

# ***One World Is Not Enough: The Structured Phenomenology of Lifestyle Migrants in East Asia***

## **Abstract**

The paper is based on original empirical research into the lifestyle migration of European migrants, primarily British, to Thailand and Malaysia, and of Hong Kong Chinese migrants to Mainland China. We combine strong structuration theory (SST) with Heideggerian phenomenology to develop a distinctive approach to the interplay between social structures and the lived experience of migrants. The approach enables a rich engagement with the subjectivities of migrants, an engagement that is powerfully enhanced by close attention to how these inner lives are deeply interwoven with relevant structural contexts. The approach is presented as one that could be fruitfully adopted to explore parallel issues within all types of migration. As is intrinsic to lifestyle migration, commitment to a better quality of life is central to the East Asian migrants, but they seek an uncomplicated, physically enhanced texture of life, framed more by a phenomenology of prosaic well-being than of self-realization or transcendence. In spite of possessing economic and status privileges due to their relatively elite position within global structures the reality for a good number of the lifestyle migrants falls short of their prior expectations. They are subject to particular kinds of socio-structural marginalisation as a consequence of the character of their migration, and they find themselves relatively isolated and facing a distinct range of challenges. A comparison with research into various groups of migrants to the USA brings into relief the specificities of the socio-structural positioning of the lifestyle migrants of the study. Those East Asian migrants who express the greatest sense of ease and contentment seem to be those who have responded creatively to the specific challenges of their socio-structural situation. Often, this appears to have been achieved through understated but active involvements with their new settings and through sustaining focused transnational connections and relationships.

**Keywords:** Lifestyle Migration, International Migration, Strong Structuration Theory, East Asia, Transnationalism, Phenomenology

## **Introduction**

This paper is based on original empirical research into the lifestyle migration of European migrants, primarily British, to Thailand and Malaysia, and of Hong Kong Chinese migrants to Mainland China.<sup>i</sup> Lifestyle migration has come to be understood as involving 'relatively affluent individuals, moving either part-time or full-time, permanently or temporarily, to places which, for various reasons,

signify something loosely defined as quality of life' (Benson and O'Reilly 2009: 621). There is by now a substantial literature drawing on social theory to explore the many lessons that can be learned from this expanding phenomenon of globalised late modernity (see Benson and O'Reilly, 2016; Benson and Osbaldiston, 2014). The current paper aims to both extend and deepen this project. It does this, firstly, by exploring the motivations, meanings, and consequences of lifestyle migration in Asian contexts, which have been under-researched in this literature. And, secondly, we combine the approach of strong structuration theory (SST), a conceptually refined and empirically oriented version of Giddens's version of structuration theory (See Stones, 2005, 2012, 2015, 2018; and, for example, Coad, Jack and Kholeif, 2016; Greenhalgh and Stones, 2010, Greenhalgh et al, 2014), which has already played a significant role in the lifestyle migration literature (see O'Reilly, 2012, 2014), with an emphasis on the 'everyday phenomenology' of lifestyle migrants. We seek to show how this combination enhances researchers' ability to appreciate the significance of granular, seemingly inconsequential, moments of everyday experience. It does this by enabling them to grasp, with some precision, the relationship of these moments to the positioning of lifestyle migrants within meso and macro structural configurations.

We draw out key empirical findings of our research, particularly indicating how core aspects of SST have shaped our data gathering and analysis. This shaping revolves around the insistence that the subjective experiences of migrants are best understood as being anchored within, infused by, past and present structural contexts. It is this 'structured phenomenology' dimension of SST that

is highlighted in the title of the paper, with a particular emphasis on the interpretative interweaving of different geographical worlds that touch the inner lives of migrants. We hope to convey a sense that the value of our approach need not be restricted to the realm of lifestyle migration, but could be fruitfully adopted to explore parallel issues within all types of migration. We begin by carefully sketching in this methodological and theoretical approach, before going on to draw out some of the key distinguishing characteristics of the 'East Asian migrants'. We then situate their experiences, perhaps surprisingly, within a common position of structural marginalisation, notwithstanding the migrants' diversity in many respects and their recognised affluence relative to the destinations. In the final section, combining SST with Heideggerian phenomenology, we return to 'the cares' that show up in the micro moments of the everyday as migrants look for quality of life in the spaces disclosed by the interplay between habitus and contextual field.

### **Methodologies and Locations**

The research was designed from the outset around the ontological categories of SST, with a particular emphasis on habitus, contextual fields and active agency, as we shall see below. The choice of case studies was informed by the possibilities for comparative analysis that would be made available to empirical research guided by these categories. The categories allowed us to focus on the exploration of a particular range of similarities and differences across our three cases (see Stones, 2017: 10-11, and n.12). Most saliently, all three cases share similarities in each involving East Asian 'contexts of destination', whilst they

exhibit differences in the 'contexts of the prior formation of habitus' of their migrants. In the Thai and Malaysian cases the sources of prior habitus that were initially brought into interaction with the new contextual field of destination were Western, largely but not exclusively British, with the added complexity that some migrants were relatively cosmopolitan. In the case of Mainland China, the prior formation of habitus took place primarily in East Asia, in Hong Kong, notwithstanding some international travel and residence amongst some of the relatively wealthier respondents. In broad brush terms, we were thus able to examine whether migrants with Western and Eastern habitus would engage similarly or differently with East Asian fields of destination. This also provided an initial framework for more fine grained distinctions within and between sites.

Though informed by a shared understanding of aims and theoretical underpinnings, there remained a good deal of latitude for the different researchers to explore each of the three sites in the ways they judged to be most appropriate and in ways that reflected their own backgrounds, orientations and skills. SST provides conceptual orientation rather than a closed theoretical system, and researchers were determined to remain as open as possible to all kinds of evidence as they immersed themselves in context (cf. Stones, 2017: 8-10). We shall see below that the empirical evidence that emerged from this immersion led us to extend our conceptual palette to include insights around the phenomenology of 'dailiness'. The overriding aim was to enrich the sociological imagination, conceptually and empirically. A range of ethnographic methods and formal and informal interviews were employed to this end. These were

conceptually informed, most explicitly, by a hybrid of migration studies and SST<sup>ii</sup>, but also, inevitably, by a range of other theoretical influences.

