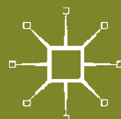
LIFESTYLE MIGRATION AND COLONIAL TRACES IN MALAYSIA AND PANAMA

Michaela Benson & Karen O'Reilly



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Lifestyle Migration and Colonial Traces in Malaysia and Panama

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1

Introduction

In this book, we draw from in-depth ethnographic research conducted in Malaysia and Panama, and build theoretically on our conceptual works to date, to illustrate how lifestyle migration as a story of practice reveals the ongoing articulation of postcolonialism and neoliberalism in the ways that privilege is structured and experienced by lifestyle migrants in their everyday lives. This consolidates and extends a wider field of research concerned to understand the intersections between migration and privilege, adding the dimension of *everyday practice.*

Practice Stories

The goal of this book is to understand migration processes as stories of practice (O'Reilly 2012). Here, qualitative and narrative accounts describe how cultures, behaviours, attitudes, institutions, and other sociological phenomena develop over time as norms, rules, organisational arrangements, and other social structures are acted on and adapted by individuals through the performance of their daily lives, in the context of their communities, groups, networks, and families. Practice stories

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therefore understand the making of the social world as ongoing processes, both shaped by and shaping of general patterns, arrangements, and other social structures.

Our understanding of migration as a story of practice is one that responds to the wider practice turn in the social sciences. Simply put, theorists are increasingly employing conceptualisations of social life that understand it as 'the social processes involved in the ongoing constitution of social life' (Cohen 1989: 12). Cohen refers to these processes as practices that are

> synonymous with the constitution of social life, i.e. the manner in which all aspects, elements and dimensions of social life, from instances of conduct in themselves to the most complicated and extensive types of collectivities, are generated in and through the performance of social conduct, the consequences which ensue, and the social relations which are thereby established and maintained. (Cohen 1989: 12)

Very briefly, the practice turn recognises that the tendency to perceive the agency of individual human actors as distinct and separate from social structures is an untenable residual feature of the historical development of social theory (Stones 2005). The emphasis by early sociologists on the *sui generis* nature of social structures, while remaining influential, was seen to be limited especially in relation to the understanding of human agency. As Giddens (1976, 1979, 1984) explained, while social structures shape people's actions, they do not fully determine them. Gradually, this perspective was replaced by recognition of the dynamic and creative nature of social action. The result, as Bourdieu (1977) so eloquently recognised, is that, in the work of many theorists, determinism was either replaced by or set in direct opposition to subjectivism. Decades of argument and debate ensued, but social science now appears to have reached (an implicit) consensus that social life is in fact processual, and the dynamic outcome of the interaction of structure and agency, over time. The goal for most practice theory approaches is to seek ways to conceptualise, understand, and describe those processes involved in what Pierre Bourdieu (1977) calls the practice of social life (O'Reilly 2012; O'Reilly et al. 2014).

Our approach here owes a special debt to the work of Stones (2005), who developed a stronger version of structuration theory that builds on and develops the work of Giddens, responding to some of his critics, and to O'Reilly (2012), who has specifically developed the approach for the study of migration. Employing practice stories (O'Reilly 2012) to explain a phenomenon involves drawing attention to the following heuristically discrete elements, while retaining the notion that structures and agency are always in a dialectic relationship to each other in the actual practice of social living (Giddens 1984):

Wider global and historical structural shifts that shape actions (O'Reilly 2012: 23–25)—For the purposes of this book, we wish especially to draw attention to postcolonialism and neoliberalism. A postcolonial relationship implies continuing exploitation, structured relations of inequality, economic ties based on prior appropriation, and cultural links informed by previously unequal relationships. Neoliberalism here takes the shape not only of economic doctrine, as ideology, but also as a technology of governance (Ong 2006). These will be addressed in detail in Chaps. 2 and 3.

The more proximate or immediately relevant structures that may be somewhat malleable by agents (O'Reilly 2012: 23–25, and cf. Morawska 2009)—Here, we specifically think about the access to visas and other arrangements that enable this migration, but also the ways in which these can be manipulated. The use and manipulations of social policy is also relevant to how migrants and nation-states practice migration. This will be examined further in Chap. 4.

Habitus (cf. Bourdieu 1984) *and Internal Structures* (O'Reilly 2012: 26–28), the typical ways of thinking and being of the various agents involved—Colonialism leaves hardened traces in the form of social structures of inequality and power but also in taken-for-granted ways of thinking and acting (the habitus of both the former coloniser and colonised). Here, we draw attention to ways of carrying oneself, ways of dealing with and viewing the 'other', and lifestyle migrants' expectations and experiences of being able to travel and move around the world. We also include the various forms of capital agents hold and

can mobilise and transform. As discussed below, we develop an understanding of these lifestyle migrants as neoliberal subjects, individualistic and self-enterprising. These will be covered in more detail in Chaps. 5, 6, 7, and 8.

Conjuncturally specific internal structures (O'Reilly 2012: 26–28, and cf. Stones 2005), or the ways in which people learn to go on and adapt their habitus in daily life, within their relevant *communities of practice* (Lave and Wenger 1991)—Migrants and agents of state alter their expectations regularly in light of experiences and expectations of those around them, adapting to and changing the norms and patterns of behaviour of the groups within which they form communities. We learn about these throughout the book, but especially in Chaps. 4 and 6, where we learn about the responses of individuals to ongoing contingencies.

Practices and outcomes (O'Reilly 2012: 28–32)—It is important to recall that social life is lived and practised on a daily basis in the context of social structures and shaped by taken-for-granted ways of doing and being. Individuals have the ability to imagine other ways of living life (Emirbayer and Mische 1998). The actions of agents thus shape and reshape social structures. Social life is dynamic and creative. Overall, we draw attention to the practices of agents and to the ways in which attitudes are changing and social structures are being reshaped, or what O'Reilly (2017) has called sedimentation. The outcomes of migration will be noted in all the chapters.

For an in-depth discussion of the role of practice stories in migration research, see O'Reilly (2012), which illustrates the approach in relation to lifestyle migration, labour migration, domestic labour migration, and forced migration.

About the Research

The empirical research reported in this book was undertaken by Michaela and Karen separately. However, in the chapters that follow, we draw up practice stories that incorporate this research.

Building Practice Stories

Practice stories require an understanding of external structures, in the form of relevant, wider, historical, and social trends. Building up a picture of this structural terrain faced by migrants requires understanding the historical, social, political, and economic (and, to a lesser extent, the geographical) situation in each country, especially, in this case, in relation to migration and the West. To develop the argument presented in this book, we consulted empirical and theoretical studies on colonialism and postcolonialism, neoliberalism and globalisation. We studied other types of migration including corporate expatriates and lifestyle migration in other parts of the world. Our central goal was to begin to understand how these practices and configurations shape behaviours and attitudes today, perhaps externally through policies and legal arrangements, and perhaps internally via norms, habits, expectations, and attitudes.

It was also necessary to understand the more proximate structures—the various laws, policies, and economic constraints that a specific migrant moving to Malaysia and Panama faces, such as the availability of visas, housing, and pensions. To this end, we read documents and learnt from interviews with migrants and social media analysis of online forums. Karen's research in Malaysia also included interviews with experts, such as consular and embassy officials, property developers, and 'expat' magazine publishers.

We complemented this analysis of the wider, upper level and more proximate external structures framing and shaping lifestyle migration, with understandings of habitus and dispositions of the migrants themselves, that is the internalised structures that shape how they behave and that, in turn, are shaped by their experiences having migrated. It was also important to understand the new communities of practice within which migrants acted, made decisions, and which constantly shaped their actions and desires. This turned our focus as much to the outcomes of migration as to its antecedents.

Building practice stories of lifestyle migration to Malaysia and Panama relies not only on the empirical research on the ground but also on archival, documentary and desktop research. The analysis that

we present in the pages of the book relies as much on foregrounding the structural and systemic conditions that support lifestyle migration as it does on highlighting the everyday lives and lived experiences of the migrants themselves. In this respect, the methodology involves writing migration as practice, in weaving together the biographies of those who took part in the research with our interpretations. It is through this project of writing that this overt analysis of migration as practice emerges through the text.

Research with Lifestyle Migrants in Malaysia and Panama

The empirical research that we report in the book derives from two research projects. Karen's research was part of a larger project on lifestyle migration in East Asia. That project, funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (grant ref: ES/1023003/1), was designed to study the lifestyle migration of British migrants[1] in Thailand and Malaysia and Hong Kong Chinese migrants to mainland China, with an initial focus on the meanings, motivations, and experiences of the migrants, as well as on the migration 'outcomes'. The project was informed from the outset by the meta-theoretical framework of practice theory, outlined above (O'Reilly et al. 2014). It used a diverse range of ethnographically informed research methods, including narrative interviews, participant observation, social media analysis, and survey methods. The explicit goal was to tell 'practice stories' (O'Reilly 2012) about migration as a way of drawing attention to the chronological, narrative nature of the structuration process, and to the centrality of practices in the sense expressed by Cohen (1989).

This book draws on the Malaysian data, so we will now outline the specific methodology for that part of the project. This was achieved through a combination of online and face-to-face interviews, participant observation, the analysis of online forums, social media, and websites, expert interviews, and a brief online survey.

Much of the understanding about the internal structures and the initial and evolving 'habitus' of lifestyle migration came from in-depth

interviews with 31 migrants. Often conducted in their homes, but also using online interviews, Karen asked migrants to describe their motivations for moving and their experiences of getting visas, settling in, staying in touch with family and friends, and making new friends. She then asked about their work and social lives in Malaysia and their plans for the future. In addition, the survey, with 57 respondents from Malaysia, asked about their migration histories, social lives, social networks, and uses of technology for maintaining social ties, their personal values and goals, and their relationships with other ethnic groups. The aim of the survey was to capture further richness and diversity rather than numerical representation.

However, goals, desires, and habits are often both intuitive and creative and are not easily accessed through interviews. The study also benefitted, therefore, from periods of participant observation. To achieve more of a feel of the lives of the migrants, and to take the opportunity to ask questions in context, to observe behaviours, and to experience the lifestyle to some extent, Karen spent four weeks in Penang, attending events and talking to people in public places and private homes. She also monitored diverse 'expatriate' online forums during the period from July to November 2012, watching what was being said and noting the topics that arose and how things were discussed. Both during this fieldwork period and since then, she has analysed the content of several 'expatriate' magazines, the membership, ethos and activities of many different associations (e.g. St Patrick's Society of Selangor, International Women's Association, Penang), and the content of migrants' weblogs about life in East Asia. A final method used was auto-photography, which involved asking respondents to send photos of life in Malaysia which were analysed alongside other visual images displayed through diverse migrant media.

Michaela's research with North Americans in Panama commenced with a small pilot project in 2008, and continued through the research project 'Contemporary North American Migration to Panama: expectations, outcomes and dynamics' funded by the British Academy (SG-53957). This examined three sites in Panama—Boquete, Bocas del Toro, and Panama City—that had become areas where foreign residential investment was being promoted and where North Americans and other

Westerners were relocating. It explored the motivations behind lifestyle migration, migrant experience within the destination, but also how these intersected within social and economic transformation within these local settings. This included three months of ethnographic fieldwork in Boquete between 2008 and 2010, supplemented with case studies in Panama City and Bocas del Toro.

As in Malaysia, the virtual presence of this migrant community, and particularly its prominent community forum and blogs written and curated by these migrants added a further dimension to the research. It quickly become clear that the (virtual) community forum was a significant hub for the migrant community, through which information and requests specific to this community were communicated and circulated. Michaela was granted permission to place a call for participants on the forum, and supplemented by emails sent out through local mailing lists, announcements at meetings, and snowball sampling she built up a bank of 25 migrant households—often couples—with whom to conduct in-depth research. She met with each of these households once or more, collecting life and migration histories and finding out more about their lives in Boquete. She was often invited into their homes, but she also met people in the bars and cafes in the town. By working closely with these households, she was able to develop a sense of the different routes into migration and the motivations and experiences of these populations.

The ethnographic research also included participant observation of migrant-organised activities and philanthropy, talks specifically organised for this population, local events attracting a wide cross-section of the local and migrant population—for example, Earth Day, Founders' Day, local *fiestas*—and everyday life in Boquete. Through the participant observation, she gained further insights into how this migrant community was positioned within the social structure of Boquete and Panama; this element of the research also provided opportunities for informal conversations and for the observation of everyday migrant lives and experiences that supplemented the self-reporting by migrants within the more formal set-up of interviews.

Conducting fieldwork in Boquete for periods stretching across three years, Michaela was also able to trace changes to the built environment and witness the expansion of the North American population first hand; this allowed her

to move beyond the simple reporting of local change coinciding with the shifting demographics of the area. Spending long periods of time in the area—each visit ranging from two weeks to six weeks—and travelling around by foot or, where distances were too great, by taxi or public transport allowed for the development of a mental map of the area.

Michaela and Karen also visited prominent locations mentioned to them, including the well-known 'expat' venues, the restaurants, the museum, the supermarkets, and the local markets. These feature in this book as the cultural backdrop, the context in which our migrants move and the imaginaries which they shape.

Karen and Michaela also collected material promoting residential developments to these migrant populations including real estate maps of the area, flyers, and taking photos of the billboards and for-sale signs that littered the roadsides. In this way, they documented the impact of imaginings of foreign investment on the landscape.

In addition to working with these migrant populations and conducting fieldwork on site in Boquete and Penang, an additional element of the research for Michaela and Karen has involved becoming familiar with and remaining up to date on the policies, legal and economic structures that facilitate these migrations, and interpretive analysis of the promotion of Panama and Malaysia as places for foreign investment.

As this methodological account demonstrates, the empirical research in Malaysia and Panama—the time spent with participants, witnessing their lives, and hearing their stories—has been put to work in the book as part of the broader ambition to describe migration in all its richness and diversity, as stories of practice.

Before outlining how the chapters of the book relate our practice stories of lifestyle migration in Malaysia and Panama, we first wish to draw attention to why we think studying privileged migrants is important and should be located in mainstream migration literature. We then go on, in the following sections, to draw out the theoretical and conceptual convergences and departures in the disparate studies of migration and privilege, while proposing theoretical innovations that consolidate thinking and push beyond the state of the art. We do this by examining work in the field of lifestyle migration, tourism studies and the role of the social imaginary, studies of privilege and power in migration (with a special

focus on the problematic term 'expatriate'), ending with a special note on postcolonial and neoliberalism as they articulate in the lives of contemporary migrants in Malaysia and Panama.

