Chapter 13

Sedentary No Longer Seems Apposite: Internal Migration in an Era of Mobilities

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As foregrounded in Chapter 1 of this volume, the world appears to be getting progressively more mobile and has been doing so for some considerable time. Indeed, as early as 1971, Wilbur Zelinsky asserted in his celebrated 'mobility transition' hypothesis that, 'the most advanced and affluent societies have now achieved a state in which the term "sedentary" no longer seems apposite for their members: almost constant change and movement have truly become a way of life' (Zelinsky, 1971, p. 247). People 'in almost non-stop daily, weekly or seasonal oscillation across and within spatial and social zones, indulge in a vast range of irregular temporary excursions, and frequently migrate, in the sense of formal change of residence' (*idem*). More than four decades later, according to Gössling and Stavrinidi (2016, p. 723), the situation has now been reached where '[m]obility, in contemporary society, is not only an option, but also an obligation'.

This is a societal development with huge ramifications, not least in terms of widespread reactions against migration, which were successfully harnessed in the political campaigns that led in 2016 to the 'Brexit' vote in favour of the UK leaving the European Union and to the election of Donald Trump as US President. Concerns have ranged from outright racism to more diffuse worries about access to jobs, health services, housing and so on for existing residents. People, it seems, have been left feeling no longer at home in (local) community but, through external forces of both homogenisation and differentiation, becoming existentially scattered to the four winds. This feeling is not limited to international migration, but has parallels in the antipathy often shown towards city migration to suburbs and rural areas, which try to protect themselves through exclusionary zoning and similar NIMBY (Not In My Back Yard) ploys.

To achieve a better understanding of internal migration today, it is vital to place it within the concept of an 'era of mobilities'. To this end, this assessment of the messages coming through in the previous chapters begins by introducing this era and its relationship to migration and by reflecting critically on how scholarship has traditionally, often implicitly,

presented and understood migration. It then focuses in on the present status of internal migration and its links with mobilities more generally.

Migration in an Era of Mobilities

Movements, Liquidities, Flows: a Zeitgeist*?*

In Urry's (2002, p. 161) words: 'there are countless mobilities, physical, imaginative and virtual, voluntary and coerced. There are increasing similarities between behaviours that are "home" and "away"'. The arguments propounded by influential books such as Castles and Miller's (1993) *Age of Migration* and Bauman's (2000) *Liquid Modernity* have strongly converged with more sociological expressions such as Urry's (2007) *Mobilities* and geographical contributions such as Cresswell's (2006) *On the Move*. Together, they suggest how '[a]ll the world seems to be on the move' (Sheller and Urry, 2006, p. 207; see also Larsen *et al.*, 2006; Adey, 2010; Sheller, 2011). Of course, people have moved residentially from place to place throughout humanity's existence (Brettell, 2013), with migration in the early 'modern' period tending to be under-appreciated (Pooley and Turnbull, 1998), but the magnitude and complexity of population flows today is unparalleled. This is the case for more than just people, however, as flux – both experiential and metaphorical – has increasingly displaced fixity and come to predominate within daily life and consciousness. Its central consequence has been what Gale (2009) terms 'de-differentiation', including the transgressing of the categories of 'home' and 'away' that Urry suggested. Thus, much of humanity has seemingly entered – exactly when can be debated elsewhere – an era of mobilities (Halfacree, 2012).

What has caused the epochal shift to an era of mobilities remains a moot point and one which also cannot be engaged with here. However, as implied throughout this chapter, a condition of mobility can be strongly allied to the evolution of capitalism into its present-day, dominant, more 'flexible' or neo-liberal forms. This is not to assert economic determinism but does re-emphasize how daily life is not (re)formed either independently or at any great distance from the underlying economic domain. Clearly, any 'mobilities paradigm' (Sheller and Urry, 2006) for examining the present day must also recognise the place of neo-

liberalism and other related conditions such as globalisation as central within its explanatory framework.