In the two South East Asian sites researchers spent an intensive few weeks with mainly British lifestyle migrants around their homes and communities in the beach-city resort of Hua Hin, Thailand and in Penang, Malaysia.<sup>iii</sup> Both of these locations carry the imprint of a distinctive social history marked, not least, by domestic aristocratic patronage in Hua Hin, and direct colonial experience in Penang. More recently, each place has experienced various forms of lifestyle migration, including many retirees and second homeowners, the self-employed, business expatriates, and those who have married into families within the host nation. A range of increasingly familiar structural conditions has prepared the ground for these newcomers. Thailand, for example, has been promoted as an attractive destination for international tourists and retirees, with excellent medical care and educational facilities. Policy incentives to attract foreigners include the *'Non-immigrant O - A Long-stay Visa for a Retired Person'*, for financially comfortable foreigners over fifty years of age. In particular, Hua Hin is marketed as a desirable location for retirement due to its temperate climate, range of leisure activities (including twelve golf courses), and Western-style shopping and entertainment. Similarly, Malaysia is promoted to would-be second-home owners and long-term visitors as multicultural, exotic, modern, friendly, and secure. Its renewable multiple entry social visit pass, *'Malaysia my Second Home Visa (MM2H)'*, was originally intended to draw retiree second-home owners but now also attracts younger people of independent means, as well as people of diverse national and class backgrounds.

In addition to ethnographic work we carried out a total of 65 interviews with male and female Western, mainly British, lifestyle migrants in both locales (31 in Malaysia, 34 in Thailand) using primarily face-to-face but also some email, Skype and telephone interviewing.<sup>iv</sup> Respondents came from highly varied backgrounds in terms of age, (former) profession, and family background and held different motivations and intentions for migration. The range and types of diversity differed between the two sites, and some of the significant aspects of these differences will become apparent in the course of the paper.

We also collected 22 stories with 31 Hong Kong lifestyle migrants in Mainland China (including single men and women, married couples and their families). Many took advantage of the ease of cross-border movement and the liberalisation of home ownership in China as a result of property rights and land reform from the 1990s. All had established a home in Guangdong Province, within 120 km of Hong Kong, with many moving to the Special Economic Zone of Shenzhen. The ages of the migrants ranged from late 20s to 70s, with over half retired - from finance, civil service, clerical or factory work, catering or other self-employed small businesses. About two-thirds of the participants self-identified as having a working class background. Unlike the middle-class lifestyle migrants in this group who have the resources to choose when and where to move (e.g. some of them have lived in the UK, Australia or other parts of Asia), the majority rely on their life savings or their children's contributions to purchase or rent a property in China. Our ethnographic fieldwork included travelling with some of the Hong Kong lifestyle migrants and their families and

friends in their cross-border activities, and spending time at a large-scale residential property aimed at both Hong Kong second homeowners and the fast-growing middle class in post-reform China. An interpretative photography exhibition around the project held at the University of Hong Kong in May 2015 became a further illuminating source of interaction with respondents from all three locations around images, objects and stories.

## **The Theoretical Framing of Migrants' Lived Experiences**

### *The Good Life as Pragmatic Contentment*

Our research has prompted us to revisit some core tenets of the lifestyle migration literature. Perhaps the most salient of these existing tenets is the view that a characterising feature of lifestyle migration, as opposed to other forms of migration, is lifestyle migrants' elite position within global structures, which enables them to privilege the search for a better quality of life above other considerations (Benson 2013). We do not want to depose any of these tenets, and this includes the emphasis on the role played by quality of life, for they remain essential and valuable distinguishing notions. But we do want to unsettle too easy an equation between this quest and the specific versions of the good life contained under the broad umbrella of Western counter-cultural ideas. These involve various configurations from a compendium of romantic, philosophical, environmental and spiritual ideas (see, for example, Korpela, 2009, 2014; Hoey, 2009; Benson and O'Reilly, 2009; Benson, 2011; Griffiths and Maille, 2014; Xu and Wu, 2016). Whilst this can be an attractive lexicon for many, it is not the

only version of 'the good life' available. Our research in East Asia was dominated by lifestyle migrants whose idea of the good life is much more empirical and immediate.

In this the 'East Asian migrants' share many similarities with the British, predominantly lower-middle and working-class, migrants to the area of Fuengirola in Spain captured in Karen O'Reilly's *The British on the Costa Del Sol* (2000: 67). Their pursuit of the good life, whilst often equally as courageous and challenging as that of the counter-cultural migrants, is less about principled ideals or journeys of self-realization. Rather, it is centred on the search for what might be called everyday contentment. This involves a concern with various permutations of relaxation, the sensuous, familial closeness and care, and sometimes the desire for adventure, exploration, and the broadening of horizons, but all typically centred around the prosaic everyday. Their pleasures are typically empirical and pragmatic, focused on a certain range of this-worldly mundane pleasures. There is little sense of transcendence or high principle. These types of migrant are probably dominant in all three of our sites.

### *SST and the Phenomenology of the Everyday*

In order to deepen our exploration of the texture of this type of migration we will use the next two sub-sections to bring the meta-theory of SST into the heart of the migration literature. SST is particularly interested in the ways in which the phenomenological standpoints embedded in people's *habitus*, which will have been predominantly structured within past contextual fields, profoundly frame



the cultural perspectives and the physical textures of their day to day involvements within the contextual fields of the present. This is coupled with an analytical distinction between the generalised, transposable dispositions of a person's habitus - including the cultural schemas within habitus - *and* their conjuncturally specific knowledge and understanding of, and experience within, their current situation (e.g. Stones, 2005, 84-100, and *passim*). This directs us to seriously consider the influence of habitus on the flow of migrants experiences and activities but also the ways these phenomenological schemas of habitus intertwine with the flow of migrants' embodied, situationally specific, experiences within their new contextual fields. We shall see that the contextual fields of the new destinations for the East Asian migrants posed a range of particular challenges. The migrants who expressed the greatest sense of ease and contentment in their new lives seem to be those who were able, through 'active agency'<sup>v</sup>, to creatively adjust their prior habitus - including the expectations lodged within this habitus - to the specific challenges and constraints of the new terrain.

We found Paddy Scannell's reflections on the profound significance of the ways that individuals organise and experience their mundane 'dailiness' to be helpful here (Scannell, 1996, 144-178). Scannell's insights were developed in the context of work on media broadcasting and its audiences. Writing in the 1990s he explores the subtle, comforting role of television and radio programming in establishing a taken-for-granted, meaningful, background to everyday life. His sociological translation of the abstract phenomenology of Heidegger can, however, be profitably extended into other domains, as will be apparent in the

final substantial section of this paper. The focus there is on the horizon of meanings that provides the background for the everyday experiences of migrants. Heidegger's phenomenological ontology parallels and complements that embedded in Bourdieu's more structurally grounded notion of habitus (see Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1993: 36-39; and cf. Dreyfus, 1991: 40-59; Bourdieu, 1977), whilst its conceptual preoccupations allow one to home in more precisely on the specifics of everyday moments of involvement, practice and interaction. Because it allows one to focus on what 'shows up', what is 'cared about' from moment to moment in the mundane horizons of lifestyle migrants it directs one to the moods and internal textures of their everyday *ways of being* (see Scannell, 1996, 169).<sup>vi</sup>