Why Study Privileged Migration? Colonial Pasts and Neoliberal Presents

This book positions the unequivocally privileged migrant subjects with whom we have spent time—despite the ease with which they appear to cross international borders—as migrants. As we have described elsewhere (Benson and O'Reilly 2015), recognising the interplay of privilege with migration is a deeply political statement intended to render visible the inequalities and asymmetries that exist and are (re)produced within contemporary migration regimes and governance. These mobile subjects represent a relatively untold migration story, or, rather, one that runs counter to what is assumed to be a typical migration experience; the restrictions, limitations, and discrimination that have become commonplace to understandings of the migrant experience are, generally, radically reversed for these populations (Amit 2007; Favell 2008). Rarely even depicted as migrants, privileged migrants are more commonly recognised as resident foreigners, expatriates, or even tourists.[2] As Lundström (2017) so aptly identifies, this distinction between 'expatriate' and migrants when carried through to migration studies signals the white normativity of this field of research. Further, these definitions, while highlighting the privilege of these populations, render them invisible within the migration discourses of sending and receiving nations. However, as we will see in the pages of this book, they are often actively encouraged to invest and reside in host countries, and their settlement similarly brings with it consequences. As an ongoing structured and structuring practice (O'Reilly 2012; see below), their migration is both the result of wider processes of social, economic, and political transformation, and a contributor to further change. It feeds into myriad processes through which local populations may be displaced and disempowered, and which bring about fundamental changes to social structures and hierarchies (see also Hayes 2018). If

there remains a question as to why it is important to study such populations, it is precisely because of what it might reveal about the reproduction and reshaping of their relatively privileged position in contemporary global power relations.

> You're an expatriate. You've lost touch with the soil. You get precious. Fake European standards have ruined you. You drink yourself to death. You become obsessed by sex. You spend all your time talking, not working. You're an expatriate, see? You hang around cafés. (Bill Gorton, *The Sun also Rises* (Hemingway 1926))

It is not our intention to add our voices to the reductionist ways in which these populations have been discursively constructed, as revealed, for example, in the seemingly timeless characterisation of expatriates by Hemingway's Bill Gorton, an American writer living in Paris. Through our attentiveness to the diverse trajectories and lived experience of privileged migrants, we deconstruct categorical representations of these populations as 'expatriates' or 'elite migrants'. However, as we outline below, thinking with such caricatures can also be productive; they serve as a reminder of the eerie resemblance between earlier privileged migration trends, where power and empire were writ large, and these more contemporary trends.

Informed by the meta-theoretical framework of structuration and practice theory outlined above (see O'Reilly 2012), we advocate understanding migration as a story of practice; that is, an approach that simultaneously attempts to understand the structures that promote these forms of international migration and the agency of individual subjects as shaping of and by such structures. *Through the presentation of practice stories of lifestyle migration to Malaysia and Panama, the book offers unique insights into how neoliberalism articulates with postcoloniality in the practice of privileged migration.* It makes clear the structural and material conditions that support migration, that are embodied by these migrant subjects, while also highlighting their agency within this process. As we emphasise throughout this book, lifestyle migration and its consequences are shaped through long-standing historical and geopolitical forces; such migrations are undoubtedly structured by the postcolonial, both in its highly visible

renderings, and what Stoler (2016) argues are the 'opaque and oblique reworkings' of colonial pasts in the neoliberal present. But to take this further, in the book we particularly highlight the interplay of lifestyle migration with neoliberalism. We view neoliberalism as at once a broad conceptual framework informing legal and governance structures and simultaneously as an internal structure, internalised in the migrant as a neoliberal subject (characterised as individualistic and self-enterprising) as well as in state and external agent practices. We thus demonstrate how colonial legacies are articulated through governance that supports privileged migration and reproduced unwittingly in the practices and experiences of lifestyle migrants and their communities of practice.

Intersections of Migration and Privilege

The rich body of literature that considers the relationship between migration and privilege represents a radical departure from the key tenets of migration studies. Research with privileged migrants immediately challenges, for example, the economic focus of much work in the field of migration studies, on the relationship between production, labour, and migration. Instead, with privileged migration, the focus is often as much on consumption and leisure time, or retirement. Equally, the study of privilege and migration sits uneasily with the orientation of migration studies towards questions provoked by social problems and migration controls. Rather than, as is so often (perhaps implicitly) the case in migration studies, seeing the migrant as a subject lacking agency, those researching privileged migration are forced to acknowledge the roles of agency and power. It is perhaps for these reasons that writings on the topic are rarely located in the mainstream of migration research, but are instead peppered across the social sciences. On the one hand, this is productive as it brings different schools of thought to understandings of the relationship between privilege and migration. On the other hand, it is frustrating, the wheel at times reinvented precisely because of the isolation wrought by disciplinary, conceptual, and theoretical silos. This has led to a tendency to continually describe as novel, newly

discovered migration processes that involve privilege without recognising the commonalities they share. The consequence of this is a fractured field of research that is in urgent need of consolidation. We aim, in the following section, to draw out the theoretical and conceptual convergences and departures in these disparate studies of migration and privilege, while proposing theoretical innovations that consolidate thinking and push beyond the state of the art.

Lifestyle Migration and the Neoliberal Subject

The inductive concept of lifestyle migration provides some insights into how we might think about the relationship between migration and privilege (Benson and O'Reilly 2009, 2015; O'Reilly and Benson 2009; Benson and Osbaldiston 2014, 2016; Benson 2015).

> Lifestyle migration is a novel extension of a phenomenon with a history, made possible as a result of global developments of the past 50 or 60 years. It relates specifically to the relative economic privilege of individuals in the developed world, the reflexivity evident in post-/late modernity, the construction of particular places as offering alternative lifestyles, and a more general ease (or freedom) of movement. (Benson and O'Reilly 2009: 620)

Initially developed out of our ethnographic projects on the British in rural France and coastal areas of Spain, respectively (Benson 2011a; O'Reilly 2000), we have sought to demonstrate why lifestyle migration is a valuable inclusion into understandings of migration (Benson and O'Reilly 2009, 2015; Benson and Osbaldiston 2016). This framing sought to explain what were, at the time, relatively understudied migration phenomena and their impact on the lives and identities of those migrating. As the quotation above makes clear, our conceptualisation sought to both identify the structural and material conditions that made migration thinkable and possible, and describe how migration acts within ongoing processes of subjectivity-making (Benson 2015a, 2016; Benson and O'Reilly 2015; Hoey 2014) as a practice (O'Reilly 2012). Lifestyle migration is a critical and analytical concept, intentionally foregrounding a distinctly sociological approach to understanding migration, in contrast

to the more predominant descriptive or categorical framings of privileged migration, such as retirement migration or corporate expatriacy.

Lifestyle migration reflects the articulation of migration, consumption, and identity in the motivations, practices, and narratives of privileged subjects (Benson and Osbaldiston 2014; Benson and O'Reilly 2015). As a concept, it has gained traction in making sense of a wide and increasing variety of privileged migration flows including (inter alia) northern European migration to southern European coasts (Casado-Díaz et al. 2004; Kordel 2016; O'Reilly 2000, 2012); urban to rural migration within Europe, the United States, China, and Australia (Eimermann 2015; Hoey 2005, 2006, 2014; Osbaldiston 2012; Lin 2014; Tang and Xu 2015); North American migration to Mexico, Central and South America (Bantman-Masum 2015; Benson 2013b, 2015; Hayes 2014, 2015a, 2018; Kordel and Pohle 2016; Spalding 2013a, b); Japanese migration to Australia and to other Asia-Pacific destinations (Hamano 2010; Igarashi 2015; Ono 2014); Northern European migration to India and the Far East (Korpela 2010, 2014; Botterill 2017); European migrations to Africa (Berriane and Idrissi Janati 2016); as well as, more recently, the consideration of lifestyle migration to urban locations (Griffiths and Maile 2014; Zaban 2015); the intersections of lifestyle and settler migration (Higgins 2017a, b) and considerations of how lifestyle interplays with youth mobility (King 2017).

The focus on how consumption and identity interplay with migration, as well as the more inductive methodologies adopted by many researchers in this field, has produced an understanding of lifestyle migration as an individualised social phenomenon, often interpreted through theories of the self. In particular, these interpretations seek to explain the search for a better way of life at the heart of this migration as a practice of self-realisation and fulfilment (Benson and O'Reilly 2009, 2016; O'Reilly and Benson 2009, 2015; Benson 2015; Benson and Osbaldiston 2014, 2016; see also Hoey 2005, 2006, 2014; Osbaldiston 2012). While we recognise that the search for a better way of life is held in common with other migrant populations, such arguments rest on a distinctly sociological understanding of lifestyle and quality of life as this is mobilised in support of claims to self-realisation, in the context of wider structural

change that encourages individuals to feel the onus is on them to seek their own futures.

Nevertheless, as we have argued elsewhere, scholarship on lifestyle migration (and, indeed, on elite and privileged forms of migration more broadly) has developed an important concern with migrant subjectivities, but has attended to a lesser extent, to relevant structural conditions (Benson and O'Reilly 2009; O'Reilly and Benson 2009; Benson and Osbaldiston 2014, 2016; Benson 2015). Where they have been taken into account, considerations over structure include the recognition of how the privilege of these subjects is structured by global inequalities and asymmetries of power (Amit 2007; Croucher 2012; Benson 2013b; Fechter and Walsh 2010; Hayes 2015a, b, 2018; Korpela 2014). Still, as Ono (2014) explains, there is a tendency to overlook the economic structures that support migration—the private industries that have sprung up to service such migrants and might best be characterised as evidence of the interplay of lifestyle migration and neoliberalism (see also Akerlund 2012; David et al. 2015; Hayes 2015b).

Building on our previous works in this field, we work in this book with an extended understanding of lifestyle migrants that explicitly frames them as *both postcolonial and neoliberal subjects.* We are inspired, on the one hand, by Rose's characterisation of the neoliberal figure, as those who 'maximise their quality of life through acts of choice according their life a meaning and value to the extent that it can be rationalised as an outcome of choices made or choices to be made' (1996: 57). But we are also inspired by Bauman (2007), for whom in liquid modernity people are 'individuals by decree', and have no choice but to seek out, or hunt, their own personal, privatised 'good life', perhaps through migration to spaces which offer the 'goods' they seek (O'Reilly 2009a; cf. Benson 2011a: 41–42). It is this pairing of quality-of-life motivations with choice in the context of wider social, cultural, and structural change that characterises the dispositions and practices of lifestyle migrants (see also Korpela 2014; Hayes 2014, 2015a).

This locates our work, here, as part of a wider shift towards thinking about how social theory might be put to work in understanding migration more broadly (van Hear 2010; Castles 2010; O'Reilly 2012), in particular, in the pursuit of explanations that locate migration—as

human mobility—within processes of globalisation, social transformation, and the global spread of neoliberalism. The practice stories we provide of migration in Malaysia and Panama are thus embedded in ongoing social science debates that recognise the co-constitutive relationship of migration and social transformation, and seek social theoretical explanations of migration as a structured and structuring process. *The (lifestyle) migrant is both an agent of but also continually produced through broad structural and material conditions including neoliberalisation, globalisation, increased mobility, and relative economic affluence*.

Tourism, Imagination, and Migration

The development of lifestyle migration as a field of research has also taken inspiration from research in the field of tourism. This is productive because, as we go on to explain, it challenges migration studies' emphasis on migration as a one-off, unidirectional movement across borders. It also makes clear that tourism—implicated in the historical structuring of the world—structures the imaginings that these relatively privileged migrants hold of destinations and the lives they might live there, shaping social imaginaries, expectations, and lived experience.

Innovative work that has critically examined the binary relationship between tourism and migration argues for an approach that understands these as taking place along a continuum (Bell and Ward 2000; Williams and Hall 2000, 2002), or as a nexus through which globalisation is mediated (O'Reilly 2003; see also Hannam and Knox 2010). This is a really useful approach that also underpins scholarship on mobilities, highlighting as it does fluidity and flow (see, for example, Sheller and Urry 2004; Hannam et al. 2006; Urry 2007). However, unlike the cognate phenomenon 'lifestyle mobilities' (Cohen et al. 2013), most lifestyle migration scholarship does not fully embrace this mobile turn (Benson 2011b; Benson and Osbaldiston 2014, 2016). While the mobilities paradigm has usefully challenged migration studies' emphasis on problematic, boundary-crossing, unidirectional moves, it has nevertheless left too little space for the roles of control, governance, history, and materiality. This is especially evidenced in the introductory chapter to *Tourism Mobilities:*

Place to Play, Places in Play (Sheller and Urry 2004) in which migration flows are dislocated from the relevance of structural constraints and opportunities (and see Fechter 2010, who critiques the postmodern discourse of borderless inhabitants of global flows). For us, the focus on tourism as a context for migration acknowledges that migrations may be incremental, circular, or peripatetic, but are nevertheless located in time and space (see also Gustafson 2002). This approach is faithful to social anthropological approaches (e.g. Battisti and Portelli 1994) that have located their understandings of migration inductively, beginning with the daily lives of people, in the context of history, geography, and community, rather than their starting point being (the problem of) migration or mobility per se (see also Benson 2011b).

Secondly, the inclusion of tourism perspectives has enabled scholars to note the explicit time-space link between tourism and migration (Williams and Hall 2002). This is relevant precisely because tourism can lead to migration, as visitors buy second homes, settle to provide services to other visitors and settlers, and eventually retire in (some) tourism destinations. It also intimates the articulation of tourism and migration, over longer time periods, and thus involves seeing tourism as part of the historical structuring of the world, as well as of the 'growing trans-boundary connectivity' known as globalisation (Betts 2011: 7). Structural inequalities both precede and endure tourism: not only are some places (and peoples) wealthier than others, but also places are socially constructed, or *imagineered*, to attract certain people. In the language of practice theory, tourism is thus both an external structure shaping migration and embodied in the habitus of some touring/migrating subjects (see O'Reilly 2009b).

Lifestyle migration (like tourism) is rife with tropes of imaginings and romanticism. As discussed in Benson and Osbaldiston (2014: 9), the idealisation of place and the constitution of particular destinations as idylls are mobilised within the quest for a better way of life. Imaginings—of the beach as representing a slower pace of life, or a soothing balm to the ills of modernity (Osbaldiston 2012, 2018), or of the rural as backward, quaint, pure, and unsullied (Benson 2010, 2011a, 2013a)—are lived out as collective nostalgia, and as practices of daily

life. Such accounts of the relationship between individual imaginings, social imaginaries, and lifestyle migration often follow the foundational work of linking social theory and tourism (see, for example, Bruner 1991; Cohen 1988; Lindholm 2002, 2008; MacCannell 1976). Lifestyle migration and its destinations are seen as offering a route to 'authentic' lives and selves—whatever authenticity is taken to mean. We both have written about the significance of social imaginaries to lifestyle migration elsewhere (Benson 2012, 2013a; O'Reilly 2014). Across these writings, social imaginaries are thus richly understood as (1) the individual capacity to imagine, (2) the socially shaped lifestyles that are imagined, and (3) the possibilities for enacting on those imaginings. The concept of the imaginary implicitly attempts to make sense of the interaction of structure and agency in interaction, but we find it useful to distinguish, heuristically, the two roles of structure and agency in the practice of imagining (O'Reilly 2014). Imaginaries are both something people do—people imagine, and work to shape, a better way of life—and something that exists externally to a given agent at a given time. Indeed, Michaela's earlier work on British citizens who have relocated to rural France illustrates this in detail, highlighting the work that goes into making lives line up with their expectations of the rural idyll (Benson 2011a, 2012, 2013a), *performing* a better way of life they seek in the context of materiality. The material and the imagined worlds thus interact through the practice of daily life. Lifestyle migrants motivated by tourist tropes have often primarily moved to consume tangible goods (Oliver 2011: 136). Their relationship to the destination is thus shaped by their imagination and expectations for a better way of life, but they are often moving to less-developed destinations, in which they have the economic power to purchase their goals.

