of organised resorts (Onyx and Leonard 2005).

Similar patterns of late-life seasonal and semi-permanent relocation have been studied in North America and Europe (Nimrod 2008; Oliver 2008). Oliver's ethnography of U.K. retirement migrants in Spain argues that 'the act of moving from the UK to Spain is employed cognitively by migrants to rethink and rewrite the common scripts of dehumanisation, invisibility and marginality associated with old age' (2008: 9). To some extent they are also able to comment with wry self-critiques, as for example when retirement migrants call themselves 'Saga louts' – a pun combining 'Saga' (old people's package tour company) with 'lager louts' (younger British tourists behaving badly).

Conclusions: Deriving Lessons from Anthropology's Claustrophobic Asceticism

These ethnographic examples and analytical tools have shown the potential importance of enriching our understanding of place appreciation and mobility around the world, by developing simple tools for analysing how these activities play key roles in the pursuit of wellbeing. Useful research on place-making needs to be appreciative (recognising the positive values of people's interactions with places), systematic (going beyond ad hoc storytelling and case studies to draw out general patterns in people's wellbeing pursuits) and generative (user-friendly enough to enable anyone to improve their own ability to develop a more intelligent understanding of how wellbeing or illbeing emerges, over time, from interactions between minds and their sociocultural and physical environments, through combinations of habitual activities with goal-setting, self-evaluation and deliberative choice). Late-life self-reinvention projects offer particularly fertile ground for learning about how people engage creatively with their environments to enhance their wellbeing.

But what have anthropologists in general had to say about the relationship between place attachment, place detachment and wellbeing? In the anthropology conference at which I presented an earlier version of this article, there was a parallel session on 'imaginaries of

home'.[i] Overlooking for now the troubling seminarian habit of turning a perfectly good adjective into a plural noun, what was noteworthy about that panel was that all nine of the papers treated 'home' and migration as sources of mental problems. Partly, this pathologism simply confirms that anthropology has followed the example of sociology in becoming primarily a trouble-seeking discipline. I do not doubt that they were all writing about real home-related problems, but it is striking that not one of those nine anthropologists chose to offer an ethnographic account of people's development and maintenance of a comfortable sense of belonging in a home environment. The call for papers had made no specification that the papers needed to be about the loss of home, yet all nine chose uprootedness and problematic remaking or remembering of home as their theme. Although some looked at home-making of resettled populations, they all in some way focused on problematic deracination, on the absence of home or absence from home.

Another source of those scholars' interest in troublesome displacement may be our discipline's longstanding involvement in various forms of un-dwelling and uprootedness. We emerged from pre-colonial and colonial travels. We then transformed a loose set of geographical and mental habits into a system of ongoing critiques and practices that challenge both ethnocentrism and parochial loco-centrism. The deliberate discomfort of unhomeliness lies at the heart of social anthropology's cultural history.

In this sense, our discipline can usefully be understood as a variety of asceticism – a conscious rejection of comforts and default options in pursuit of other more elusive and exotic values. Fieldwork, the traditional anthropological rite of passage, involves deliberate self-uprooting in geographical, sociocultural and mental senses. And so it is hardly surprising that we retain an interest in people whose lives have been voluntarily or involuntarily uprooted in different ways – refugees, migrants, pilgrims and people whose personal or collective life narratives have undergone traumatic turning points. Like other ascetics, we

have great potential to bring useful lessons back to the everyday world, but to do so we need

to cultivate habits of expressing appreciative and systematic synthesis of wellbeing pursuits

in ways that will be widely understood.

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