This ontology complements SST. The newly existing ways of being, and the emotional lives entwined within them, are seen to emerge from migrants' involvements at the junction between past habitus and current contextual fields. They are seen to emerge, as migrants first encounter the new destination, in ways that are reflexively self-conscious, in those kinds of encounters that Heidegger refers to as 'unready-to-hand' (Heidegger, 1962, 98; see Mulhall, 1996, 47, and 39-50), where the world fails to fit with migrants' usual, prior, ways of going about things (cf. Greenhalgh *et al*, 2013). But over time this kind of experience gradually gives way to new rhythms of dailiness in which newly established practices become routine in a world that now becomes 'ready-to-hand', with practices taken for granted. Now, dailiness is experienced, for the most part, with only a low level reflexivity, without self-consciousness or explicit reflection upon rules, representations or memories (Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1993:

38; Dreyfus, 1991: 16-23). There are still, to be sure, prominent moments of high-level reflexive reasoning, remembering, and imaginative projection, and of determined intentionality, and these play a significant role in the practices and texture of quality of life. Whilst these moments of high-reflexivity are often relatively short in duration, they can be profound in their effects, recurrent reminders of the challenges of being elsewhere. Our analysis attempts to acknowledge each of these aspects of dailiness, to grasp something of their interweavings, and so gain greater insight into the embodied qualities of life experienced by migrants.

### *SST and the Migration Literature*

In this section we relate these meta-theoretical points to some influential preoccupations and framings of the migration literature . We do this through engaging with the literature's use of the notions of 'push' and 'pull' factors, while also reflecting on the implications of the meta-theory for the role of transnational practices. Our key objective is to explore and illuminate the lived experience and structural conditions of our respondents, who have all set out to find a better quality of life in one or other of the three different locations located within East Asia. The organising thesis is that lifestyle migrants, like all migrants, inhabit at least two geographical worlds. Even in those cases where the lifestyle migrant does not physically return to the old world, the two worlds still co-exist in their habitus, memories and imaginations<sup>vii</sup> and, for most, in a range of transnational activities. In many cases, however, the migrant also physically inhabits both worlds for shorter or longer periods, and in a variety of sequences,

across the years.<sup>viii</sup> All migrants embody marks, traits, memories and images of the world they departed from, carrying these within habitus into the new, everyday lives of their second, and subsequent, worlds. To draw out the hermeneutic power of this insight and its implications for grasping significant aspects of the migration experience, we began with three influential categories within the migration literature: the ‘push factors’ that influence the decision of a migrant to leave their home country; the ‘pull factors’ that attract them to migrate to a particular place; and the ‘transnational practices’ that subsequently create a bridge between the place of origin and the place of destination.

The raw ideas of ‘push’ and ‘pull’ factors are ultimately too crude to stand without major qualifications, and have also often been associated with narrow, economic and individualistic conceptions of migration (for a critical discussion see Castles, 2010; Castles and Miller, 2003; Martin, 2004). However, they can still be, and often are, usefully employed as starting points from which to develop more complex conceptions of relevant structural networks and agency orientations within places of origin and destination (O’Reilly, 2012, 40-44; 157-8). Our own perspective reconfigures the idea of push and pull factors within dense notions of structural or *contextual fields*, which themselves can usefully be differentiated in terms of what O’Reilly has called ‘proximate’ and ‘upper’ structural layers (O’Reilly, 2012, 24 and *passim*, see Morawska 2011). The latter, less familiar term, the ‘upper structural layers’, refers to those large, macro, historical and spatial forces that enter into, and interweave with, the proximate circumstances of a *contextual field* (see Stones, 2014, 2015, 27-58 and *passim*; 2018, and also see Stones, 2005, 61-6 and *passim*).

Push and pull factors are thus here reworked as *continuing factors* within the internal subjective experience of migrants. We can think of push factors as potentially translating into a memory and consciousness of an *escape from* certain negative elements in the home country, and also of an *escape to* positive imagined opportunities and experiences in the destination country – the pull factors. Powerful memories of negative push factors and of positive expectations will stay with migrants as they settle into their new lives. The roles these play in the unfolding of the new beginnings will naturally be complex, but they will often provide potent clues to subsequent levels of satisfaction. They inevitably form a significant part of the interpretative frames of meaning within their habitus, which inevitably play into their relative capacities for adaptation and contentment. More broadly, a variety of prior aspects of habitus will provide more helpful capital than others for traversing a successful transition in circumstances of socio-structural marginalisation.

The connections and phenomenological perspectives informing migrants' transnational practices typically continue to be influenced by past habitus as this evolves and develops in interaction with current fields. Transnational involvements have both material and subjective dimensions, and by their very nature engage the participant in two or more worlds. We found that they serve an indispensable role for many as a protection against isolation and anomie, and that it was the women amongst our participants who often did the lion's share of the work of actively sustaining connections between the two worlds, of

continuing to nurture relationships embedded in the past, still touching the present.

### **Distinctive Characteristics of the East Asian Lifestyle Migrants**

The pragmatic, sensuous and prosaic orientation of the East Asian migrants was perhaps first, and most insistently, apparent to us in the case of the migrants to Mainland China. And the explanation we first considered was a cultural one, something emerging from *differences* in the prior formation of habitus. But this proved to be simply a beginning rather than an end-point. The recognition that in the Chinese case there was quite an acute difference of outlook and sensibilities from those found in many Western lifestyle migrants' quest for the good life, prompted us to begin to highlight the same difference *within* the broad category of Western migrant. For whilst the texture and detail of expression was culturally specific, the Hong Kong migrants to Mainland China possessed a 'phenomenology of dailiness' that was very similar in disposition, mood and rhythm to the lifestyle migrants in Hua Hin and Penang. In these respects, one seemed to be able to generalise across Eastern and Western habitus for these groups of lifestyle migrant. This sense is reinforced by Xu Honggang and Wu Youefang's recently published study of Chinese lifestyle migrants within China (2016). Xu and Wu do identify some groups, characterised as working tourists or lifestyle entrepreneurs, who had moved to southwestern towns for self realization, reflecting counter-cultural ideals. However, they note quite distinct differences between these groups and the more prosaic patterns and textures of

domestic seasonal retirement migration to the southern tropical island of Hainan, where the search for health and climate was paramount.

The playful appropriation of the 007 trope, 'One World is Not Enough', in the title of this article has a determined purpose, which is to convey the profound phenomenological impact on our respondents – on all migrants – of living in more than one world. The movement, in body and imagination, from the world of Hong Kong to the world of the Mainland has just as great a salience within the texture of lived experience as does the movement between the United Kingdom and Hua Hin or Penang. There is an intense effect on the subjective life of migrants that comes from embracing two worlds within one phenomenological reservoir of meanings, within what comes into view and is 'cared about' within the routines of daily experience, as both those worlds fold into each other, and as the past is retrieved at the same time as futures are projected. The subjective experiences of the Hong Kong migrants, who come and go more regularly between their two physical worlds, nevertheless have many parallels with those of the Western migrants. The initial 'push' imagination, which proves more or less enduring, typically (re)configures the place of departure as restrictive in significant ways, and reframes *elsewhere* as liberating. The 'irresistible attraction' of the destination, and the inhospitality of the place of departure - the drivers of mobility for Bauman (1998: 92) – seem to revolve around the imagined, simple but emancipatory, possibilities signified by the elsewhere.