The emergence of certain identifiable forms (the rural idyll, for example) can often be traced back to earlier times and practices, and to the structuring of the globe through exploitative practices (Higgins 2017b). But this exists alongside the work on the ground, the active agency, that goes into the imagineering of destinations—for example, by place-makers of the industries that have sprung up to promote particular (lifestyle) destinations. As Teo (2003) illustrates, Penang, one of the sites we

consider in detail in the book, has been carefully constructed and shaped to represent those elements that will attract the 'right' kinds of incomers, with tourism being a feature of its development plan since the 1970s. Imagineering extends beyond the investment in tourism accommodation, infrastructure, and 'the beautification of beaches and the development of cultural and heritage sites' (Teo 2003: 547). As we discuss in Chaps. 2 and 3, imagineering is also significant to the increasing levels of privatisation, liberalisation of labour and trade, and establishment of 'free trade zones', with Penang, a strategic urban centre attracting professional elites, and central to Malaysia's self-image as attractive to global technology giants. The imaginative geographies of relatively privileged migrants also reveal colonial continuities (Higgins 2017a, b).

Finally, the link between migration and tourism is also relevant for its governance, and other proximate structures, as we discuss in Chap. 4. 'Migration is inherently political in nature—involving states according rights to non citizens' (Betts 2011: 3); it is also an embedded practice, shaped by those who have internalised ideas about the 'desirable' migrants and tourists. Many lifestyle migrants arrive in destinations on tourist visas, and are therefore not even recognised as migrants. Furthermore, as Oliver (2011) notes, their presence tends to give no rise to concern for regulation on humanitarian or security grounds. Indeed, as we discuss below, they have often been explicitly drawn to the destinations as tools of foreign direct investment (FDI). But this attraction has often been as second-home owners, as residential tourists, as retirees, or as long-stay tourists. They are often not recognised as would-be migrants with potential needs, demands, or productive abilities.

Considering the relationship between migration and tourism, then, permits some initial insights into migration as a story of practice. It draws attention to the wider global and historical structures that shape privileged migration as much as tourism. It makes clear the governance and marketing structures that enable migration. Further, it provides a sense of how imaginings of destinations, of the lives to be led there, might interplay with the decision to migrate and settle elsewhere, as well as the practices and outcomes lifestyle migration might produce.

Interrogating the Role of Power and Privilege in Migration

While lifestyle migration scholarship offers one lens onto the relationship between privilege and migration, there is additional value in considering how privilege has been deployed within other conceptualisations of privileged migration. Variously labelled expatriates, privileged migrants, and skilled migrants, research in this area has been relatively neglected because of the reluctance to 'study up' (Nader 1972). Their work has thus (as with the work on lifestyle migration) often been inductive and ethnographic, with the aim to gain insights into practices and processes of globalisation on the ground, or from the bottom up. Nevertheless, this body of literature has important things to say about racialised and gendered experiences (see, for example, Yeoh and Willis 2005; Fechter 2007, 2010; Leonard 2008, 2010; Croucher 2013; Lehmann 2014; Lundström 2014); migrant imaginaries—of place—and practices (see, for example, Knowles and Harper 2009; Coles and Walsh 2010; Conway and Leonard 2014); and questions of home, identity, and belonging (see, for example, Walsh 2006, 2011, 2014). It is also clear that this work takes seriously wider geopolitical structures that shape migration, including, as Fechter and Walsh (2010) make clear, the colonial legacies within contemporary migration practices.

What becomes clear in looking across this literature is the development of conceptualisations of these migrations on the basis of in-depth empirical research. Indeed, this approach mirrors our own theoretical and conceptual work on lifestyle migration outlined above (see also Benson and O'Reilly 2016). The relative—rather than absolute—framing of privilege within these migration trends is also important to highlight here, and a point which we have developed in our conceptualisation of lifestyle migration. Writing about North Americans living outside of the United States, scholars including Croucher (2012) and von Koppenfels (2014) stress that understanding privileged migration lies in considering the differences in (economic) power between the country of origin and residence. The workings of relative privilege are also clearly laid out in Amit's (2007) consideration of

the structures and dispositions that support the elective movement—both travel and migration—of those with resources.

We focus in detail here on the misconceptualisations permitted in conflating such privileged migration trends with 'expatriacy'. In particular, we highlight briefly what adopting this term might obscure through the discussion of two texts: Fechter's (2007) book *Transnational Lives* and Cranston's article 'Expatriate as a "good migrant"' (2017).

As Fechter (2007) highlights, 'expatriate' is a label that circulates through the mass media and popular literature, and that may be used by employers and indeed by individuals themselves. It often carries with it connotations of luxury, leisure, and moral decline, from which other migrants often wish to distance themselves. To avoid such confusion and conflation, Fechter (2007: 2) restricts herself to use of the term 'corporate expatriate' only when referring to 'someone who takes up an international assignment for their current employer'. Furthermore, as her research on the transnational lives of corporate expatriates makes clear, and as we discuss in Chap. 6, the framing of such migrations as 'elite' may be unsuitable. Lives that are sometimes precarious brought about by changes to the 'expatriate package'—their perks and benefits, increasingly short-term assignments, expectations of mobile working, and the replacement of imported labour with local employees—are documented by Fechter (2007; see also Green 2015) and can also be seen reflected in the lives of some of those Karen worked with in Malaysia. Fechter (2007) argues for the notion of a *transnational middle class* to replace the idea that such populations are elite. Even though they often used the term loosely themselves, our participants were not easily categorised as 'expatriates' if we take an expatriate package or corporate employee or even access to luxury goods and incentives such as health insurance, free schooling, and expensive relocation funds as part of that. Routes into expatriacy vary, as Pauline Leonard (2008) found amongst her 'expatriate' respondents in Hong Kong, some arrive as tourists or on short-term contracts and stayed on, some set up small businesses, others include teachers, artists, and the retired. That is to say, these privileged migration flows now include a variety of less privileged migrants (see also Green 2014; Hayes 2014, 2015a, b, 2018).

However, the way we conceptualise such phenomena also needs to critically engage with power as well as being reflective of bottom-up understandings of migration. As Cranston (2017) highlights, it is necessary to critically appraise such migrants' self-categorisations. In her research with British migrants in Singapore, she argues that by calling themselves expatriates, these migrants are making a moral claim that positions them as a 'good migrant'—contra the migrants of immigration debates. Cranston continues to argue astutely that:

> We as researchers must also recognise and think about the power relations implicit and explicit in the terminology we utilise in our research. It is through understanding and challenging labels that work to differentiate people, such as 'expatriate,' 'migrant', or 'refugee', that we open up the possibility of confronting the privilege that underpins the ways in which these become determined. (2017: 10)

Both Fechter (2007) and Cranston (2017) demonstrate clearly the relational dimensions of the labels that migrants themselves adopt and how these are reproduced or resisted within conceptualisations of privileged migration.

The considerations of power that lie in the assertion of relative privilege also highlight the location of privileged migration in geopolitical structures and their historical conditions. Research in this area has been particularly well attuned to the colonial legacies reproduced through these migrations. Fechter (2007) draws on existing studies and perspectives on colonial Europeans to illuminate some of these processes in contemporary privileged migrations (see also Higgins 2017a). Her work on the concepts of 'white prestige' (see also Lundström 2014) and 'the expatriate bubble' draws from ideas about the importance of the body for the reproduction of European identities and the daily realities of social relations within and across communities. This is not simply a matter of mapping colonial realities onto contemporary trends. Much as Stoler (2016) highlights the refashioning of the inequalities wrought by colonialism in the postcolonial present, Fechter describes how the lives of contemporary corporate expatriates in Indonesia are more complex than might be permitted by the simple transference of our understandings of their

colonising predecessors. The colonial imagination, in which one side views the other through the colonial lens, is, for Fechter (ibid.: 28), dehistoricised and undifferentiated short-hand on which to base relations with each other. Instead, the relations are negotiated in practice; as Leonard (2008: 45) describes in the case of expatriates in Hong Kong, these migrants move into previously racialised and gendered spaces and must negotiate these as well as the 'relations and practices forged through imperialism' (see also Lundström 2014).

'The actual and conceptual relations' between the colonial and contemporary times are far from clear (Fechter 2007: 160), and it is this critical mapping of the postcolonial continuities in contemporary expatriate mobilities that Fechter's and Walsh's special issue of *The Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* (2010) seeks to address. Drawing on Hall (1996), Fechter and Walsh make clear that the postcolonial is not a fixed stage or epoch but a temporal period 'that comes after formal decolonisation but that demonstrates continuities with the colonial through reconfigured colonial relations' (Fechter and Walsh 2010: 1201–1202), and that it is a condition which extends even to places that were neither colonisers or colonised. There are various ways the colonial past influences the present. Cultures and stereotypes shape present-day relations: for example, some Germans in Namibia view Africans in terms of chaos, disease, and inertia (Armbruster 2010: 1234); and ethnic stereotyping in a transnational office in Jakarta casts expatriates as the experts (Leggett 2010). As Coles and Walsh (2010) argue, imaginative geographies influenced by colonialism—for example, those held by expatriates in relation to the Gulf states—feed into the constitution of the 'British "expatriate" self' (2010: 1317), while, for Higgins (2017a), the imaginative geographies of Britons living in New Zealand need to be complemented by an understanding of those of settler colonialism. But the process is neither straightforward nor homogenous: places are postcolonial in diverse ways (Walsh 2014); some Western expatriates embrace the earlier established colonial identity, while others distance themselves from it (Farrer 2010). For example, in discussing the case of the British in Hong Kong, Leonard (2008, 2010) stresses while, on the one hand, 'their daily lives are shot through with imperialist assumptions about social differences' (2010: 1260), on the other hand, those on short-term contracts or working for themselves live

different kinds of life in which the privilege associated with whiteness is contested. Similar challenges were found for the British in South Africa, who feel increasingly alienated from the national story yet for whom the apartheid era may well be remembered as personally painful (Conway and Leonard 2014: 177).

Our review above has considered how privilege features within research on privileged migration. It has highlighted how (relative) privilege is embodied by individual migrant subjects; it additionally demonstrates how everyday experiences within the destination foster a rich awareness of racialised (white) and classed privilege (see, for example, Fechter 2005; Lundström 2014, 2017; Benson 2015). But it is also the case, as several authors have highlighted, that privilege is not only a structure framing migration, but is also (re)made through migration and settlement (see, for example, Benson 2013b, 2014; Kordel and Pohle 2018). This literature makes visible how migrant identities, subjectivities, and lived experiences are structured by postcoloniality and highlights the (dis)continuities with colonialism as these register in the practices and imaginings of migrant subjects (Fechter and Walsh 2010; Farrer 2010). Through such migration phenomena, the systemic inequalities embedded in this relationship of postcoloniality are reinforced, and the underlying power dynamics reaffirmed. Nevertheless, in taking the migrant subject as a starting point—as is common to many of these studies of privileged migration—postcoloniality is observed in their actions and thoughts, while the consideration of the way this functions as a wider geopolitical and historical structure is given less attention. This is an oversight we aim to correct in the present book, through the telling of migration as practice stories.

Neoliberalism and Postcolonialism in the Practice of Privileged Migration

To conclude, we depart from previous explanations of privilege and migration by shifting focus from privileged migrant subjects, to an understanding of privileged migration as a story of practice in which the contemporary conditions of neoliberalism and the traces or continuities of

colonialism provide both historically shaped conditions and internally structured habits and practices in the lives of our migrants.

Such a shift brings to light the need for greater and more sustained attentiveness to the ways in which historical circumstances—notably colonialism—pave the way for privileged migration through their articulation with contemporary practices of governance. Hence, our sustained attention to these in the first chapters of the book. In particular, we argue that while understanding these migrations as postcolonial is a good starting point in rendering visible the geopolitical and spatial inequalities that support these social phenomena, this needs to be complemented with an understanding of how this articulates with neoliberalism, through ongoing practices such as governance, imagineering, and place marketing.

The precedent for such an understanding lies in decolonial scholarship; simply put, this body of work sees the relationships and power inequalities established in colonialism persisting unabated through contemporary global relations. The works of Quijano (2000, 2007) and Mignolo (2003, 2007), for example, trace the conquest of societies and cultures to a new world order, in which 'a violent concentration of the world's resources (came) under the control and for the benefit of a small European minority' (Quijano 2007: 168). This process continues today along the lines initially established in the early days of colonialism, with the world divided into the exploited and the beneficiaries, so while the explicit politics of colonialism may have ended, colonial domination continues as both 'coloniality of power' and 'coloniality of knowledge' (Mignolo 2007). That is to say, the conditions and the modes of domination and exploitation continue in the shape of racial hierarchies, economic relations, and intercultural relations. Race and the global division of labour are inextricably and historically linked, Quijano (2000) says, so that coloniality is constantly reproduced as 'the invisible and constitutive side of modernity' (Mignolo 2007: 450). Rationality, individualism, and Western culture are seen as superior, and all alternative ways of living (e.g. communist, socialist, or traditional) are deemed a threat to modernity and, now, even to neoliberalism (ibid. 2007). This approach provides a broad framework within which to understand the relationship between capitalism and colonialism, and the persistence of geopolitical inequalities in contemporary neoliberalism.

While this understanding of the continuation of colonialities within contemporary global economic structures is crucial, in line with our practice theory meta-theoretical framework, we are also concerned with the way in which, in contemporary contexts, neoliberalism continues to function in the production of privileged migration, and how neoliberalism as both structure and agency shapes the migrant practice. We further develop Ono's (2014) description of how neoliberalism coincides with lifestyle migration, considering not only the construction of the 'mobilities market'—the privatised industry that supports privileged migration—but also the explicit role of migration intermediaries, through imagineering, for example, through an analysis of governance as an ongoing practice of control, and through a sustained focus on the lifestyle migrant as postcolonial and neoliberal subject.