Returning to migration, this clearly has a very central place within the era of mobilities, as is consistently noted by its leading scholars (e.g. Cresswell and Merriman, 2011). However, by starting with mobilities – both material and, as noted shortly, immaterial – rather than with the third component of Population Geography's classic demographic triumvirate of births, deaths and migrations (Barcus and Halfacree, 2017), embodied human migration becomes just one element of interest to mobilities scholars. Thus, we may well note the current salience in daily news bulletins of the subjects of the *Age of Migration* (Castles e*t al*. 2014), but the scope and impact of mobilities certainly does not stop there. In fact, in part perhaps because migration is now so very prominently studied across numerous sub-disciplines (Brettell and Hollifield, 2008), it can seem relatively rather neglected or at least taken for granted within the mobilities canon, where more novel expressions of movement have grabbed most scholarly attention.

Through a mobilities lens, migration needs to be emplaced first within what Pooley *et al*. (2005, p. 2) termed a 'mobility continuum' (Figure 13.1), whose time-space mapping Bell and Ward (2000) had pioneered. Table 13.1 introduces five broad families of mobilities, with migration again seeming to be rather 'lost' within the first category, not least with its inclusion of quotidian movements. This is a status, however, that is revisited below. Second, as Table 13.1 makes clear and Figure 13.1 hints in its final category, migration needs to be emplaced in the context of diverse material and immaterial mobilities, perhaps the most prominent of the latter being the vast volumes of data flowing through the internet and other telecommunications media. It is movement or travel which can be virtual, imaginative and/or communicative (Gale, 2009). The importance of this material-immaterial engagement was pioneered by Urry's (2002) concept of the 'post-tourist', whereby an element of the perceived de-differentiation (Gale, 2009) between tourism and the daily life was the enhanced immersion in mediated images of tourist places. Subsequent physical travel may still be central to most tourist experiences but is now moulded via the immaterial as never before, not least through social media (e.g. Cohen *et al*., 2013; Gössling and Stavrinidi, 2016).

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Being mobile in diverse ways is, moreover, not only an empirical state within the era of mobilities but also typically portrayed as a normative state of being. Living mobile lives (Elliott and Urry, 2010) is a condition widely promoted and even glamorized through diverse means, from the blatant seductions of advertising to a more entrenched sense that 'contemporary societies assign high social value to the consumption of distance' (Cohen and Gössling, 2015, p. 1663). From this perspective, to be immobile is thus to be a 'problem', a source of shame, embarrassment and inadequacy.

One consequence of recognising an era of mobilities in all its scope and dimensions, therefore, is the need for all migration scholars to give greater attention to people's residential relocations and their relational connections to other forms of mobility. From this it immediately follows, as Chapter 1 of this volume sensibly acknowledges, that mobilities as a concept cannot be dismissed – or supported – simply from one element alone. As already explained in Chapter 1, observations of rising mobility and declining internal migration rates are not necessarily incompatible. However, from within this 'mobile' perspective, understanding of 'migration', too, needs further critical attention.

Re-specifying Migration

The era of mobilities may raise the existential significance of migration from occasional life course disruption to a more regular part of a commonplace cultural texture of normative flux, but this perspective does not leave the concept of migration untouched – even repositioned within the continuum of mobilities – as conventionally delineated. Our concept of migration, too, feels the force of the de-differentiating wave that articulates mobilities' 'liquefaction of *social forms*' (Gale, 2009, p. 132), since these forms include socially constructed cognitive objects (Halfacree, 2001).

As defined in a recent textbook, migration is 'the movement of people to live in a different place' (Holdsworth *et al*., 2013, p. 96). It is a 'permanent change in residence', as deemed in most censuses to have occurred when one's 'usual address' is different from that of one or five years ago. Nonetheless, as Holdsworth *et al*. (2013, p. 98) also noted, careful consideration of these definitions immediately raises a host of questions over the precise

meaning of terms such as 'different place', 'live in', 'permanent' and 'usual address'. Such terms do not escape the attention of the mobilities critique.