*The Attractions of 'There': Mainland China*

For the Hong Kong Chinese migrants to Mainland China there is a good deal of focus on increased space<sup>ix</sup>, on relative luxury, and on the respite the new home provides from deadening routines. A working class respondent living in a public housing estate in Hong Kong noted of the new home on the Mainland: 'The estate looks westernised, so colourful....Lifts were installed even in a nine-storey building.' An older working class couple, Mr and Mrs Cheung,<sup>x</sup> who lived in a squatter hut with their grown up children in Hong Kong, running a street food stall, also spoke of the material luxury of their apartment across the Hong Kong-Mainland border in Shenzhen. The size and quality of their property, its expansive balcony, which was the area of their entire living space in Hong Kong, and the swimming pool, all figured prominently in their sense of satisfaction. They used to take day trips or spend a few days every week in Shenzhen to relax, watch tv or cook in the fully equipped kitchen. They enjoyed the simple pleasures of dining at Hong Kong-style Chinese restaurants, going to the massage parlour, and taking local cruises or mini-van journeys for sightseeing on their own or with friends. One of their favourite places was Shenzhen's 'Window of the World' theme park with its replicas of the world's wonders, heritage and famous scenic sites. They eventually sold their flat with great reluctance, but kept the owners' handbook and restaurant VIP membership cards as a token reminder of the lifestyle they once crafted.

The Cheungs, and others from this older generation, also made much of similar pleasures gathered around mental and physical rest and respite: doing calligraphy, taiji, hiking to collect herbs for medicinal use, mass dancing in plazas or parks, playing mahjong, and golf. This is the case for Mrs Lui who is in her 70s



and uses her second home in part to escape an unhappy marriage. She takes pleasure in the bus and train journeys to the Mainland, in the pleasant environment, and in the space 'to do whatever I want when I want', involving modest enjoyments such as taking a walk in the estate, a dim sum lunch, going to the market and cooking for herself in a well equipped kitchen, watching cheap pirated DVDs at leisure, and sharing lychee and other seasonal fruits with a newly befriended neighbour. For Mrs Lui, the mundane structure of feeling her migration allows her to inhabit needs to be set in the context of her personal history. Her aspiration felt like a well-deserved reward for a hard life lived in the shadows of other people's freedoms. She had lived in the same 350 sq ft flat with her husband for over thirty years. She took great pride in using her life savings and income as a part-time cleaner in a fast food restaurant to purchase her second home in the fast-growing Chinese town nicknamed 'Little Hong Kong':

The location is very convenient. It's not far from Hong Kong at all. The city centre has lots of eateries and shops, all very clean, very much like Yuen Long in the New Territories...The bathroom in the flat is so beautiful, it looks just like the ones you find in a hotel, a big mirror, a bath tub, a wash basin, even a cabinet where you can put all your daily necessities away...There's room for a sofa, made in China, not real leather; there's a proper dining table and six chairs. I chose the curtains myself, very pretty floral patterns.

*The Attractions of 'There': Thailand and Malaysia*

For many migrants to Hua Hin, in Thailand, the allure and the pleasures revolve around sun, sea, sand, and the exotic, captured in the language of popular culture and the tropes of commercial tourism. For some, but by no means all, their positive attraction to these features seemed to be combined with relatively conservative cultural outlooks in which elements of cosmopolitanism combined with other, less receptive, less labile, sets of dispositions. The combination could leave them relatively ill-equipped when facing some of the challenges of the new life. It would be reductionist to simply read off such complexities of habitus from abstracted facts about prior social positionings and social categories, but our ethnographic material and interviews seemed to suggest that such prior structurings could well provide fruitful starting points for further investigation. There were apparent differences in all sites relating to class background, between women and men, between those in relationships and those not, between those who had and had not been through Higher Education, and across the age range in the ways in which habitus expressed itself in the new milieu.

Reasons for initial migration and settlement varied among the Hua Hin cohort with eight out of thirteen male respondents stating that the overwhelming reason for settlement was the fact that they had married Thai women. While some of these had attempted to learn the Thai language, most had not got very far. Three of the seven migrant women from the Hua Hin cohort had arrived with their husbands, usually in retirement, and their outlooks and sensibilities were noticeably different from those of the male respondents. These individuals tended to be more family-oriented, engaging in regular transnational practices with children in the UK or elsewhere. The transnational practices engaged in by

many of the men involved keeping prior business contacts healthy. The four single women were different again, tending to be the closest from all the Hua Hin lifestyle migrants to the more transcendental or authenticity-seeking category of lifestyle migrant, although their material resources varied leading to differences in everyday routines and habits.

The cohort of British migrants in Malaysia was generally more affluent, and often connected in one way or another to international business networks. They tended to be drawn to Malaysia by the pull of the exotic, the attraction of a multicultural society, the opportunity to experience new things and to travel. Here 'Asia' itself was an important signifier. This cohort quite significantly blurred the lines between lifestyle migration and economic transnationalism.

### *Comparative Textures of Belonging*

There was markedly more evidence in the Malaysian case of some migrants having become international nomads, with often a minimal level of emotional investment in either their country of initial origin or the country in which they were currently living. A significant number were no longer sure where home was or if they would ever return. For most, however, there was usually a nation state they felt they belonged to even if only for reasons of welfare or citizenship rights, and this was also somewhere they had friends and family, would receive visitors from, and would visit regularly (in person or by Skype). But they also had friends in many of the other places they had lived. Despite the fluidity of the lives of some – dependent on short-term contracts and regularly having to make

decisions about where to work next, as teachers, as corporate expats or as entrepreneurs – they still liked to feel grounded somewhere, and they worked quite actively to create psychological moorings in both the old and new worlds, something that was apparent in their displays of material objects acquired in places they had lived or visited.

Some of the migrants in Hua Hin had, likewise, lived in a number of different places, often due to work, and there were differences between the cultural frames of this group and the outlook of those who had migrated to Thailand more or less directly from the UK. Some of those who had married into Thai families conveyed an image of their future in which they would let go of all kinds of transnational life. In both the Malaysian and the Thai cases, however, the dominant type of migrant still had a substantial sense of where they had come from, of a place from which they had set sail, and which retained deep connotations of home within their imagination.