Neoliberalism is employed here in recognition of the extent to which free-market logic has seeped into every area of social and economic life. Within the field of lifestyle migration research, this understanding clearly underpins the way that Ono (2014) and others (see, for example, Akerlund 2012; David et al. 2015; Hayes 2015b) explain the emergence of property markets and industries that target individual foreign investment. However, in addition to seeing this as a wide, overarching structure, we are also inspired by Ong's description of neoliberalism as a 'technology of government' and all that incurs:

> Neoliberalism is often discussed as an economic doctrine with a negative relation to state power, a market ideology that seeks to limit the scope and activity of governing. But neoliberalism can also be conceptualised as a new relationship between government and knowledge through which governing activities are recast as nonpolitical and non ideological problems that need technical solutions. Indeed, neoliberalism considered as a technology of government is a profoundly active way of rationalising governing and self-governing in order to 'optimize'. The spread of neoliberal calculation as a governing technology is thus a historical process that unevenly articulates situated political constellations. (2006: 3)

In this way, her account presents neoliberalism both as a structure—the market-driven calculations that drive the distribution of resources—and as a quality of individual subjects, the 'self-enterprising' citizens who

take responsibility for themselves, the prime neoliberal subjects (and see Rose 1996). As she describes, '[I]n global circuits, educated and self-propulsive individuals claim citizenship-like entitlements and benefits, even at the expense of territorialized citizens. Expatriate talents constitute a form of movable entitlement without formal citizenship' (Ong 2006: 16). Understanding neoliberalism as a 'technology of governance', or as an embedded practice (see Chap. 4), makes visible and meaningful the proximate structures that support, promote, and facilitate contemporary forms of privileged migration. It also draws attention to the potential for such migrants to be imagined as what Ong (2006) refers to as 'exceptional subjects', those courted and wooed in the pursuit of profit (see Chap. 3). The cases we consider in Malaysia and Panama make visible these technologies of governance—the specialist migration governance, land reform—that explicitly mark out privileged migrant subjects as exceptional.

We emphasise here that previous approaches have not fully appreciated the ongoing articulation of neoliberalism and postcoloniality as a practice, shaped and enacted by diverse agents on the ground—a practice through which contemporary privileged migrations are produced. This is in part the consequence of taking the migrant subject as the starting point of enquiries, or, in theoretical works, of starting from the wider structural frame. In this book, we take a different starting point; inspired by practice theory, we approach migration as stories of practice.

About the Chapters

The structure of the book mirrors the development of practice stories that we outlined in the discussion above. We begin by identifying and examining the structures that create opportunities and constraints that, in turn, shape lifestyle migration to Malaysia and Panama. This takes places over Chaps. 2, 3, and 4 as we consider in greater depth the interplay of colonial traces and neoliberal presents in Panama and Malaysia, the relationship between residential tourism and economic development, and the ongoing practice of the governance and regulation of lifestyle migration.

Chapter 2 offers clear insights into the wider geopolitical and historical conditions that shape Malaysia and Panama. It also introduces Boquete and Penang, the two field sites that are the predominant focus of the book. In particular, it examines in depth pasts of the countries and of the specific locations studied and how these articulate with contemporary economic development strategies. In this way, it draws out the specific relationships between neoliberalism and postcolonialism in these locations. The chapter also considers the historical relationships between sending and receiving countries. Through its spotlights on the two field sites, it presents an initial sense of the local sociopolitical and economic histories that shape the destinations and provide opportunities for lifestyle migration.

Chapter 3 provides a more focused discussion of how lifestyle migration figures within state-led strategies for economic development. It introduces residential tourism—property-led foreign investment by individuals—as a feature of neoliberal development strategies. Starting from the discussion of residential tourism development in Spain, it highlights how the prospect of foreign investment of this kind has led to the establishment of new markets in many economies, including Malaysia and Panama. Exploring these cases in particular, we examine how places are promoted and become popular destinations for certain populations at specific points in time. In this way, we consider how Boquete and Penang are imagineered with the intention of attracting such investment. It therefore provides some initial insights into the proximate structures that shape lifestyle migration.

However, beyond the market, lifestyle migration is also structured at this proximate level by governance practices. As we make clear in Chap. 4, the foreign investment in property anticipated by residential tourism is further supported by specialist visa regimes, which incentivise such investments through, for example, tax breaks and other favourable terms of residence. In this way, migrants-cum-investors are treated as exceptional cases (Ong 2006). What also becomes clear, however, is the tension between how the migrants themselves manipulate these structures and the tightening and relaxing of these in legislative practice that aims at the exclusion of those less-desirable migrants using such entry routes. Chapters 1, 2, 3, and 4 are not simply meant to be read as background to

the stories of lifestyle migrants' daily practices, but as part and parcel of the telling of migration to Malaysia and Panama as ongoing practices that are shaped by, and shaping of, wider contingencies and structures.

Following this thorough analysis of the wider and more proximate structures that shape these lifestyle migrations, we turn to the consideration of how lifestyle migration is lived in Boquete and Penang. Through migrant biographies, narratives, and experiences presented in Chaps. 5, 6, 7, and 8, we explore how the colonial residues implicit within settings are shaped, reproduced, and resisted through everyday lives. This enables a focus on the ways in which the various structural frames outlined previously are embodied and enacted by migrants as agents.

In Chap. 5, we introduce participants in our research in Malaysia and Panama, providing a sense of their diverse backgrounds, the different routes that led them to this migration, and an initial sense of their lives there. Their stories reveal how imaginings of a better way of life underpin decisions to migrate, but also how acting on the basis of these imaginings is variously supported by experience, expectations, assumptions, and resources. The decision to migrate and the life as lived are processes shaped by habitus, by conjuncturally specific internal structures, by communities of practice, and by diverse contingencies as they are confronted by people in their daily lives. While we highlight the extent to which such populations may be considered as relatively privileged, we also stress that this does not presume absolute wealth and privilege; these populations are socially stratified.

Moving into the everyday lives of these migrants, Chap. 6 considers the relationship between work and lifestyle migration. Within this, we do not only speak about paid employment—as might be assumed in the case of corporate expatriacy—but consider work to extend into volunteering and the other activities that such migrants occupy themselves with. The chapter is therefore descriptive of work, lives, and diversity, but also illustrates their flexibility and capitals. In this way, it demonstrates the value of referring to these populations as lifestyle migrants, laying bare how people use paid and voluntary work to achieve quality of life rather than vice versa.

Chapter 7 shifts focus to a close analysis of the material, social, and emotional aspects of home-making practices. It makes visible the social

and emotional investments at the heart of such home-making and highlights the complex ways in which these lifestyle migrants make living in Malaysia and Panama work for them, developing comfort in and familiarising themselves with living in these environments. In this way, it outlines how such migrants learn from their experiences and adapt their behaviours accordingly. It thus emphasises home-making itself as a form of practice.

Chapter 8 considers how lifestyle migration to these destinations is framed around the opportunity to live and lead healthier lives. In this way, it teases out the significance of health and well-being to imaginings of a better way of life, and in everyday migrant lives. What becomes clear is that considerations about where to migrate is for some additionally framed around their understandings and/or knowledge of healthcare provision and the cost of domestic labour—for example, in cases where there is need for daily care within the home—within the destinations, and the capitals and resources that they can draw on to make the best of what is available. As we demonstrate, this is paired with the development and promotion of high-quality healthcare services in Malaysia and Panama, a further dimension of their economic development strategies, and evidence of outcomes or sedimentation (O'Reilly 2017) of this practice of migration. But these neoliberal solutions come at a cost that not everyone can afford.

In the final chapter, we draw together our practice stories of lifestyle migration in Malaysia and Panama, drawing out the practices, outcomes, and unintended consequences of this social phenomenon. We close by reflecting once again on the relationship between lifestyle migration, postcoloniality, and neoliberalism.

Notes

1. It should be noted at this point that, while the majority of Karen's respondents in Malaysia were British, some were of dual nationality or identified as Western rather than British. Nevertheless, they self-selected for participation, knowing the research was ostensibly about British migration.

2. Within research on privileged migration there has been rich discussion of the use of these terms as categories of investigation and analysis. Of particular note are the papers by Kunz (2016) and Cranston (2017) who carefully lay out the difference between claims of self-identification and the categorical use of these terms by researchers. Such efforts to distinguish between conceptual labels as analytical tools and the demarcation of particular migrant populations are also at the heart of our recent article, moving lifestyle migration on to considerations of lifestyle in migration (Benson and O'Reilly 2015).

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2

Colonial Traces and Neoliberal Presents: Situating Malaysia and Panama

This chapter describes the geopolitical histories of both destinations, examining in depth the colonial pasts of the countries and of the specific locations studied, as well as the historical relationships between sending and receiving countries. This includes an analysis of the more recent past and the current sociopolitical situations within the destinations in order to contribute to practice stories of British/Western migration in Malaysia and US migration in Panama. As outlined in Chap. 1, practice stories understand the making of the social world as an ongoing process, both shaped by and shaping of general patterns, arrangements, and other social structures. We here describe and analyse the distinct characteristics of the colonial histories of these two destinations. Malaysia underwent a process of formal colonisation by the British between 1824 and the end of the Second World War, with the establishment of the Malaysian state in 1963. From its importance in Spain's colonisation of the Americas, to the significance of the Panama Canal in the United States' imperial project—even though Panama was never formally a colony of the United States—Panama's history tells a different story of colonialism. As readers will see as they proceed through the pages of the book, these histories and ongoing relationships set the stage for ambivalent

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and hierarchical relationships between Malaysia and Britain, Panama and the United States. In the language of practice theory, these geopolitical histories can be understood as the broader and more distant structures which, in turn, shape the context in which contemporary lifestyle migration takes place. Here, these colonial histories imply continuing exploitation, structured relations of inequality, economic ties based on prior appropriation, and cultural associations informed by previously unequal relationships.

The chapter also serves as an introduction to the specific field sites discussed in the book: Boquete in Panama, and Penang in Malaysia. This provides a sense of the local sociopolitical and economic histories that shape the destinations and the local geographies and environments where our research was located. The latter intimates the meaningfulness of landscape to the migrants' imaginings and lived experiences that we explore further in Chap. 3.

Malaysia and Panama on the Map

We begin with a brief introduction of the two countries. Malaysia and Panama are vastly different in size and population, but there are some fascinating similarities. Both countries are ethnically, religiously, and linguistically diverse with their majority populations being only 55–65% of the population. In both cases, there is an ongoing struggle to protect the rights and language of these majority groups in the face of persistent inequalities forged over centuries of invasions, settlement, and/or exploitation. Both are thus characterised by racialisation and ethnically based competition for power and resources. Both countries are rich in biodiversity and natural resources, and both are strategically located at the crossroads of important trade routes.

On the Map: Malaysia

Malaysia's 329,000 square kilometres of land includes the Malaysian Peninsula, South of Thailand, and Eastern Malaysia, which is physically the northern third of Borneo. Malaysia is made up of 13 states in total,

including the two Eastern states of Sabah and Sarawak. It is a land of hills, beaches, and tropics, but also of gleaming high-rise apartments and business districts. Malaysia has diverse natural resources, a sometimes violent but often peaceful history, a culturally and religiously diverse population, and a challenging and ever-changing politics and economy (Fig. 2.1).

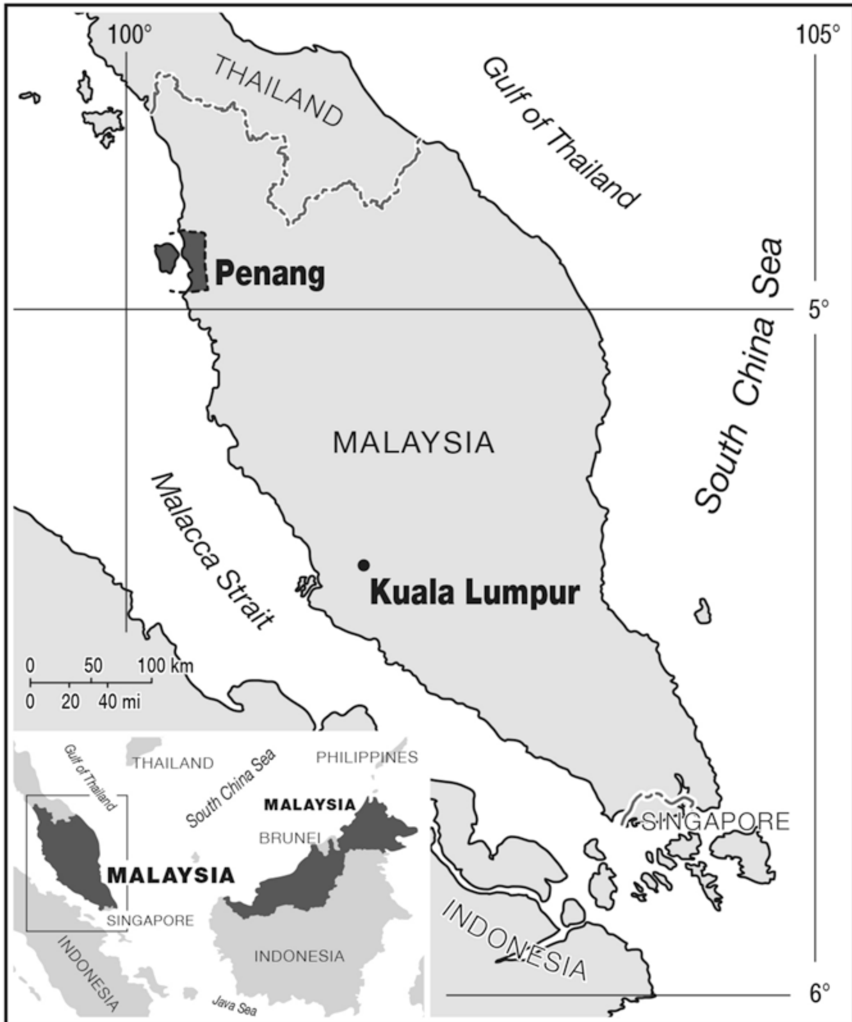

Fig. 2.1 Map of Malaysia

Malaysia has been part of the Commonwealth, a voluntary association of 52 independent and equal sovereign states, since 1957. It has a constitutional monarchy, with a bicameral parliament, and (sometimes hereditary) heads of the individual states. Malaysia's legal system is a mixture of English common law, Islamic law, and customary law (CIA Factbook 2016). The most recent prime ministers, since 1981, have been pro-business, and are especially focusing on manufacturing, services, and tourism as routes to development. However, the production and export of raw materials (especially oil and gas) remain a major component of Malaysia's GDP. The state oil producer, Petronas, remains influential (Bowden 2013) (Figs. 2.2 and 2.3).