In particular, mobility scholarship's rejection of an assumption of a sedentarist norm also causes a questioning of the component terms of migration as conventionally understood. Now widely recognized (e.g. Cresswell, 2006; Gustafson, 2014) and reinforced by philosophical reflections on human dwelling (e.g. Heidegger, 1971), 'sedentarism' expresses the idea that being still, bounded and 'authentic' through being-in-place is a foundational feature of human life. In consequence, mobility is regarded with suspicion. It is at root 'inauthentic', even potentially deviant, inherently disruptive of normal settled states of affairs (Cresswell, 2006). Thus, people 'live' 'permanently' at a single 'usual address' unless residential relocation impels them to a 'different place' where a (re-)building of sedentarist roots automatically begins again.

Rejection of an *assumption* of sedentarism – as opposed to recognizing it as an achievement to be worked at – also rejects the certainty that one can always recognise a single 'usual address'. It likewise throws into the air the notion that migrations are 'permanent'. Indeed, as most people move residence many times in their lives, how can anyone ever declare a move to be permanent? Furthermore, with this implied fuzzier sense of both place and time, the notion of 'living in' somewhere and the boundedness of 'different places' become equally uncertain. In short, the mobilities paradigm works to undermine the predominant significance of the empirical fact of residential relocation from Point A to Point B.

This critique and reappraisal can be taken even further to challenge the taxonomic delineations that surround and regulate migration scholarship (Halfacree, 2001) in three ways. Firstly, attention can be paid to the enduring distinction (as in the present book) between internal migration and international migration (King, 2002). Whilst the act of crossing a national boundary is certainly very likely to be highly significant for a migration and its experience, its core and primary importance is not necessarily true *a priori*. Favell (2008a, p. 270, emphasis added), for example, has argued how the 'defining' role of state boundaries can be overemphasized since 'the world is not *only* one of nation-state units'. For example, for lifestyle migrants (discussed below), whether internal or international, their urban-to-rural relocation may well be more significant to their daily lives than the

international scale of the relocations of Favell's (2008b) economically elite *Eurostars in Eurocities*.

Secondly, within just internal migration, what is seen as migration is often itself separated from short-distance residential mobility. This, too, can be problematic if also assumed to be a hard divide (Coulter *et al.*, 2016). As noted in Chapter 3 of this book, research has suggested that there is often 'no obvious or easily defined cut off between local and long distance migration', whilst in Chapter 4 Bell and colleagues found on their IMAGE project how declines or rises in internal migration were frequently apparent at all spatial scales.

Thirdly, even the distinction between (internal) migration and more quotidian mobility (such as commuting for work or travelling to shops) is not to be assumed as paramount. Indeed, it can sometimes be more useful for researchers to examine migration according to themes cross-cutting both the internal/international and the migration/mobility divides, such as lifestyle-prompted movement (Cohen *et al.*, 2013; see Barcus and Halfacree, 2017), than simply to work within pre-ordained categories. In the era of mobilities, these social forms are more liquid than we have tended to acknowledge.

Internal Migration Within an Era of Mobilities

Every Day, Not Everyday

From the preceding discussion it might be concluded that internal migration acts as a relatively minor member of the mobilities cast, certainly not its star player. This needs qualifying. While internal migration represents an every day component, occurring ubiquitously, within the general cacophony of mobile rhythms of lives that writes and reproduces the era of mobilities, such migrations are rarely everyday for those involved (Schillmeier, 2011). On the one hand, internal migration is an every day mobility, in that almost everyone migrates during their life, most of us many times. As a form of mobility, as argued above, it is thus not so clearly distinguishable or as unique as Population Geographers have tended to imply. Yet, on the other hand, internal migration is not an everyday quotidian mobility, mundane and largely taken-for-granted, in that the significance of a residential relocation is likely to be wildly considered and the action itself can have profound and long-

term life course consequences (Fielding, 1992; Halfacree and Rivera, 2012). In other words, whilst arguing for internal migration to be understood relationally within its mobilities context, it must still generally be acknowledged as somewhat more existentially significant than strolling to the shops for a newspaper.