There were nascent elements of the nomadic in the case of the more affluent of those living in Mainland China. This group included privileged, mobile individuals, some of whom were highly educated and in professional occupations, who were accustomed to travelling to, and sometimes living in, far flung destinations. Not infrequently this was connected to family migration, small business ventures, and property investment in the UK, Canada, Malaysia, Singapore and Australia. Having said this, however, there were no cases at all, affluent or not, in which individuals gave any real sense that Hong Kong was no longer home, where the work of integrating identities across transnational

spaces did not lead overwhelmingly back to the 'Fragrant Harbour'. Many of the older Chinese lifestyle migrants make use of social media to keep in contact with their children or grandchildren. They also follow the news in Hong Kong closely, and value their connections with friends and families, even – and here the issue of geographical proximity is significant - travelling back across the border for family gatherings, festive celebrations, business activities, and medical treatment.

### **The Lifestyle Migrants' Common Structural Position within their New Societies**

Notwithstanding the various differences between the lifestyle migrants in the three different destinations, and the inevitable differences between groups within each site, the great majority shared a similar socio-structural location within their new society. And, as noted above, there is something quite curious about this positioning, which can be pithily captured by saying that they were *relatively privileged but structurally marginalised*. Relative privilege came from their financial situation and consequent purchasing power, and in some cases from a degree of respect and recognition - however complex the mediations - accorded to them by virtue of their perceived race, ethnicity and national background. In terms of global structuring there is no doubt most of these would be considered privileged migrants. But particular kinds of socio-structural marginalisation *in situ* came from the character of their migration. In an earlier paper on the lifestyle migrants in the Thai case Botterill has referred to aspects of this in terms of 'discordant status', and we aim here to emphasise some of the

existential challenges and corollaries of this positioning (Botterill, 2016; see also Benson and O'Reilly 2016: 10-11 and O'Reilly 2007).<sup>xi</sup>

Once they have arrived in their host country, migrants often live through a version of what Ewa Morawska (2011) calls an ethnic path, or an ethnic-adhesive assimilation trajectory, into their host society. An assimilation trajectory is a transitional path into living in the receiving society in which migrants adapt in various ways, and to different degrees - through what Morawska conceives of as an 'ethnicization *qua* structuration' process (Morawska, 1996: xviii-xix) - to life in the host society, taking on some aspects of its culture and blending these with the habitus they've brought with them from home. The ethnic-adhesive dimension suggests that much of this takes place whilst associating for the most part with other migrants from their own home and ethnic culture. It is useful to consider the structural conditions impacting on this dimension for the East Asian migrants in comparison with those shaping some of the lives within Morawska's study of eight different groups of migrants to the United States<sup>xii</sup>. One can, for example, see a certain kind of ethnic-adhesive trajectory in the cases of Korean shopkeepers in Los Angeles, and low-skilled Mexicans in Southwestern agriculture and in Los Angeles (e.g Morawska, 2011: 121-28). These groups are positioned differently to each other within the US social structure, but they are both relatively underprivileged at the economic level, on the margins of the mainstream economic life of the nation. Their working and social lives are heavily embedded in networks of their own ethnic group, and their experience of the US is mediated through this social prism. The East Asian lifestyle migrants are in positions of greater relative economic

privilege than these two sets of US migrants, and, arguably, have additional status advantages derived from their positioning within elite global structures. However, as we shall see, there are some intriguingly similar forces pushing them towards the ethnic-adhesive trajectory. In many cases, moreover, their marginalisation from the structures of social integration is exacerbated even further through being more cut off from the living arteries of paid work, and through the relative dearth of other opportunity structures to forge social connections *within* ethnic groups, whether conceived narrowly or more broadly.

In each of the three East Asian cases there was very little engagement in local workplaces, sometimes because of regulatory obstacles but also because of the phenomenological frame of the migrants, which was dominated by perspectives of retirement, relaxation, and an investment in quality of life practices that did not generally include economic activities. This was limited to a certain extent in Penang, most prominently with those in paid work, but also through the networks of volunteer and charity associations under the umbrella of western associations. These associations certainly helped to allay the isolation of many lifestyle migrants from each other, although they also lessened the felt need to turn outwards to other groups (cf. O'Reilly, 2007, 2012, and Fortier, 2006).<sup>xiii</sup> There was some local tradesmen activity in Hua Hin, but this was minimal and where it was found it would typically be within the confines of the ethnic group. This situation in Hua Hin was a structurally parallel, but much paler, version of the dominant practices found in Karen O'Reilly's *The British on the Costa Del Sol*, where a buoyant informal economy included the exchange of labour and services within the migrant community. The much lighter demographic of migrants in

Hua Hin diminished the possibility of anything approaching the concentration of this experience being replicated there, at least in the short term (2000: 124-5). Morawska notes how a sense of being in a situation together, a long way from home, can enhance and reinforce the ethnic bonds and feelings of solidarity amongst marginalised migrant groups. This sentiment is evident in the dispositions of national groups of lifestyle migrants in Hua Hin, including those of British men married to Thai nationals. The most striking and consequential thing to note, however, is that in Hua Hin and Guangdong particularly the social effects of these sentiments are greatly diminished by the limited number of established institutional avenues for interaction.

At the other end of the socio-economic continuum within Morawska's groupings in the United States we find Hong Kong and Taiwanese transnational entrepreneurs, who differ from the two groups already mentioned in that their working lives lie near the heart of American economic activity. They accrue a good deal of status and recognition from this. There are some similarities here to the status and respect that are sometimes achieved by the East Asian lifestyle migrants on the basis of either relative wealth or ethnic kudos, or a combination of both. However, the Hong Kong and Taiwanese entrepreneurs have a 'living' relation to their own financial capital, engaged as they are in ongoing economic activity. As such they are able to take advantage of ties, albeit relatively 'weak social ties', to the host society generated through their work interactions (and also through civic-sphere-related encounters). The trajectories of adaptation for the East Asian lifestyle migrants mean that even such 'weak' social ties through work are only available in any substantial way to the cosmopolitan group of



migrants within the Malaysian cohort, working as corporate expats, entrepreneurs or teachers (cf. Fechter, 2007). It is probably not irrelevant that the contextual field facilitating this in Penang is one in which direct colonialism had been a significant structuring force.

The integration of the Hong Kong and Taiwanese entrepreneurs into America's corporate and international economic networks does in fact provide them with the potential for much greater social and civic integration than they choose to take advantage of. Whilst they do assimilate aspects of mainstream American upper middle class orientations and practices, they pull back from complete immersion as they focus a good deal of their social and cultural interest in a world Chinese diaspora 'extending between Hong Kong, Taipei, London, Los Angeles, and New York' (Morawska, 2011: 119). Elements of these activities parallel the transnational practices carried out by many of the different groups of East Asian migrant. However, the US based entrepreneurs most resemble the extreme end of the cosmopolitan lifestyle migrants prominent within our Malaysian cohort, although not entirely confined to them. Both groups live in more than one world, but they have much less attachment to specific geographical places. As such, these migrants differ from the great majority of our respondents.. For these migrants, marginalised from the institutions of work and the civic sphere, transnational practices tend to much more focused, both geographically and emotionally. Their adjustment to the new context is invested to a much greater degree around relatively privatised subjective relationships in two (or more) specific places – the places they've left and the ones in which

they've settled – where each carries a great deal of existential and emotional resonance.