Malaysia's current population (as of 1 June 2017) is 31.7 million. (https://www.statistics.gov.my); 68.6% of the population is ethnic

Fig. 2.2 The diverse faces of modern Malaysia: tropical rainforests, and abject poverty, side by side with opulent luxury

Fig. 2.3 The diverse faces of modern Malaysia: sky-rise apartment blocks

Bumiputera, 23.4% Chinese, 7% Indian, and 1.0% other ethnic groups. In all, 10.3% of the population are non-Malaysian citizens. Bahasa Malaysia is the official language but English, Chinese (Cantonese, Mandarin, Hokkien, Hakka, Hainan, Foochow), Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, Panjabi, and Thai are also spoken, along with several indigenous languages in Eastern Malaysia. The official religion is Islam, with over 60% of the population, but other religions include Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Confucianism, Taoism, and other traditional Chinese religions (https://www.statistics.gov.my). Currently, 6% of the population are over 64 years old; 72% live in urban areas. Infant mortality rates, life expectancy, and literacy are close to what we might expect of what tends to be called a 'developed country' (https://www.statistics.gov.my).

On the Map: Panama

Panama occupies 74,340 square kilometres of land, comprising ten provinces and three *comarca indigena* (regions administered locally by indigenous populations of Emberá-Wounaan, Kuna, and Ngäbe-Buglé). Bordering Colombia to the east and Costa Rica to the west, it is located on the land bridge uniting north and south America (Fig. 2.4). An Isthmus of geological significance, it is known for its unique biodiversity. Following Panama's secession from Colombia in 1903, the United States backed the building of the Panama Canal, governing and controlling this globally important shipping lane—rivalled only, to date, by the Suez Canal—until 1979. In 1989, the United States invaded Panama, capturing and incarcerating Manuel Noriega, the military dictator. Today, it is a representative democracy, with a president—since 2014, Juan Carlos Varela—who is both the head of state and of government.

Tropical beaches and islands, rainforests, and the temperate highlands contrast the skyscrapers that grace the skyline in Panama City, the latest articulation of Panama's economic performance on the world stage (Fig. 2.5). Consistently the most competitive economy in Central America, and ranked by the World Economic Forum as one of the strongest in Latin America, the strong economic performance of

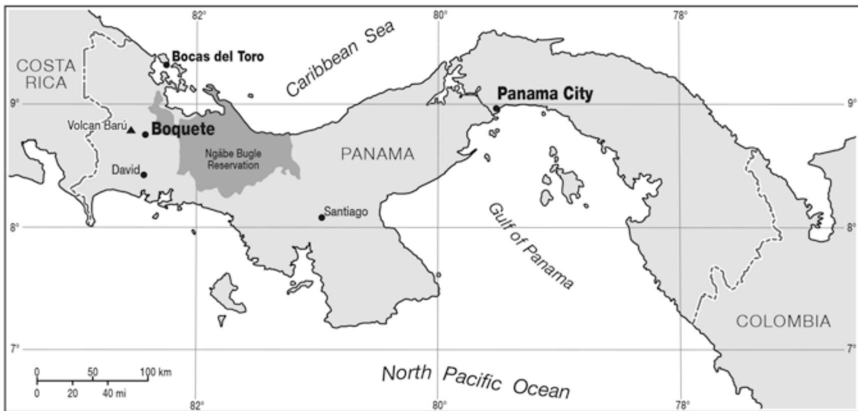

Fig. 2.4 Map of Panama

Fig. 2.5 The diverse faces of Panama: Panama City skyline

Panama partly results from the prominence of financial services within the economy, the wider service sector employing 64.4% of the labour force (CIA 2016). Panama's income is bolstered by the (recently expanded) Canal, logistics and banking, the Colon Free Trade Zone, insurance, shipping, and tourism; it has hopes that this will be further bolstered through the development of the Special Economic Zone of Panamá Pacífico. Despite its economic success and consistent economic growth, Panama has the second worst income distribution in Latin America. Development has been highly uneven; many of Panama's indigenous communities live in extreme poverty, while, as Rudolf (1999) documents, rural communities continue to eke out a precarious living through subsistence farming. Within this changing landscape, depopulation is on the rise, as families leave in search of economic opportunities (Fig. 2.6).

Census data for Panama produced by the Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censo lists the population as approximately 3.9 million, an estimated 1 million of which live in Panama City.[1] The latest census data (2010) lists the ethnic breakdown of the population as 65%

Fig. 2.6 The diverse faces of Panama: A view of the rural landscape of Chiriqui

Mestizo—the normative racial identity around which the nation-state is framed (Guerrón-Montero 2006)—12.3% indigenous Panamanians, 9.2% Afro-Panamanians, 6.8% Mulatto, and 6.7% white. Spanish is the official language, spoken by the vast majority of the population, although there are several indigenous languages; in the Bocas del Toro archipelago, the Afro-Panamanian population speak Guari-guari, a local form of Creole English, a legacy of Caribbean labour migrations to the area to work in the banana industry from the late nineteenth century onwards.[2] The country hosts a large Roman Catholic population at 85%, with the remaining 15% listed as Christian of other denominations (CIA 2016). Currently, 7.6% of the population are over 64 years old; 66.6% of the population live in urban areas (CIA 2016), with 59% of the population living in close proximity to the Canal.

Malaysia and Panama and Colonial Histories

Because of their geographical position, their histories of colonisation and exploitation, and diverse forms of migration, these countries are both ethnically and religiously diverse, have relatively healthy economies, are politically and economically outward facing, but are riven with inequalities and, especially in Malaysia, inter-ethnic competition. Furthermore, the elite position of some outside nationals (Westerners and Chinese in Malaysia, Americans in Panama) is deeply embedded even as it is overtly denied. There is thus an ongoing struggle for resources in which certain groups continually come out on top.

Malaya: From Colonisation to Independence, Consolidating Ethnic Tensions[3]

Prior to British rule, the Malay Archipelago (especially Penang, as we see further in the chapter), with its excellent strategic location in Southeast Asia, had long been a trading route for Indian, Arabic, and Chinese traders. Its turbulent past includes Portuguese and Dutch interference, long periods of territorial battles, and significant economic and political migrations. Malaya was thus already ethnically mixed when the British arrived, with Malay and Orang Asli indigenous peoples, and Chinese, Indian, and Arab settlers being the most significant populations (Noor and Leong 2013).

The British first arrived in what was then Malaya in the mid-seventeenth century and had fully colonised it by the end of the Second World War (Yusof 2010: 10). Prior to this, tin had been mined on a small scale by Malays, but as demand for the mineral grew worldwide, the British drew on European companies for support and opened vast new tin fields across different states. They also developed rubber production and, by the twentieth century, Malaysia had emerged as the world's leading producer of rubber and tin (Bowden 2013). Believing Malays to be somewhat unreliable and even lazy, and not wishing to settle the country themselves, the

British looked to China for cheap labour (Yusof 2010); thus began the mass immigration of Chinese as miners and rubber tappers. It has been argued that the British went so far as to keep Malays working in the paddy fields producing food and in other unwaged labour, not encouraging them to take on the other roles in tin and rubber production, as a deliberate divide and rule strategy (Noor and Leong 2013).

Over time, Chinese migrants drew on their secret-society networks (*quanxi*), or clan membership, and on support from British and European companies, to develop their own business interests in Malaya, including the exportation of rubber and tin (Aldrich 2007). The Chinese have thus been successful in Malaya economically, with British and European companies also reaping the benefits of Chinese entrepreneurialism and contacts. By the 1950s, European companies controlled 60% of tin output and 83% of rubber output, while the Chinese controlled 40% of tin and 14% of rubber (Yusof 2010). The Chinese settled in urban areas, such as Kuala Lumpur, that had begun life as tin settlements.

Indian migrants came to Malaya as rubber tappers in huge British and European plantations across the country, as demand grew for rubber by the electrical industry and then the motor car manufacturing industry. Large swathes of rainforest jungle were cleared from the 1890s onwards after botanists had discovered how well rubber trees would grow there, and these migrant workers were therefore located on these estates long distances from the urban and coastal areas (Yusof 2010: 12). Meanwhile, Malays tended to remain settled in villages working as farmers and fisherman, and, as time went by, close to coasts and rivers to aid paddy planting and fishing. Thus was established something of a physical and economic geography of the different ethnic groups that continue today to be the main ethnic groups in Malaysia (Teo 2013).

Arguably, British interests in Malaya (Penang especially) were initially only intended to achieve free trade and profit for Britain rather than being an act of settlement. British rule thus took shape through persuading Malay rulers to accept the advice of British advisers in political and economic affairs, while they retained self-government (Bowden 2013). In effect, the British 'Residents', as they became known, eventually gained control of almost all affairs of the state, while the 'rulers' were left to merely administer religious and cultural affairs (Yusof 2010: 13). Their

rule was not without tension, and assassinations and attempts on British officers had to be continually suppressed. Meanwhile, the three main ethnic groups remained segregated, with little interaction, and with unequal economic status and access to education (Noor and Leong 2013). 'By the late 1930s, ordinary Malays were less well off than the urban Chinese, and in danger of becoming a minority in their own homeland. The stage had been set for decades of racial tension' (Bowden 2013: 35). The Japanese occupation during the Second World War arguably increased inter-ethnic tension, especially with Malay police supporting the Japanese in fighting the mainly Chinese Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army, who in turn received support from the British (Noor and Leong 2013).

From Panamá to Panama: Cabildo to Country

Panama's history is instead one of Spanish colonisation and settlement. The land that makes up the contemporary nation-state of Panama was foundational to the Spanish colonial project. In 1510, the first permanent Spanish New World settlement was founded at Nombre de Díos; in 1513, Nuestra Señora la Antigua del Darién (in modern-day Colombia) became the first diocese on the New World mainland by papal decree. In search of gold, Vasco Nuñez Balboa led the 1513 expedition reaching the Pacific coast, leading to the (European) recognition of this Isthmus as the path between the Atlantic and the Pacific seas. In 1519, Panamá, the first colonial capital in the Americas, was established by Pedro Arias Dávila; it was granted a city by royal decree in 1521, becoming a new *cabildo*, Spanish colonial administrative council, the base from which expeditions to explore the rest of the Americas set off. Located in the suburbs of present-day Panama City, the ruins of Panamá—Panamá Viejo—are now a UNESCO world heritage site.

Panama persisted as an important location in the Spanish empire; it 'quickly became the crossroads and marketplace for Spain in the New World' (Harding 2006: 13). Silver and gold, purloined and mined throughout Spain's colonies, were carried overland along the *Camino Real* to be shipped to Spain; it also played a significant role in Spain's slave trade. These briefly stated points highlight Panama's location as a hub for

the Spanish colonial project, its significance to the political administration of Iberian America, and its economic prowess in the sixteenth century.

As Quijano and Wallerstein (1992) carefully document, the structure of Spanish colonialism corresponded to the social and cultural values, the political and economic structures of Spain at that time—the construction of Latin America central to the Spanish nation-building project (Mignolo 2011). Commerce was largely organised around trade with external markets—notably, in the case of Spain's colonies, the English Atlantic trade—the funds raised through this returned to the crown to support their military engagements; internal consumption was supplied not through the market but by the feudalist system in which indigenous populations were understood as free labour, working the lands and mines of Spanish seigneurial colonisers.

Panama broke away from Spain in 1821, forming part of the new republic of Gran Colombia; when this was dissolved in 1831, it became part of the Republic of Colombia. It eventually seceded from Colombia in 1903 to become an independent republic; as we discuss in more detail below, this moment marked a new chapter in Panama's history in which the United States played a prominent and contested role. Panama's colonial history is thus part of one which positioned Iberian America on a different footing from that of British America. In contrast to the settler-colonial states of North America that were founded on capitalism from the outset, their independence from Britain heralded a clear hegemonic social and political order.

> The Ibero-American colonies at the end of the eighteenth century had stagnating economies, with their social and political patterns in crisis … in the principle colonial centres, independence only occurred when the dominant seigniors decided they wished to get out from under the liberal regime of Spain at the beginning of the nineteenth century. (Quijano and Wallerstein 1992: 555)

Quijano and Wallerstein (1992) emphasise how these different histories and outcomes are central to understanding the geosocial construction of the Americas from the sixteenth century onwards, and their

resonance in understanding the contemporary geopolitics of the Americas in which Latin America is subordinate to the United States. This serves as a timely reminder of the histories of colonialism in this region and the work that a postcolonial lens might do in relation to understanding colonial continuities and legacies in the migrations that we explore in this book (see also Fechter and Walsh 2010; Farrer 2010).

Recognising the significance of Spanish colonialism, first to the project of Spanish nation-building and later to the construction of Europe through global capitalism (Quijano 2000, 2007; Mignolo 2000, 2003), lays the initial foundations for understanding how race and racial identity operate as forms of social classification in contemporary Panama. The residues of this relationship lie in the continued power of the white political elite of European origin—colloquially and derogatively referred to as *los rabiblancos* (white tails) (Leonard 2015)—who control social and economic life in Panama, and who seem to have escaped the lens of critical academic enquiry or indeed wider critique (Gott 2007; Seales Soley 2008), but who appear as a spectre in the everyday discourse of ordinary Panamanians.

Although brief, these accounts provide an initial indication of Malaysia's and Panama's position in relation to successive colonial and global geopolitics; such history is writ large in the racial politics of the two countries, but also in their government's contemporary ambitions to become a major player in the global economy (Malaysia) or 'the crossroads of the world' (Panama).

Independence for Malaysia; the United States in Panama

While Malaya was granted independence from Britain in 1957, Panama came increasingly under the United States' influence during the twentieth century. In Malaysia, the years following independence and up until recent years have been marred by the reproduction of inequalities, increased attempts to improve conditions for the majority population, and ongoing attempts to unite the country and control inter-ethnic tension. In both

countries, deeply embedded cultural and economic differences have continued to leave their traces. In Panama, the Canal has been central to understanding the United States' interference. As the United States took control of the zone, it also imported wholesale the racialized logics that were current there, leading to racial segregation and discrimination that leave their mark today.

Malaya to Malaysia: From War to Independence

Post war, an alliance of different ethnic political parties united to campaign for independence from the British (who had returned since the war), and this was granted in 1957, with the new government aiming to assimilate the diverse ethnic groups into a common identity, language, and educational system. However, the deeply embedded cultural and economic differences have continued to leave their traces in all subsequent interactions. Malay was chosen as the national language in order to symbolise the end of colonial rule but also to invoke patriotism, especially among the most disadvantaged. A more integrated education system was proposed, again with Malay as the common language of instruction. But the other groups felt marginalised, since the only common language was English and not Malay, and Chinese, Indian, and other groups became concerned they would lose their cultural identities and (for some) their economic dominance (Noor and Leong 2013). The first years of independence were marred by political unrest, the continuation of the communist insurgency, and, later, confrontations with Indonesia, the Philippines, and then Singapore. Malaysia was formed in 1963 when the former British colonies of Singapore and the East Malaysian states of Sabah and Sarawak on the northern coast of Borneo joined the Federation of Malayan states that had been formed in 1948. Singapore left Malaysia in 1965 (Bowden 2013).