Neo-liberal Expressions

In the 21st Century, neo-liberal capitalism's central demand, simply put, is predominantly for a fluid or flexible workforce, where 'flexibility' is understood in at least three ways. It is needed in terms of what tasks can be performed, with workers developing a portfolio of skills and experiences rather than pursuing one career, whether defined by job or occupation. It must be spatial, with workers willing to move almost at the drop of a hat to access the latest work opportunity and over any distance from the local to the international. Thirdly, flexibility is demanded of the life course priorities of the workers, such that existential needs for ties to people, places or practices should not impede the other two areas of flexibility.

In this context, one might immediately expect internal migration to be enhanced in these neo-liberal times, as indeed is implied by the frequent association made between neo-liberalism and mobilities. However, this interpretation is wholly inadequate, as it presents workers in the kind of atomised ways that bedevil early neo-classical migration theories (Barcus and Halfacree, 2017). In short, whilst neo-liberal capitalism might desire and prompt enhanced internal migration with one hand, with many of its other hands it can hold back such migration. There are many ways that (internal) migration can be suppressed by, or displaced by and thus dispersed among, other categories within the mobilities continuum: three examples will suffice.

One brake on internal migration is that the process of moving house is not as straightforward as the estate agency and removal businesses would have us believe. Leaflets posted through the door may promise a no-hassle house sale but they cover only part of the relocation story (Halfacree, 2012). Moving home is widely recognised as stressful (e.g. Mann and Seager, 2007) and disruptive (Fielding, 1992) and it is usually very costly in terms of time and money. There is also the prominent barrier of the geographical unevenness of housing costs, which are widely noted with preventing movement from less to more expensive places (Cameron and Muellbauer, 1998; Rabe and Taylor, 2010; see also Coulter, 2013). Instead of

internal migration, therefore, other forms of mobility may be adopted to compensate. The most obvious example is the rise of long-distance commuting (Green *et al*., 1999), facilitated by developments in transport mobilities, but others include such unstable and temporary living arrangements as 'sofa surfing' (Schwartz, 2013).

Secondly, fluidity in the character of jobs undertaken – flexible jobs, zero-hours contracts, employment precarity – can undermine the incentive to migrate if the job in question is consequently seen as insecure or unrewarding. Whilst the idea of economic calculation within the migration decision-making process has been widely critiqued (Barcus and Halfacree, 2017), a perhaps more qualitative sense of 'is it worth it?' undoubtedly informs this process. When a job is certainly not 'for life', then what is the (rational) point of making a 'permanent' move? How potential migrants engage with risk and uncertainty (Williams and Baláž, 2012) is clearly of central significance here.

A third example is provided by the breakdown of any norm of a family having one predominant income earner or 'breadwinner'. The growth of the 'dual-career household' (Green, 1997) means that finding suitable jobs accessible through commuting from a single 'usual address' can be extremely challenging. Hence, the rise of 'dual-location households' (e.g. Green *et al*., 1999), 'commuter marriages' (e.g. van der Klis and Mulder, 2008) and the 'living-apart-together' (LAT) relationship (e.g. Levin, 2004), all displacing a potential internal (or international) migration. The existence of such households is, as with long-distance commuting, facilitated by the development of transport mobilities. Furthermore, they demonstrate the de-differentiating force of mobilities; for example, with LAT expressing 'neither a new family form... nor... a simple reaction to constraints' (Duncan *et al*., 2013, p. 337) but new flexible articulations of inter-personal relationships.

Resisting Neo-liberalism and De-differentiation

In the era of mobilities, as just seen, internal migration is normatively promoted in response to demands for economic flexibility, but then in practice undermined by other aspects of neo-liberalism and either blocked or displaced into other mobilities. In addition, negative existential consequences of the contemporary mobilities experience (Cohen and Gössling, 2015) can prompt both migration and non-migration as critical and resistant rather than compliant and acceding responses. Indeed, focusing simply on movement forms only part of

the scope of the mobilities paradigm; in the words of Sheller (2011, p. 1), mobilities research 'emphasizes the relation of such mobilities to associated immobilities and moorings, including their ethical dimension; and it encompasses both the embodied practice of movement and the representations, ideologies and meanings attached to both movement and stillness'.