### **Cultivating Quality on the Margins: Adapting Across Worlds**

The account and discussion in this final section will work from within this general framing of the characteristics and socio-structural positioning of the East Asian lifestyle migrants. It is significant that in the vast majority of cases the migrants live on the margins of, or in restricted niches within, their new society's economic, social and civic life. The migrant groups themselves are not homogeneous, and vary according to education, class, gender, age, cultural orientations, and other structured aspects of deeply embodied dispositions, or habitus. Their experience is framed and influenced by these dispositions in a variety of different ways as they confront the new fields presented by their host societies. In what follows we will focus on just three from many possible themes, drawing on interview material from each of our migrant cohorts, using excerpts – directly quoted, summarised, or using free indirect discourse<sup>xiv</sup> - to reconstruct aspects of how they experience and negotiate their new lives. The account aims to provide something of the texture of their own subjectivity in identifying the things that 'show up' for them as everyday cares and involvements – their dispositions of being-towards, being caught up in, being with - in their daily engagements, as they respond to their new surroundings and to their socio-structural positioning within these.

#### *Fragments and Textures of Social Isolation*

Most migrants in Hua Hin and Penang went through a period of coming to terms with their lack of integration within mainstream society, with this soon becoming acknowledged as an intrinsic part of their everyday realities, their 'dailiness'. It did not cease to matter, however. The relative isolation it produced, and the emotional resonances of this, were experienced and expressed in a variety of ways. The socio-structural position of exclusion with respect to work is particularly marked in Thailand, when compared to Malaysia, because of the stricter regulations around working in both paid and voluntary occupations.

Some migrants spoke about the difficulty of making friends:

You'll very rarely see foreigners you don't know. When you go to Market Village you might see foreigners you don't know, they might be tourists, but on the social side – if you go to Sam Tam and you don't know a foreigner, by the end of the night you will. A German girl said to me, very blunt – 'if we were in Germany we probably wouldn't be friends but because we're here we are - you're white, I'm white we're friends'. I think friendships are hard [Sam Tam is a club near the Hilton Hotel in Hua Hin, which has a predominantly Western clientele. Market Village is a large western styled shopping mall, but it is a quite distinctive hybrid with many Thai features].

This kind of comment is commonplace, but very revealing in that the small triumph that emerges is in making friends with a non-British European rather than with members of the local community.

From afar one might think that the number of British men married to Thais in the Hua Hin community would make a radical difference, opening out social possibilities beyond the weak ethnic-adhesive trajectory. Its impact is limited, however, for reasons of habitus - to do with language, class, gender and culture. Gordon, a retired professional who had previously lived in several countries through work, including non-English speaking countries, and is married to a Thai woman, remarks:

Unfortunately, if we go out with the same couples, the first thing they'll say is 'Thai girls up that end talking Thai and we'll sit this end'. I actually don't like that, I'd rather sit near my wife, or someone else's wife and talk to them, it has to be English but I don't like shoving them down the end of the table. They don't do it to be rude, they're trying to be practical but it's wearing a bit thin for me seeing the same people.

This and other similar types of frustration arise at the intersection between the challenges of the new contextual field and relatively *traditional* types of habitus (cf. Bellah et al, 1985). In cases where their habitus has been, and continues to be, relatively restricted and unchanging, migrants are typically left with fewer skills with which to negotiate contextual challenges in ways that would give them self-satisfaction. Low-level emotional frustrations can combine with involuntary conceits of 'distinction' established within migrants' habitus by class and ethnic hierarchies in the cultures of their home societies and transposed to the new context (Bourdieu, 1984) . Some of this can be seen in 'back-stage' aspects of the barriers erected against the local community by the British men

married to Thais. Intimations of such conceits are conveyed in disapproving comments from Keith who left school at a relatively early age and had experience of living and working overseas before settling with his Thai wife near Hua Hin.

Her mum and dad think I'm bloody wonderful, I think they're great too, I do like my family, I have a really lovely family, salt of the earth. ....the bulk of the foreigners here they wouldn't entertain them. I had an American friend came here and built a 5 bedroom, I'll use the word – mausoleum – for him and his wife, no kids. Family are never allowed to come to the house because they're poor, he's a bloody snob. You'd be surprised how many of them are like that. They won't openly admit to it but that's exactly what goes on behind the scenes.

Keith's comments are suggestive of some of the hierarchies that operate across bi-national families, notwithstanding the fact that his perceptions are marked by a distinctive worldview which is consistently critical of other Westerners in Hua Hin.

The barriers between established communities and newcomers are often exacerbated in similar ways in the case of Mainland Chinese due, likewise, to the legacies of relative status, difference and distinction embedded within the cultural imagination. Despite growing political and economic integration and intensified cross-border flows of people for work and consumption, Mainland Chinese have always occupied a position of difference in the imagined community of Hong Kong citizens. Mainland lifestyles, daily routines and values

remain important markers of cultural otherness (Ma 2012). As a retired couple, Mr. and Mrs. Ho bought a second home in Mainland China mainly for weekend visits in the 1990s but have since turned it into their primary home after renting out their flat in Hong Kong. Their border crossing activities reflect a general feeling of dissatisfaction with the mundane routines and crowded environment in Hong Kong as well as a more positive yearning for the broadening of horizons and the comfort of things (*'We are surrounded by mountains and green spaces here...it's so peaceful and quiet'*). Mrs Ho has picked up new hobbies such as attending Chinese painting classes organized for retired people in the local area, though she conceded it is not easy to strike up new friendships. Instead they socialise with Mr. Ho's brother, their neighbour in the same building, and with other lifestyle migrants from Hong Kong:

We're happy just staying at home, following the news of Hong Kong and local TV drama, and being on our own. We have our circle of friends who have also moved from Hong Kong, and we go swimming, go for walks, have a game of mahjong, or take short trips whenever we feel like it....We don't associate much with the local people on our estate. I don't like the way they dump their household rubbish, they don't bother to wrap it or close the lid properly...they don't follow the rules when they park their cars...There's no point in complaining to the management. It's to do with the quality of these mainlanders.