Years of ethnic conflict eventually spilled over into violent race riots, shortly after a second general election in 1969. Given it was assumed the Chinese had economic dominance, the solution was seen to be to help lift the Malays and Bumiputera (sons of the soil) out of poverty through affirmative action.[4] The New Economic Policy (NEP 1979–1990) thus

involved 'state intervention in economic and social planning for a vulnerable new nation' (Yusof 2010: 16). The overall goal was to eradicate racial differences and inequalities, to enable Malays to gain a bigger share in the corporate sector, through enhanced educational and investment programmes. Arguably, however, the outcome has been that a few middle-class Malays have been able to use the policies for their own advancement at the cost of both the Chinese and Malay populations (Fong and Ishak 2014). Certainly, inequalities increased, but now along class as well as ethnic lines. The NEP was superseded by the National Development Policy (1991–2000) and the National Vision Policy (2020). Singh and Mukherjee (1993) argue that each of the earlier policies served to intensify inter-ethnic tensions and inequalities. Instead of helping enhance the status of all Malays, Noor and Leong (2013) suggest that a few elites have managed to secure advantage for themselves without enhancing the situation for all. Meanwhile, other ethnic groups have retained their economic and political power and influence despite efforts to even things out, yet they feel alienated in their own country (Wu 2015). However, as Wu (2015: 79) argues, 'such tension remains largely hidden under the ethnically harmonious façade, due to the strict control of speech by the government as a result of the bloody ethnic riot on 13 May, 1969'.

There have been several changes of government over the decades since independence—and the different groups have at times been granted more or less cultural expression and freedom, as multiculturalism rather than forced assimilation was variously embraced. One important change was the Education Act of 1995, which permitted private institutions to deliver their curriculums in English. The current Prime Minister (Malaysia's sixth), the Hon. Dato' Sri Mohd Najib Bin Tun Haji Abdul Razak (abbreviated to Najib Razak), is yet again attempting to unite the country through the 1Malaysia programme. This is a further attempt to control inter-ethnic tension, but the constant attempts, and failure, to improve the political and economic position of Malays undermines such overt efforts to achieve unity on the part of each subsequent government or national plan.

It becomes clear that, of all the disruptions, attacks, and interventions of the past centuries, British colonialism has left the most profound mark,

through geographical mapping of ethnic groups, through a hierarchy of ethnic diversity, through the persistent inequalities that serve to keep the Malays in a disadvantaged position and ethnic Chinese in a generally more advantaged position, and because of the continued success of Western countries mediated through the English language, even more recent attempts to secure economic success are directed towards the West rather than the East. This is not to deny involvement by other forces, such as support from China, but our focus here is on the colonialities of power that frame and shape the migrations we are specifically interested in for this book. British and other Westerners are migrating to a space where inequalities are rife, English is widely spoken (by the elite) and respected, Western investment is encouraged, and Westerners are viewed as bearers of wealth and prestige, contacts and language.

The United States and Panama

Panama's geopolitical history is further complicated by the United States' interventions and involvements in the region over the course of the twentieth century, as we outline below. From the explicitly colonial relations that characterised Latin America's relationship with Europe, to the political and economic interventions of the United States, colonial legacies undoubtedly run deep in contemporary Panamanian society. We focus in this section on the United States' interventions in and involvements with Panama as a way of exploring further the conditions inherent to colonialities of power in this small Central American state.

The history of the United States' involvement with Panamanian (national) interests is closely tied to the Canal. As Leonard (2015) reports, nineteenth-century interests in constructing a canal running from the Atlantic to the Pacific consolidated around the Isthmus when the Colombian government rejected the United States' proposal for a Nicaraguan route. This coincided with the declaration of independence by the elites of Panama province in 1903, who felt they were under-represented and discriminated against by the Colombians. The United States was quick to recognise the newly independent nation, supporting it through the deployment of warships to the Colombian coast. The coming together

of these external and internal interests resulted in the Hay–Bunau-Varilla treaty, which, in return for guaranteeing the independence of Panama, granted the United States 'in perpetuity the use, occupation, and control of a zone of land and land under the water for the construction, maintenance, operations, sanitation and protection of said canal' (United States Department of State 1938, cited in Leonard 2015: 303). The Canal Zone 'granted the North Americans all the rights, power, and authority as if it were sovereign over the Zone' (Leonard 2015: 65). In his evocatively entitled book *How Wall Street Created a Nation*, Diaz-Espino (2014) argues that the United States claimed the rights to build the Canal through financial speculation and fraud, spawning in the process US imperialism in Latin America.

The resulting Canal transits the country from north to south, allowing cargo and passengers to travel from the Atlantic to the Pacific in less than a day, bypassing other routes around the tip of South America. From the outset, Panamanians had contested the treaty rights on the grounds of sovereignty; in 1979, the Panama Canal Commission—a US-Panamanian agency—replaced the United States' governance of the Zone, with Panama eventually gaining full administration of the Canal in 1999.

Further US interventions in Panama include Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) involvement with Manuel Noriega, military general and de facto ruler of Panama from the early 1980s; Operation Just Cause (1989) that ended in the capture and detention of Noriega (and later his criminal prosecution and incarceration in the United States) evocatively captured in the final pages of John Le Carré's *Tailor of Panama*; and the role of US Corporations (such as the United Fruit Company) in mediating Panama's role in the international trade of fruit and other goods throughout the twentieth century. Since independence, Panama has used the US dollar as legal tender alongside the Balboa, the two currencies tied together with a fixed exchange rate of 1:1 since this time.

Although not a formal colony, such involvement by the United States, which Lindsay-Poland labels 'Emperors of the Jungle' (2003), bears a striking resemblance to that found in colonial cases that are writ large in how Panamanians understand the contemporary relationship towards the United States conceding that it was 'like a colony' (Theodossopoulos 2010). The contested history of US-Panama relations is reflected in rather

ambivalent attitudes of many Panamanians towards North Americans (Diaz-Espino 2001; Lindsay-Poland 2003; Bolivar Pedreschi 2004; Theodossopoulos 2010).

The 'Canal Zone', the area stretching five miles either side of the Panama Canal that was controlled and governed by the United States from 1904–1979, is a useful tool for thinking through contemporary relationships between Panama and the United States. In part, this rests on its position as perhaps the most notable example of the United States' imperial project (Donoghue 2014). Entry into and out of this area was highly regulated and monitored; the references to this space as a 'company town' (Sigler 2014) and as an 'overseas imperial frontier' (Donoghue 2014: 246) implicitly communicate the practices of exclusion and racial segregation that were characteristic of the Zone. As Donoghue documents in his recent history of the Canal Zone, *Borderland on the Isthmus* (2014), the 'Zonians', predominantly white citizens of the United States, enjoyed colonial lifestyles, the urban planning of the area resembling that of the American suburbs.

Racialised logics, current in the United States from the time they took control of the area, were imported wholesale, inscribed in practices of social segregation in relation to housing and education, but also at play in the racial discrimination of both Panamanian populations and non-white citizens of the United States living and working in the Zone (Taussig 1993; Frenkel 2002; Velásquez Runk 2012); as Donoghue (2014) recalls, fixed in time, these continued even after substantial changes in the United States brought about by the Civil Rights movement. The Zone was a place of exclusivity, insularity, and racial and national privilege, fostering a white supremacist vision of being American (Donoghue 2014). In Panama, race relations and claims to racial democracy are framed precisely through opposition to what is understood as the introduction of racial segregation and discrimination through the US occupation of the Canal Zone (Bourgois 1989; Guerrón-Montero 2006; Donoghue 2014). As Guerrón-Montero argues,

> Panama contrasts itself with other parts of Latin America having racial inequalities and injustices, which it claims do not exist in Panama because

> of its long history of miscegenation and harmonious relations. It attributes any inequalities and racism to the U.S. presence in Panama, which introduced segregation and discrimination in the Canal Zone (Bryce-Laporte 1998: 103, United Public Workers of America). This portrayal represents a nationalist stance against United States intervention. At the same time, Latinos are viewed as stereotypical or the "real" Panamanian. This results in favoring some groups and fostering racial differentiation. (2006: 210)

At one and the same time, the United States and the discourse of an imported hierarchy based on racial discrimination serve as useful foils in the Panamanian nation-building project, while the structure of the contemporary nation-state in Panama is haunted by precisely the racial processes of US imperialism that it critiques (Guerrón-Montero 2006), demonstrating how the legacies of such practices are more insidious.

The racialised framing of nationalist discourse was made particularly clear in the 2010 census, which explicitly documented those self-reporting as indigenous or of Afro-Antillean and African descent, but not other populations. This was part of the wider context of how Latin American nation-building was often accompanied by 'whitening' projects (Wade 1997), and the successive efforts of elites to consolidate national identity around whiteness (Horton 2006) provide the historical backdrop to contemporary claims of racial egalitarianism supported by liberal multiculturalism, and (invisible) racial inequalities which persist despite claims to the contrary (Bourgois 1989; Guerrón-Montero 2006; Horton 2006; Velásquez Runk 2012).

The relics of the historic relationship between the United States and Panama are evident in the contemporary economic and political relationship between the two countries. A free trade agreement between the two, which came into force in 2012, eliminates tariffs and other obstacles to the supply of US-produced goods, investors, and service providers in Panama. It is understandable, given the history of the relationship between the United States and Panama and particularly the imperialistic framing of this, that parallels would be drawn to the migration of US citizens to Panama in the present day.

Contemporary Malaysia and Panama

Both Panama and Malaysia are currently economically successful, given their geographical location and colonial pasts. Despite recent concerns about economic decline, Malaysia is globally considered a middle-income country, while in Panama, the Canal is hugely successful, and the Colon Free Trade Zone is the second largest free trade zone in the world after Hong Kong. As discussed in Chap. 3, both countries are turning towards tourism and FDI as secure ways of securing their economic futures, and in both cases, this faces West (but in Malaysia also Eastwards). Both countries have aspirations to be world leading. However, economic growth in both countries exists alongside significant disparities in income across the populace, and migrants are an important feature of the social and economic landscape.

Malaysia Present Day: Economy and Migration

Despite the internal strife outlined above, Malaysia has experienced decades of economic growth and is now considered a middle-income country (Hugo 2011). Arguably, this growth has been enabled by mass immigration of unskilled workers, especially since the 1970s, in construction, manufacturing, forestry, plantations, and household work, enabling Malaysia to produce competitively priced exports. The number of migrants is difficult to assess, but many estimate foreign workers make up about a quarter of the workforce, with almost as many illegal as legal (Hugo 2011; Noor and Leong 2013). Despite efforts to monitor and control immigration since the 1970s, the 1997 economic crisis in the area led to even more people leaving crisis-hit areas for work in a more successful and secure Malaysia. Malaysia is thus home to a large, very low-skilled immigrant minority.

Western migrants are also an important feature of the Malaysian landscape, but their numbers are comparatively small. It is very difficult to work out how many British live there. According to Sriskandarajah and Drew (2006), there were approximately 16,000 British in Malaysia in 2006, but this will include what we think of as business or corporate

expatriates and may well exclude those who use Malaysia as a second home. It will also exclude all those of mixed descent who settled in Malaysia long ago and now consider it their home. In such a context, defining who is of what nationality can be a complex issue.

> Malaysia is one of the top ten tourist destination in the world and among the leading countries (with China) in the Asia region. (Kumar et al. 2015: 1102)

There has been a concern in recent years that Malaysia is threatened with something of an economic decline, partly explained by the lack of training and skills of the Malay workforce, partly because the success brought by immigrant labour has led to a decline in investment in training and in technological innovation, while also blamed on emigration, especially of high-skilled groups (Hugo 2011). Tourism and inward investment have been viewed as part of the solution. Although it was slow to take off because in the past, arguably established through British interventions in the last century, the country had spent its energies exploiting its natural resources (Teo 2003), tourism is currently one of the largest sectors of the Malaysian economy, second only to manufacturing. Tourism was part of the Third Industrial Master Plan (2006–2020) and 2014 was declared Visit Malaysia year (Kumar et al. 2015). More recently, the government has developed policies to promote tourism and inward investment further in attempts to secure its longer-term future. These measures include FDI, tax incentives for foreigners, low-interest loans, and commitment to the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS; Kumar et al. 2015: 1102).

Malaysia also receives considerable numbers of skilled migrants from Western Europe, North America, and Australasia. Here we are talking about the professional and management-level transnationals we are familiar with in much literature on 'expatriates'—the global labour force which is highly specific in terms of knowledge, skills, and networks (Beaverstock 2002: 251). However, as Butler and Richardson have observed,

> these flows do not just concern the transnational elite that has been previously identified in numerous Western migrant studies, but a range of

> 'middling' transnationals who are employed in skilled or early-career professional positions. Moreover, based on the observations of this study, it was evident that many had arrived with predetermined motivations that ventured beyond career development requirements. These demands included desires to obtain lifestyles and opportunities for travel that had been imagined and developed back in their homelands. (Butler and Richardson 2013: 251)

These lifestyle migrations have been encouraged by various visas and policies and initiatives, as discussed further in Chaps. 3 and 4. These include increased privatisation, reductions in bureaucratic constraints for skilled migrants and investors, and strengthening the financial and capital markets through improved infrastructure (Teo 2003: 552).

Modern Malaysia, then, is an upper middle-income country, with aspirations to become a fully developed country and a major player in the global knowledge economy within a few years (Yusof 2010). Some interventions to achieve this status include the Multimedia Super Corridor, one of Prime Minister Mahathir's programmes, an attempt to build an Oriental Silicon Valley in central peninsular Malaysia (Dixon 2010). This is a special economic zone, and high-technology business district in Malaysia. It aims to both attract foreign investment and grow local capacity and skills (http://www.mscmalaysia.my/what_is_msc_malaysia). A further initiative, aiming to attract businesses (especially technology) to Malaysia, was Cyberjaya, a themed city located in the Multimedia Super Corridor that combines both working and living space. These technology centres represent massive investment, but debates around their likely success centre around the skills and education of the population. In the 1970s, the government had switched from English to Bahasa Malaysia as the medium of instruction in secondary schools (an interesting colonial trace that one Chinese man Karen met talked about with passion and regret). The Vision2020 programme aims to quadruple per capita income, double the size of the economy, and make Malaysia a fully developed industrialised country by 2020 (Dixon 2010: 508). However, as McKenzie (2007: 151) points out, 'Like most ex-colonies Malaysia has parliaments, law courts and universities modelled on European prototypes.'

Contemporary Economic Development in Panama: Inequalities in 'the Crossroads of the World'

Until the leaking of the Panama Papers, which reveal the extent to which Panama had been operating as a tax haven, the canal would have been the only thing people would be able to recall as they thought of Panama. A significant contributor to the country's economy—the strongest in Central America and the second strongest in Latin America—the canal is the source of a large amount of the country's FDI; its recent expansion means that it can now accommodate 79% of total global shipping traffic (Barreto 2017). However, the country's economic prosperity is also made possible by the Colon Free Trade Zone, the second largest free trade zone in the world after Hong Kong. Established in 1948, it offers the free movement of goods and complete tax exemption on imports and exports, specialising in the exporting of consumer goods throughout the Americas (Sigler 2014).