Resisting de-differentiating mobilities can – at first sight, rather paradoxically – prompt other forms of internal migration, thereby somewhat ironically re-inscribing a positive association between mobilities and internal migration. In particular, whilst a strong individualism as well as (allied) neo-liberalism may stimulate the mobilities condition (Bauman, 2007), this can also promote more social- or community-seeking responses, as with many of Duncan *et al.*'s (2013) LATs envisaging future co-habitation. At least two further responses merit fuller discussion.

One mobilities expression of resistance to de-differentiation stems from the potential for social worlds to be ever more geographically scattered, not least due to numerous mobilities developments that range from improved transportation, allowing longer distances to be travelled regularly, to social media and the internet prompting ever-distant social links. Consequently, the most significant and valued social links to immediate family and close friends are often no longer tied down to local, regional or even national scales (Larsen *et al.*, 2007). Social media and other communications mobilities appear, however, insufficient to keep these links flourishing. Embodied propinquity is still needed, expressed by enhanced Visiting Friends and Relatives (VFR) travel. Janta *et al.* (2014) associates this type of mobility with five types of practice: as well as maintaining social relationships, it also about care provision (e.g. to elderly parents), affirming or even discovering place-based roots and identities, asserting territorial rights (e.g. for voting), and pursuing leisure and tourism activities. All but the last of these express a critical response to mobilities' de-differentiating liquefactions and neo-liberalism's abstraction of the individual.

Secondly, reduced ability to entangle oneself in a place-based community – or, as put by Cohen and Gössling (2015, p. 1672), 'decreasing time for co-present social life at home and locally' – is a further existential experience consequent from enhanced mobilities. This emerges not only from the need for the VFR mobilities just mentioned, but also from the extensive time-space demands of hyper-mobile business travel and from a more general

flexible precarious economic existence. The resulting social or communitarian cost of mobilities can be manifested critically in many ways, including through a rising 'desire for connectedness' (Gössling and Stavrinidi, 2016, p. 724) and a 'rootedness' that, as Cooke (2011, 2013; see also Chapter 5 of this book) observes for the USA, is not just driven by material priorities.

Such desire for (re-)connection is expressed particularly strongly through the imaginative geographical lure of 'a place in the country' (Halfacree, 2008). This refutes liquid modernity's treatment of space as 'ceas[ing] to count for much at all' (Gale, 2009, p. 132) by (re-)emphasizing rurality's status as a source for articulating a critical form of place consumption. Specifically, as providing metaphorical 'bolt-holes', 'castles' or 'life-rafts', consuming rural places through residence can express 'critical responses to mainstream everyday life' (Halfacree 2010, p. 250). The mobilities associated with such forms of rural consumption range from those linked to accessing rural leisure and living within second homes (e.g. Halfacree, 2012) to more permanent counteruban relocations in search of an assumed more sedentarist rural *gemeinschaft* existence (e.g. Halfacree, 2008; Halfacree and Rivera, 2012). Thus, Cognard (2014, p. 216) could depict even relatively poor urban residents relocating to rural upland areas of France as being motivated in part by the lure of 'a place that is reassuring in its permanence in these uncertain times'. The burgeoning lifestyle migration literature (e.g. Benson and Osbaldiston, 2014) illustrates these pro-rural quests extremely well. Even the amenity migration literature is now recognising how the appeal of many rural places is often their supposed promise of the 'slow life' and 'stillness' as much as their more active recreational offer (Moss, 2014).

Taken together, these two responses illustrate how many forms of what Cohen *et al*. (2015) term 'lifestyle mobilities' may be facilitated by Table 13.1's five families of contemporary mobilities but nonetheless express a critical narrative on the overall 'liquid' condition. It is a narrative with which internal migration is deeply enmeshed. However, critique may also be expressed through non-migration, through efforts to try to stay put and dwell within relatively established and secure locally emplaced moorings. In other words, the presence of non-migration must not be seen solely in terms of constraints preventing relocation – although these are very widespread, as noted above (e.g. Cooke, 2013; Coulter, 2013) – but as an expression of asserting more 'rooted' social forms of dwelling. Hence Italy's more 'familial'

society promoting varied forms of commuting more than internal migration, documented by Bonifazi and colleagues in Chapter 11 of this book.