*Mundane Pleasures of the Immediate Everyday*

In the course of the curating of the interpretative photography exhibition at the University of Hong Kong a number of our research participants sent in photos and brief commentaries illustrating for them how they were able to embrace a different lifestyle in the new locality. Their stories signaled a desire for small-scale adventures and positive freedoms, for grander material lifestyles, and a sense of taking pleasure in the rhythms of everyday life. Their initial aspirations, typically vague and general, can be seen to often take form and shape in small, incremental moments of opening up to new ways of 'being-towards' and 'being-with'. These are all the more poignant for being so modest. Small changes in the quality of 'dailiness' took on a more than usual significance. Alongside one photograph in the exhibition, we integrated the direct discourse of Becky, a much-travelled 63-year-old American living in Penang (and married to a blind, 36 year-old British man who lives and works in Japan) to render one such experience:

Becky's 22-year-old Indonesian cleaning gal, Ika, cleans their whole flat for RM50 for 4 hours! The wilted lilies looking forlorn in a vase also cost RM50 and they were dead in two days. One fateful day Becky looked at Ika cleaning her home for four hours, and at the vase of overpriced lilies that she had to carry around the house, from the air-conditioned living room by day into the air-conditioned bedroom by night. That's when she realized that she couldn't live her former Western lifestyle in this new place. Needless to say, Ika's services continued and she stopped buying expensive flowers that were just going to start dying the following day.

Much of the quality of life achieved by the lifestyle migrants in our study was gained in taking pleasure in such slight, low key adaptations to changed physical and social circumstances. These were adaptations initiated and shaped to become the fresh 'ready-to-hand' practices that would gently accumulate to animate the new everyday. These were often interlaced with an appreciation of the value of having the time and autonomy to enjoy the simple and sensuous involvements and pleasures the move to the new country had promised and then disclosed to them. Leslie had worked in HR in London before moving to Malaysia with her husband in a joint decision to escape what they felt was the excessive stress of their jobs. After the move she once turned down the chance of an exciting post in Kuala Lumpur. The original reasons for escape remained a powerful force within her current frame of meaning. In an emotional inner battle of priorities, the jolt back into heightened reflexivity told her to remember why she was here in the first place:

...I turned it down, and I cried for nearly two days straight. Now, I am over it and you know what, it was just my ego. I was flattered that I was wanted and I could have this top job. But I know it's not what I wanted from my life, and I know if I took it I'd be as unhappy in five years' time as I was before I came here.....quality of life is knowing it's okay to be here, to be only working part time, it is okay to spend an hour by the pool in the afternoon. Revel in what you've got, you know. For me, it's also the weather. I'm a hot country girl. Having the opportunity to live somewhere where going to the jungle for the weekend or Singapore for the weekend is viable....



*The Continued Centrality of the World 'Left Behind'.*

The continuity of the subjective life as people travel from life in the home country to life in the host country is a powerful support. It provides many of the social and psychological resources from the formative world to underpin and sustain life in the new. This is that much more the case when life in the new world is lived on the socio-structural margins. The work carried out by the old life within the new is often just as valuable and sustaining for those whose second country becomes a third and a fourth as it is for those whose second country is where they stay. When Deirdre was interviewed for the research she was in the twilight days of seven years in which Malaysia had become her family's home. She had grown up in Ireland and left eighteen years ago, not because there was anything she wanted to escape from, but because she wanted to experience more. The hunger for a world beyond her safe existence was accompanied by an inquisitive openness towards other ways of life. She immersed herself in the local cultures of the countries - Kuwait, South Korea, Malaysia - in which she settled for a time before moving on. She also, slowly but surely, became comfortable breathing a cosmopolitan air. She is now in Vietnam with her English husband and their two sons.

Deirdre's 'escape' from her country of birth remains an affectionate one, and the memories she continues to cultivate are vibrant and warm. They are rooted in childhood but renewed through regular returns, once every year and sometimes twice. Behind the scenes, Deirdre harbours the knowledge that distance matters, that there will come a time when she won't be there, on hand, for her ageing

parents, a time when she will have to rely on the generosity and goodwill of siblings. Being part of her new tightly knit family of four, out there in the world, involves immediate, intimate, bonds but these are overlaid by connections with Ireland that are actively nurtured from afar. Skype and FaceTime are regular rituals, and her two children – global citizens who have lived in Malaysia most of their lives - love going home, both to the UK and Ireland. They love staying with their cousins, and they love the long evenings that far north of the equator. As with so many lifestyle migrants, these connections don't just work one way, as the imagination and the experiences of those back home become enriched by sharing in the transnational odyssey.

As we have seen, the shorter distances involved for the migrants to Mainland China alter some of the particulars of the processes by which they draw on and nurture their Hong Kong life. But there are striking similarities in the texture of their needs and pleasures. Mrs Lui, introduced above, who had worked as a cleaner in a fast food restaurant, and whose flat on the Mainland was in 'Little Hong Kong', spoke to us of the fulfilment of having the space to be able to host family gatherings, to cook for her children and grandchildren in a fully-equipped kitchen, to bring all the family together for events such as karaoke, and to involve the grandchildren in summer activities:

We used to get together as a family – my husband, my son and his wife, grandchildren. My grandson was nine years old then, there were so many fun activities designed for kids on the estate, car racing, skateboarding, lots of games, he loved it.....They would be swimming in the pool downstairs, I

could wave to them from the balcony. My grandson would say 'grandma, can you see me?' It's a wonderful warm feeling to be with my son and grandchildren, all for a small amount of money. It's not possible to enjoy such a lifestyle in HK, not for working class people like us.

The activity of nurturing and sustaining connections typically changes over time, through the life-course, requiring further adaptation. This was apparent for Mrs Lui, as now one of her sons is divorced, grandchildren are growing up, busy studying, and less interested in trips across the border. She still tries to make the journey every month but it is not always possible as she has to take care of her husband as age and illness take their toll. Nevertheless, she has mapped out the most convenient, cheapest and safest way of travelling to her second home on her own, by bus, train, and then bus again, by which she can physically be in her 'other world' within two hours.

The resonance of cultural goods and artefacts burrowed heavily into the folds of habitus and memory is a marker of the mundane but evocative role of the old life in the new. Food associated with home illustrates this powerfully – a variety of what Daniel Miller in his eponymous volume has called the 'comfort of things' (2008). The close interweaving of our second and third themes, encompassing 'here' and 'there' within the stretched contextual field, is readily apparent here. The enjoyment of buying this food, preparing it, eating it, talking about it, and using it as an excuse for bringing people together socially, often at ritual calendared times, was a theme brought up recurrently by our participants. We can use an example of this to illustrate how it often takes a while for lifestyle

migrants to explicitly recognise the essential role played by the old life in the new. This is possibly because the phenomenology of lifestyle migrants, contrasted with many other kinds of migrant, is skewed towards the future in a particular way, freighted with voluntary motivations and heavily invested in the expectations of the life to come in their chosen destination. One can see this in how one of our participants, Livvie, a migrant to Malaysia, expresses a feeling of unease and anxiety in the following excerpt of her commentary on a choice of photograph she sent to us for the exhibition:

I took this snap at our local 'posh' supermarket. Stunned of course to see Waitrose products here, but to see them priced higher than branded products seemed so backward! Seeing a Waitrose product made me think suddenly about how you feel when you move across the world: amused/frustrated so often by things that seem familiar but turn out to be quite different; oddly comforted to see a slice of 'home' yet a bit guilty about that. Is it ok to want to feel connected to things from the UK, when we moved out here to live a new, different life? Which place should I refer to as 'home' now? If I bought that product, would I be 'cheating' at life out here?