The election of Ricardo Martinelli—of *Partido Cambio Democratico*, a centre-right party—as president in 2009, rendered visible the ties between the political and economic markets in Panama, heralding success for a political party sponsored by a business conglomerate. During his leadership, Panama managed to avoid the contraction experienced by other Latin American economies at the time; with investment in major infrastructure projects, including the expansion of the Canal, hydropower development in Changuinola, and transportation infrastructure in Panama City, the economy boomed (Sullivan 2011). Such developments were part of an ambitious plan to accelerate economic growth and to make Panama a world-class logistics, transportation, and distribution hub—a veritable crossroads of the world, building on its geopolitical position. Tourism has also been on the rise. The current President Juan Carlos Varela—of *Partido Panameñista*—has maintained the economic growth of his predecessor.

Panama currently has a well-developed service sector, which accounts for 75% of its GDP (CIA 2016); this builds on a long economic history of offering intermediary services and the maritime trade linked to the Canal (Sigler 2014). It is a magnet for trade and investment underpinned by favourable taxation regimes and free trade, made visible in its latest

efforts to develop two Special Economic Zones, intended specifically to attract FDI in the absence of Panama's ability to develop its own domestic industries. Indeed, the rapidly changing skyline of Panama City is testament to the economic prosperity of this Central American country as an increasing number of foreign firms relocate their regional hubs to Panama.

Economic growth in Panama exists alongside significant disparities in income across the populace. It is also notable that the income distribution in Panama remains one of the highest in Latin America. Poverty currently stands at 26%, with a disproportionate impact on indigenous communities, many of whom live in poverty or extreme poverty. However, the routes of such inequality lie precisely in the structures that support its economic development.

> The Panamanian economy was bifurcated into a relatively fast-growing sector that received special privileges and paid few taxes, and a slow-growing sector whose property rights were precarious and subject to (at least on paper) heavy tax rates. (Sigler 2014: 7)

The recent establishment of the Special Economic Zone of Panamá Pacífico (Sigler 2014) can be considered as illustrative of this trend. This is marketed as 'a master-planned sustainable city', 'the largest mixed-use development in the world' (http://lrp.co.uk/panama/). Sigler (2014) documents the range of different incentives—including tax, labour regulations, and expedited visas—for corporations to set up their regional headquarters in the new development. And yet, at the same time, neighbouring areas suffer from high levels of poverty. This is unlikely to be alleviated by the development; indeed, while employment opportunities are one element of this development, as Maurer and Yu (2011) have observed of the Colon Free Trade Zone, such jobs are likely to be targeted to the highly skilled rather than the unskilled local population. Further, the juridical framework 'makes it explicit that Panamá Pacífico's economic objectives are to be enabled by the local government, and makes no reference to any net benefit to the municipality' (Sigler 2014: 9).

What becomes clear is that this foreign investment has not been matched with a concern for how such funds might be channelled into

the development of local economics and social development. Alongside the Special Economic Zones, the residential development of locations across the Isthmus for foreign investment—investments that are similar, framed by significant tax exemptions and other incentives as outlined in Chap. 4—is a further articulation of Panama's economic development model.

In his strategic plan, the current president, Juan Carlo Varela, outlines how future development must sustain its strong economic position within Latin America, but also put to work for the greater social benefit of the whole society minimising income inequalities (Gobierno de la República de Panamá 2014). It remains to be seen whether this will be achieved.

Conclusions

Here, then, are the conditions under which our migrants have moved to Malaysia or to Panama. Both countries are strategically located at the crossroads of important trade routes. Both have suffered centuries of external interference, direct and indirect colonisation, various forms of settlement by diverse ethnic groups, and clear exploitation by Western nations. Both are attracting foreign (often Western) investment, through property, free trade zones, and tourism (see Chap. 3). Both experience relative economic success, but in both cases this appears to be fragile. Both countries have a rich ethnic diversity, with Malaysia experiencing specific struggles in relation to continued inequalities along ethnic lines, while Panama appears to subjugate its indigenous minorities completely. Both countries are ambitious, with Panama aiming to be at the crossroads of the world while Malaysia has turned (to an extent) from natural resources to technology, health services, and tourism. In Malaysia the population is diverse and widespread while in Panama majority settlement is in the Canal zone.

These histories illustrate colonialities of power (Quijano 2000, 2007; Mignolo 2003, 2007), highlighting how colonialism and imperialism (alongside other aspects of the geopolitical histories) have long-term consequences that shape future actions and interactions. These geopolitical histories are examples of long-term interference, informing deep-seated

attitudes, shaping economies and inequalities. Even where colonialism was not direct, as with the United States and Panama, or not directly linked to settlement, as with the British in Malaysia, the unintended consequences are profound, and the emergent social, political, and economic structures will shape the future in ways that are not easy to resist (Elder-Vass 2011).

We now move on to describe in a little more detail the local sociopolitical and economic histories that shape the destinations, and the local geographies and environments where our research was located. This serves to intimate for the reader the meaningfulness of landscape for our migrants' imaginings and lived experiences, which we explore further in the second part of Chap. 3.

Spotlight on Penang

Penang: A Brief Introduction

Penang consists of Pulau Pinang (Penang Island) and Seberang Perai (on the mainland); however, it is common to simply refer to the Island as Penang (Bowden 2013). Although we also often spoke to lifestyle migrants in Kuala Lumpur, the capital of Malaysia, the research for this book mainly took place in Pulau Pinang (Penang from now on), because of its strategic importance in Malaysian (and British) history and thus its historical relevance for British lifestyle migration. Located on the northwest coast of Malaysia, in the Strait of Malacca, Penang has a tropical rainforest climate, is a thriving tourist destination and one of the most developed and economically important states in Malaysia. The capital, George Town, is a UNESCO world heritage site, famous for its mix of colonial architecture, military history, and the famous old colonial hotel, The Eastern and Oriental. Penang Island is ethnically heterogenous, due to its long history of trade, migration, and settlement. The ethnic composition in 2015 was 42% Malay, 42% Chinese, and 10% Indian (or Malaysian Indian). The remaining 6% of the population includes Europeans, Eurasians, and migrant workers from the surrounding areas

(personal interview with British Consul). Given the high percentage of Chinese on the Island and their important role in its history and governance, the Island has a distinct Chinese feel in terms of food, architecture, festivals, and religious buildings, but other cultures are also very evident, especially in the many religious festivals that take place throughout the year (Bowden 2013). Penang is the only Malaysian state that has consistently selected a Chinese chief minister (Teo 2003) (Fig. 2.7).

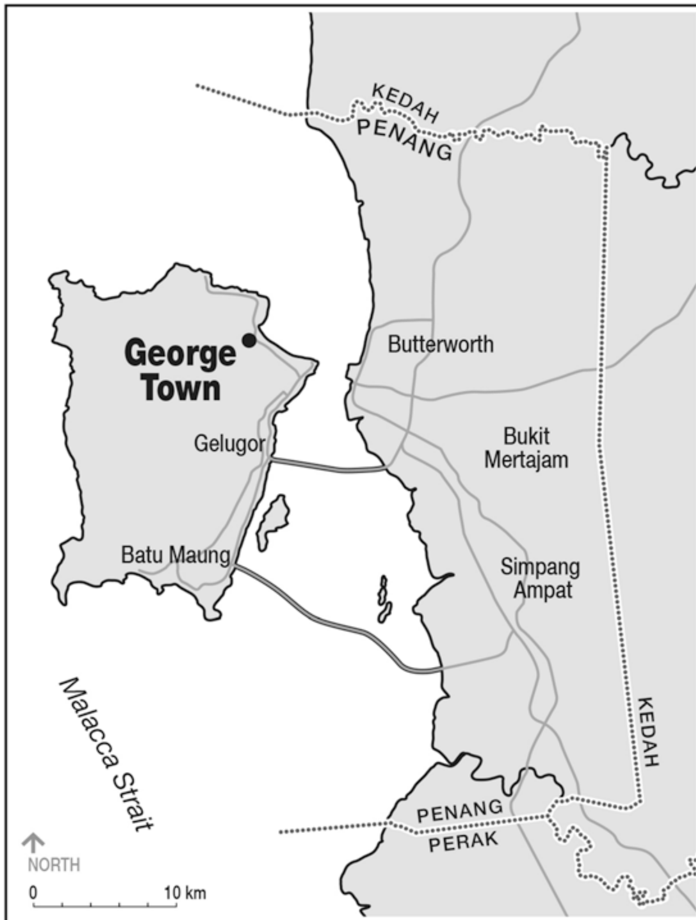

Fig. 2.7 Map of Penang

Penang and Colonisation

Penang played a special role in the colonisation of East Asia, being the first British settlement there when, in 1786, Captain Francis Light managed to persuade the Sultan of Kedah to lease the Island to the British East India Company in return for protection against Siamese and Thai aggression (Aldrich 2007). Light renamed it Prince of Wales Island and named George Town its capital (after the then reigning monarch, King George III). Penang was an important trade route for Europe, the Middle East, India, and China. In 1826, Penang, along with Malacca and Singapore, became part of the Straits Settlements under the British administration in India (Bowden 2013). British rule eventually spread across Malaya, especially after huge supplies of tin were discovered, followed by awareness of the potential for rubber manufacture (Aldrich 2007). The 'Federated Malay States' was established in 1896, with Kuala Lumpur as the main capital, while Penang remained the main commercial trade centre. Penang was heavily bombed by the Japanese in 1941, and the British soon withdrew from the Island, and eventually from Malaya. When they returned, after the war, 'the local impression of invincibility of the British had been irrevocably tainted and the end of British imperialism seemed imminent' (Lonely Planet 2016: 158).

> Penang quickly became a site of convergence, where migrant cultures interacted across ethnic lines every day, and where family genealogies connected the local to the global. (Walker 2012: 308)

Because of the opportunities it offered for commerce or refuge, Penang continued to attract diverse populations: Eurasians, Malays, Indians, Arabs, Chinese, Europeans, Armenians, Burmese, and Thais, as well as other peoples from the Malay Archipelago. As discussed above, the British did not intend to use Penang for settlement by British families, but as a location to enable trade and profit (Doran 1997). They employed Chinese and Indian migrants (and sometimes local Malays) as labourers in the building of the infrastructure, and for tin and rubber production. Thus, a hierarchical ethnic diversity continued to be a feature of life in Penang.

There was also rich ethnic diversity amongst those designated as Europeans, who included English, Scottish, and Irish, as well as Portuguese, French, Dutch, Armenian, German, Swiss, and Danish. Many of those included in the European community were of Eurasian or Asian descent; as Doran (1997: 29) reminds us, cultures are usually more heterogeneous than pure. These 'Europeans' were the product of long-distant migration histories:

> from Calcutta to Hong Kong, Paris to Sydney, and all the countries in between … These histories described life trajectories lived across vast geographical and temporal spaces, and at the intersection of multiple cultural worlds … threads of their ancestral journeys were deeply woven into their constructions of the past and, often, their everyday lives. (Walker 2012: 303)

The wealthier European families would employ European governesses, and Chinese, Indian, or Malay nannies (*amahs* or *ayahs*), with the more menial tasks usually reserved for the Asian servants (Doran 1997: 38). Furthermore, there was an established tradition of European settlers to liaise with and/or marry Asian women, and this continued with the British settlement, including Francis Light himself (Walker 2012). Sometimes the children of mixed parentage were accepted into the European community, sometimes they were not. Usually this depended on whether the father recognised them (Doran 1997). The ethnic diversity amongst Europeans and higher class Chinese in Malaysia, which has continued from the past to the present day, is richly illustrated in the fiction of Tan Twan Eng.

Penang lost its free-port status in 1969 and suffered something of a decline with high levels of unemployment, but it has since been successful in re-establishing itself as one of the largest electronics manufacturing centres in Asia and is now loosely known as the Silicon Valley of the East (Lonely Planet 2016). With almost 2 million inhabitants, it is the second most important urban centre in Malaysia, while approximately a quarter of its GDP comes from tourism (Teo 2003). Investment in tourism in Malaysia has emphasised the infrastructure—accommodation, transport, improvement of beaches, and development of cultural and heritage sites. Penang has been a beneficiary of such investment, and continues to benefit

from its excellent geographical location, its free industrial zones, and its industrial parks (Teo 2003). Penang is clearly targeted for growth through state-enabled neoliberal investment and development (Figs. 2.8 and 2.9).

Penang is celebrated for its food, especially renowned hawker stalls, and for shopping, with many large, gleaming (and expensive) shopping malls. The capital, George Town, is known as Malaysia's, if not Southeast Asia's, food capital, while Penang itself is a very diverse island, with some parts highly developed and others quite poor and rundown, and others still entirely undeveloped. The lifestyle migrants Karen conducted research with tended to live in George Town, Batu Ferringhi, or Tanjung Bungah. Batu Ferringhi (Portuguese for Foreigners' Rock), on the north of the island, is the most touristic resort, and most hotels are found here or in the strip that runs south from here to Tanjung Bungah. But step a few yards back from the developed coast and you will find yourself in slum areas and rainforest. The south and southwest of the island still have some very small, traditional villages. Karen

Fig. 2.8 A view of Penang, harwker stalls in the foreground against the backdrop of a skyscraper

Fig. 2.9 A view of the beach and the sea beyond in Penang

met two lifestyle migrants who lived in such areas. One had been a child in Malaysia in the 1950s and had returned there in later life. She lived a very modest lifestyle, living in a small village and working as a freelance journalist. Another was also a woman, in her 50s, who had moved to Malaysia from Sri Lanka, with her Sri Lankan partner. She also lived in a very modest house, which she called a shack, in a traditional village in the southwest of the island.

Spotlight on Boquete

Boquete: A Brief Introduction

Boquete is a district in the Chiriquí Province of Panama located in the highlands of western Panama. The capital of the district is officially named Bajo Boquete, but is more commonly referred to as Boquete. Most of the research

reported in this book was conducted in Boquete because of its recent popularity as a retirement destination, and the subsequent rise in the resident population of North Americans living in the area. Sixty miles from the border with Costa Rica, the town of Boquete is located at an elevation of 1200 metres, in the shadow of Volcán Barú, an active volcano and tallest mountain in Panama (3475 metres) (Fig. 2.10). The town was founded in 1911, and North American and Europeans settled there, drawn by the relatively temperate climate and fertile valleys which were suitable for agricultural production (Sánchez Pinzón 2001); the history of the town is memorialised on the walls of the local museum which features photos of the 'founding families' of the town. Many local landowners still have the North American and European surnames of their ancestors (McWatters 2009) and claim this heritage in conversation.