In summary, there is no clear or singular relationship between our present mobile times and moving house. Table 13.2 therefore attempts to bring together the diversity of internal migration experiences illustrated in this book in the context of their associations with neo-liberal mobilities. It shows how positive association between internal migration and mobilities is but one box from four. In addition, mobilities can be expressed in reduced migration due to displacement, lack of necessity or costs. Furthermore, both heightened and reduced internal migration can resist neo-liberal mobilities through seeking to access what is presumed lost or simply opting out of migration practices, respectively. It is therefore clear that, whilst mobility today may well be an 'obligation', how individuals and families fulfil it is very variable indeed.

<Table 13.2 about here>

Conclusion: Beyond Mobility Saturation

It is clear that internal migration has a central place within any present-day era of mobilities and will continue to do so into the foreseeable future. However, this chapter has argued that it is simply too one-dimensional to expect to see any clear positive relationship between the two. The whole basis of any mobilities era or *zeitgeist* is that the whole is greater than the sum of its individual parts: 'mobilities' is much more than internal migration or even migration in total. Indeed, the chapter identified an ambiguous relationship, with the former sometimes encouraging and facilitating the latter but at other times discouraging and preventing it. At the same time, both migration and non-migration may be seen as attempts to resist and counter the fluid logics of the era of mobilities.

In conclusion, nearly half a century ago Zelinsky was extremely perceptive with his assertion that the idea of humans being sedentary was no longer satisfactory. Sedentarism is always in dialogue with nomadism (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987) and how we dwell today will thus implicate countless forms of mobility, of which internal migration remains a major player. Yet the present era of mobilities simultaneously highlights the limits of the mobile nomadic

life, as was also hinted at by Zelinsky: 'it is more difficult to fix an effective upper limit to human mobility, even if the phenomenon is obviously finite. Is there a point beyond which mobility becomes counterproductive economically and socially or even psychologically and physiologically? ... When and how will mobility saturation be reached?' (Zelinsky, 1971, pp. 247-48). It is important to recognise that mobility is prevented for many and is also resisted for its consequences. Indeed, to dwell in an existentially satisfying manner in the 21st Century requires much more effort in terms of producing both settlement and mobility practices, including those of internal migration, than has been realised to date.

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Table 13.1: Five families of contemporary mobility

Type	Subject	Examples
Material	People	Work, leisure, family, safety: from quotidian mobility through internal migration to international migration
Material	Commodities	Raw and finished goods to producers, retailers, consumers
Immaterial	Imaginations	Other places via written word, photographs, film and TV, memories, conversations, dreams
Immaterial	Virtual worlds	Internet exploration of places
Material and/or Immaterial	Communications	Letters, cards, phone calls, emails, texts, online conversations (e.g. Skype)

Source: Substantially adapted from Gale (2009, p. 133) and Larsen *et al*. (2006, p. 4).

Table 13.2: Internal migration and neo-liberal mobilities

	Increase in Internal Migration	Decrease in Internal Migration
Neo-liberal Consequences: Mobilities	• Flexible work and workers – precarity • Normative 'nomadic' identities	• Displacement to other mobilities • Generalised conditions – no point to moving • Monetary costs, geographically highly variable
Neo-liberal Resistances: Community	• Enhanced importance of Visiting Friends and Relations • Second home consumption • Pro-rural lifestyles	• Staying put – building place-based communities • Dropping-out – Brexit?

Source: Compiled by the author.

Everyday movement	•Home, Garden
Daily short-distance trips	•School, Work, Shopping, Family, Social activities, Leisure, Pleasure
Regular longer trips	•Business, Family, Social, Leisure, Other
Cyclical mobility between two homes	•Long-distance weekly commuting, Students, Children between parents
Holiday away from home	•Various distances
Local residential moves	•Same community, Short distances
Longer-distance migration	•Same country, Various distances
International migration	•Various distances
Virtual mobility	•Almost limitless

Figure 13.1: The mobility continuum

Source: Substantially adapted from Pooley *et al*., 2005, Figure 1.1.