Livvie expresses a tension between the intuitive enjoyment she feels in the interlacing of her two worlds and the tough injunction not to look back inherited from the popular idea of starting a new life. But lifestyle migrants come, in time, to rely on this, the past, present and future co-existing in their habitus, in their imagination, and in their everyday practices. Celebrating Christmas festivities,

decorating a new home with objects from the past, consuming familiar food and drinks in Western-style cafés, maintaining old friendships and nurturing ties to the original home localities, provide the dailiness of mobile lives with cultural moorings (cf. Rabikowska and Burrell, 2009). They allow new experiences to find a way home, to anchor themselves in narratives of self and identity in which new departures are reassuringly continuous with the past.

## **Conclusion**

Based on three original empirical cases framed by an innovative theoretical approach the paper has explored the complex, everyday negotiations of lifestyle migrants anchored within past and present structural contexts. It has also developed the literature on lifestyle migration through its focus on under-researched locations in East Asia and on non-European lifestyle migrants in Asian contexts. These elements were combined with a cross-case comparative analysis that profited both from explicit conceptual guidance and an openness to unexpected empirical evidence. A prominent substantive finding is that despite the differences in prior habitus arising from the formative social milieus of the East Asian and Western migrants, and notwithstanding differences in the specifics of their respective destinations, there are striking similarities in the dispositional orientations they bring to their new lives. A commitment to a better quality of life is central to the inner lives of the East Asian lifestyle migrants of our study. But it is an uncomplicated, empirically enhanced texture of life they seek, framed more by a phenomenology of sensuous well-being than of self-realization or transcendence.

A good number of the migrants find at least something of what they were looking for in their new home. This is despite the fact that there are often tensions between migrants' culturally framed expectations and their actual lived experience in the migration destination. These are tensions we were able to investigate on the basis of SST, and which are due in large part to the migrants' marginalised socio-structural positions within the new contextual field. These limit the range of experiences and the forms of social support available to them at the same time as the migrants retain relative economic and status advantages.

Finally, an important conceptual refinement was required for us to be able to adequately notice, and make sense of, the empirical evidence that many migrants did find a way to finesse these tensions. The refinement involved the grafting of Scannel's micro-phenomenological account of the profound significance of mundane everyday practices onto SST's emphasis on active agency at the intersection of habitus and immanent contextual field. We believe this approach has great potential across the full spectrum of migration research. The great advantage of the broad comparative nature of this study is that it opens up an expansive field for further research. Having said this, however, the study already provides some strong guidance. Not least, it suggests that the migrants who express the greatest sense of ease and contentment despite the relative marginalisation of their socio-structural situation often achieve this in two complementary ways. They immerse themselves creatively and imaginatively in a range of mundane involvements, interactions, cares and pleasures freshly disclosed within their new settings, and they further enrich and augment their

daily subjective experience through activities that sustain continuities in their transnational imagination, connections and relationships.

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<sup>ii</sup> See Stones, 2017:5-6 on 'hybird forms of social ontology'.

<sup>iii</sup> Fieldwork was carried out by Karen O'Reilly in Malaysia, Kate Botterill in Thailand, and Maggy Lee and Leona Li Ngai Ling in Mainland China. All authors were involved in both research design and analysis.

<sup>iv</sup> The ethnographic study was supplemented with an online survey of 112 people about their motivations and experiences of lifestyle migration in Thailand and Malaysia. We also monitored a number of online expatriate discussion forums and analysed the content of several expatriate magazines, the membership and activities of many different organisations (for example, St Patrick's Society of Selangor; International Women's Association, Penang), and the content of migrants' weblogs about life in East Asia.

<sup>v</sup> On 'active agency' in SST see Stones, 2005: 100-104

<sup>vi</sup> Interesting, potentially fruitful, connections can be made between this phenomenological emphasis on care and Andrew Sayer's exploration of 'what matters to people', which he approaches through the lenses of morality and emotion. See Sayer, *Why Things Matter to People* (2011).

<sup>vii</sup> On the role of imagination and the social imaginary within SST, and within practice theory more broadly, see O'Reilly, 2014.

<sup>viii</sup> The distance, duration and sequencing involved in the migration of Hong Kong respondents were distinct in quite fascinating ways that we don't have the space to explore in the present paper.

<sup>ix</sup> In 2012, the average living space per person in public rental housing in Hong Kong was 12.9 square metres. For the poorest citizens living in subdivided flats, a recent survey found that their average living space was only 4 square metres, 'roughly the size of three toilet cubicles or half the size of a standard parking space'. <http://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/community/article/2117810/average-living-space-hong-kongs-poorest-residents-same>

<sup>x</sup> All names are pseudonyms except where a respondent has given express permission for their real name to be used.

<sup>xi</sup> The range of forms of potential socio-structural challenges for lifestyle migrants are many, and these will vary from case to case. For an imposing and instructive listing of such forms in the case of British migrants to Spain, see O'Reilly, 2007: 283-4.

<sup>xii</sup> We draw on Morawska's study in the comparative spirit that informs Glaser and Strauss's conception of grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, (1967/2008). We feel that Morawska fruitfully combines the kind of inductive immersion in empirical cases advocated by grounded theory with the prior theoretical knowledge distilled from a longstanding engagement with migration issues and the wider migration literature. It is this 'hybrid' combination we endorse in focusing on the 'formal' theoretical aspects of structural positioning, processes of adaptation and transnational practices that Morawska draws most immediately from her substantive engagement with the US cases. We then use these aspects as benchmarks against which to situate our understanding of the conditions, subjectivities and practices of the East Asian lifestyle migrants. In both Morawska's case, and our own, this hybrid form of substantive theory is combined with careful attention to the fruits of 'the ontological turn' – most specifically to refined ontological conceptualisations of structure and agency - which can only complement and strengthen uses of sector specific (in this case migration) and grounded theory (see Stones, 2017).

<sup>xiii</sup> In O'Reilly's Costa Del Sol study the isolation of lifestyle migrants was seen to be mitigated to some degree by the extraordinary number of clubs and associations set up and sustained by British migrants. (O'Reilly, 2000, 76-81).

<sup>xiv</sup> This is the kind of speech used extensively in novels in which there is a creative intermingling of a subject's speech with that of the author. See, for example, Rimmon-Kenan, 1989, 109-16, and Stones, 1996, 174-6.