Boquete also has a long history of tourism both for Panamanian and international travellers; its cool climate offers an escape from the humid heat of the rest of Panama. Texan Joseph Wright opened the first hotel—offering a modest five bedrooms—in 1914, the site of the modern-day

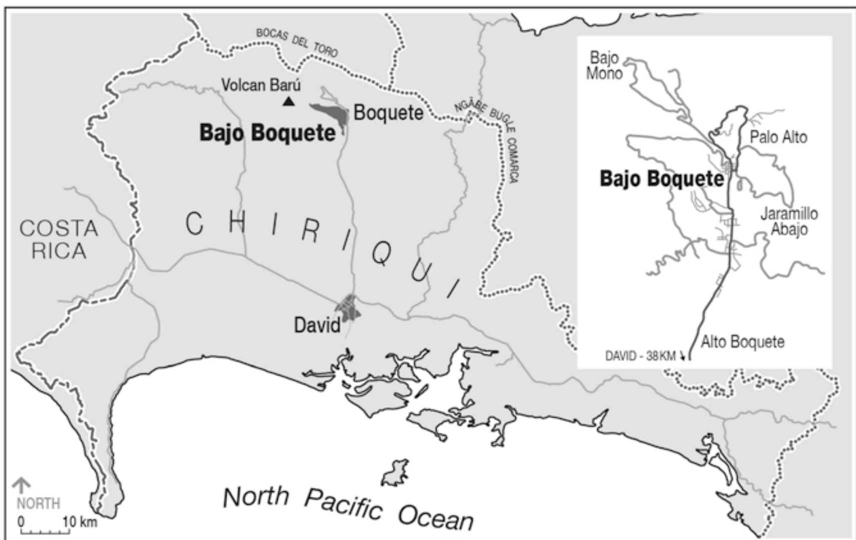

Fig. 2.10 Map of Boquete

Hotel Panamonte. According to its own account of history, the hotel has hosted notable foreign dignitaries and diplomats, including Teddy Roosevelt, Richard Nixon, and the Shah of Iran (Hotel Panamonte 2017). This history sets the stage for the contemporary transformation of Boquete through tourism, part of the wider economic transformation of Panama.

Boquete's population is now made up of middle-class landowning—mostly mestizo—Panamanians, other middle-/working-class Panamanians and indigenous workers (ordinarily Ngäbe-Buglé), as well as lifestyle migrants moving more recently to the area and Panamanian second-home owners.

Destination Boquete?

Boquete has produced coffee, one of Panama's remaining agricultural exports, alongside bananas, cocoa beans, and sugarcane since the early twentieth century, and labour on the vast plantations is supplied by migrant indigenous workers from the Ngäbe-Buglé *comarca*. More recently, coffee cultivation in the area has turned towards gourmet production, which requires less land and labour; much of the land that had been used for coffee production has been packaged up and sold on for residential development, marketed towards the residential tourism market (McWatters 2009) (Figs. 2.11 and 2.12).

This transformation of the landscape has been brought about by a range of factors including, *inter alia* a crisis in the global coffee market; long-term economic shifts within Panama towards a service-based economy and economic reform, with a related decline in agricultural production and its contribution to GDP—currently accounting for only 3% of GDP, with Panama a net importer of food; neoliberal land reform promoting land markets and the sale of previously public land (Horton 2006; Jackiewicz and Craine 2010; Velásquez Runk 2012); and opportunities offered by Panama's expanding tourism industry. Boquete has been rebranded as one of the top destinations in the world to retire to, lauded in the international lifestyle media on retirement and property investment; aided by favourable migration, residence and

Fig. 2.11 The road between Boquete and David, Volcan Baru in the background

taxation regimes, it is now home to many North Americans and Canadian lifestyle migrants, drawn to its significant residential tourism industry (McWatters 2009; Myers 2009). This is paired, to a lesser degree, with the development of an eco- and adventure tourism industry in the area.

The results of the recent Panamanian census (2010) make clear that there was a large increase in the population of the Boquete district between 2000 (the date of the last census) and 2010, an increase of 26%, from 16,943 to 21,370 inhabitants. Although the reasons for this increase could be attributed to greater rigour in the collection of census data—including, for example, greater knowledge of the location of indigenous people—and also accounts for the migration into the area of Panamanians (and others), it is undoubtedly the case that recent North American migration to the area also plays a role. Estimates based on this census data

Fig. 2.12 A rainbow over Boquete town, a common sight produced by the almost daily light drizzle in the area

list 3000 foreign residents living permanently in Boquete, most of whom are North American.

Closing thoughts on Boquete and Penang

We thus see that Penang and Boquete, as with Malaysia and Panama more generally, are shaped, among other things, by their colonial pasts, their specific geographical locations, their wider (including migration) histories, and the natural resources they are able to exploit. These wider historical and structural shifts shape actions of present-day agents, in the form of government agents, marketing literature, and the daily practices of host and migrant populations.

We will now, in Chap. 3, return to some of the themes in the present chapter, trying to understand how, in the context of a neoliberal present, the overt attracting of migrants to these destinations shapes the way they imagine and live their lives after migration. Then, in Chap. 4, we will turn to a discussion of the practices through which migration of Westerners to Malaysia and Panama is governed as a way of examining the more proximate and relevant structures of constraint and opportunity that frame lifestyle migration to these destinations.

Notes

1. Unless otherwise stated, all statstics presented below are extracted from the report XI Censo de Población y VII de Vivienda, 2010: Resultados Finales, Volumen V: Migración y Fecundidad (http://www.contraloria.gob.pa/inec).
2. We are using the names Malaya and Malaysia to reflect the name that was used during the time period we are referring to.
3. Malays and the many other diverse indigenous groups are collectively known as Bumiputera (sons of the soil) as a way of uniting them and distinguishing them from other ethnic groups and is used to 'conjure notions of a collective, indigenous Malaysian category'. In fact, the label encompasses such diversity that it is far from an ethnically homogenous category (Butler et al. 2014: 200).
4. Bocas Town was home to the headquarters of the United Fruit Company from 1899 onwards, replacing the smaller Snyder Brothers Banana Company (Stephens 2008). This led to the planting of vast banana plantations across the province of Bocas del Toro that are now part of the Chiquita Brands International portfolio.

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3

Residential Tourism and Economic Development: Imagineering Boquete and Penang

This chapter advances understandings of the relationship between lifestyle migration and residential tourism. It takes as its starting point the need to complement the bottom-up perspective common to lifestyle migration research with the top-down approach that the scholarship on residential tourism offers. As we argue, bringing residential tourism into conversation with lifestyle migration offers insights into some of the structures that promote, inform, and shape this social phenomenon.

Our focus here is on understanding residential tourism as a state-led process of encouraging foreign residential investment and in laying bare the practices that support this. We highlight the ways that infrastructures are developed by countries to support a property market that specifically targets investment by foreign nationals in second-home ownership or more permanent relocation. While this characterisation of the market for us emerges through tourism scholarship, we acknowledge here briefly the work ongoing in cognate fields including critical geography and amenity migration research. Critical geography is attentive in particular to the power inequities rendered by such (foreign) investments. It highlights the geopolitics of global real estate investment (see, for example, Rogers 2017), and the transnational and translocal drivers of gentrification in

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the Global South (see, for example, Sigler and Wachsmuth 2015; Hayes 2018; see also Lees et al. 2016). Global amenity migration research takes as its starting point how migration intersects with rural development and transformation (Gosnell and Abrams 2009), highlighting how the pursuit of (environmental) amenities by migrants impacts local communities, cultures, and economies (see, for example, Moss 2006; Moss and Glorioso 2014).

Notwithstanding the significance of foreign investment in exacerbating social and spatial inequality through housing, our ambition here is to advance ongoing discussions of residential tourism to consider the factors that make such markets in Malaysia and Panama successful. Within this, we make explicit residential tourism as a part of economic development strategies, revealing residential tourism as one way that governments woo and court FDI. In this way, we move beyond economic explanations of such markets, and into considerations of imagineering and place-making; simply put, how certain representations and understandings of destinations are constructed and peddled within such markets. Malaysia and Panama are cases in point, heavily promoted as areas of residential property investment, particularly targeted at attracting foreign owners. We make clear what gets imagined and marketed, as well as what these exclude, and demonstrate the life of imaginings beyond the marketing, co-opted, adapted, and amended by those settling in these destinations.

This chapter begins by examining the rise of residential tourism as a development tool through a focus on Spain as the paradigmatic example. We highlight residential tourism as the structural shaping and reshaping of destinations and the policy of 'residential tourism' as a way of attracting foreign income, and critically discuss the impacts of residential tourism as a process in postcolonial contexts.

About Residential Tourism

In this section, we examine the concept and practice known as residential tourism. Residential tourism has become a widespread development tool adapted from the Spanish model (sometimes explicitly) for

destinations worldwide. The term has served as an umbrella concept for understandings of second-home ownership, long-term tourism, and individual investment linked to forms of migration and mobility. However, we adopt a more precise framing of the concept here that focuses on practices of attracting investment, shaping places, and enabling property development. In this way, we disentangle residential tourism from the more individualised practices that lifestyle migration describes, with its focus on individual homeowners and migrants. Such conceptual clarity allows for a productive conversation about the relationship between these practices.

Spain, the Paradigmatic Case of Residential Tourism

Residential tourism is most commonly used, in an academic context, by Spanish academics as referring to second-home tourism involving the articulation of migration and tourism; it is a practice that, as Huete and Mantecón (2011: 161) highlight, 'has left a more profound mark' (see also O'Reilly 2003). Possibly the first use of the phrase was by Francisco Jurdao (1990) in his book *Espana en Venta* (Spain for Sale), a sociological but polemical critique of the impact of tourism on the small town of Mijas in the province of Malaga, in the Costa del Sol. Jurdao was concerned about the loss of agricultural land and the undermining of village life occurring as a result of massive building projects where tourist properties and second homes were constructed specifically for the older North European market. This tone of critique has permeated most work on the topic that has since been published in Spanish (Aledo 2005; Mantecon 2008; Mazon 2006) and can be associated with a top-down analysis that focuses more on wider socio-structural shifts than on daily practices of agents. Spain, then, has emerged as the paradigmatic case of residential tourism.[1]

With mass tourism—which had been a major source of income to their economy post-dictatorship—in decline in the 1990s, residential tourism was established as an alternative tool of economic development and essential to Spain's modernisation. This was essentially a way of encouraging a mode of tourism that was less affected by the seasons and

which would bring greater income to the Spanish economy through investment in property, longer periods of residence in Spain, and the local spending that that would entail (O'Reilly 2000). The Spanish tourist board pioneered the use of tourism-marketing techniques to promote this, attracting people to rural areas and to the history and culture of Spain. It is significant that the consumers of residential tourism were imagined as tourists, spending only part of the year in Spain, rather than migrants. As has been documented, the uptake of the property developed in this way includes second-home owners, but also North European and especially British populations making Spain their home year round (Huete et al. 2013). We could go so far as to say Spain's entire modernisation process in recent decades has been massively boosted by what has become known in Spain as residential tourism (Mantecón 2010).

Since the Spanish financial crisis that started in 2008, residential tourism has taken something of a tumble. Unsustainable property-development-led economic growth in Spain—including residential tourism development—has been widely recognised as a significant factor in its sovereign debt crisis, leading to the depreciation in the value of homes. This incurred massive job losses, especially in construction and real estate, widespread rises in unemployment, a property market crash that is taking years to recover, profound local effects, especially in small towns dependent on tourism, as well as devastating social and economic problems. Unmortgageable properties and repossessions are thus a feature of the housing landscape that affects foreign nationals and Spanish homeowners alike, along with other locals living and working in these areas.

> When we talk about the Spanish economic crisis, we are dealing with a drastic change … the unemployment rate went from 8.5% in the first quarter of 2007 to 27.2% in the first quarter of 2013, and 2.5 million jobs were destroyed during that period. Almost half of them were jobs in the construction sector and the real estate market. A large number of towns, particularly on the Mediterranean region, had based their economic development on the large-scale construction of second homes, which led to many local economies being dependent on real estate markets characterised by speculation and hyperinflation: property costs increased by 207% between 1995 and 2008. Prices reached their highest point in 2008, just

> when the real estate sector collapsed, and subsequently the destruction of jobs caused by the chain reactions in the whole business sector could not be stopped. (Huete et al. 2013: 337)

This chain reaction includes a downturn in tourism, empty properties, and although the pattern is very variable (and difficult to decipher for a number of reasons), statistically it can be argued that many, especially working-age, migrants have returned home (see Huete et al. 2013).

Residential tourism in Spain has thus not been an unqualified good. It has left severe and long-lasting impact: 'excessive exploitation of the region's scarce water resources, and the destruction of natural areas of immense value due to the aggressive process of urbanization of the territory' (Huete and Mantecón 2012: 162), as well as profound sociodemographic changes that are often the result of the lack of understanding of the complexity of the phenomenon (ibid. 2012). In other words, because it has not been fully understood, in terms of who moves, why, for how long, with what ambitions, expectations, and resources, its consequences had not been fully anticipated either.[2]

Despite its downfall in Spain, the development of markets in residential tourism has been adapted as a development tool in diverse settings, including Panama, Malaysia, Mauritius, Morocco, Egypt, and elsewhere. As we outline in the next section, its uptake in these settings is closely linked to economic development, considered as a form of FDI within the restructuring of national economies.

Residential Tourism as Economic Development

Although briefly stated, Janoschka and Haas (2014) make clear that residential tourism should be understood as a state-led strategy for economic development. Sigler and Wachsmuth (2015) render this mechanism particularly visible in their account of the regeneration of Casco Antiguo, a historic neighbourhood in Panama City. They demonstrate how this urban transformation was made possible by 'leisure-driven migration to spatially distant neighbourhood reinvestment schemes that existing local demand may not have allowed for' (2015: 707)—these foreign incomers

settling and investing in the neighbourhood. Residential tourism thus interacts with wider transnational forces resulting not only in the production of a market but also in its success. In turn, nation-states underpin this strategy through policy and legislation that might include, among others, land reform (particularly the zoning of land for residential tourism development), legislating for the foreign ownership of land.

Concerned with issues of social justice and inequality, an increasing number of studies examine the impacts of residential tourism. Janoschka and Haas (2014: 6), for example, draw attention to the 'consequences that cities, villages, landscapes and places suffer if an important part of their constructed environment is empty during broader parts of the year'. Sigler and Wachsmuth (2015) argue that the transformation of Casco Antiguo is a form of transnational gentrification, focusing therefore on the mechanisms that bring about the displacement of long-term residents. Escher and Petermann (2014) look at the displacement, gentrification, and sexual exploitation that result from a 'massive influx' of foreign residents into Marrakesh. Bastos (2014: 48), who works with the Mezcala community on the Chapala Lakeshore, examines 'their efforts to maintain the integrity of their territory' in the face of diverse and widespread forms of second-home purchase and retirement migration through what he terms a process of real estate 'accumulation by dispossession' (drawing on Harvey 2005). Lipkina and Michael Hall (2013) studied Russian second homeowners in Finland, with a special focus on the impact on local residents. Hayes (2018) highlights how lifestyle migration to Cuenca, Ecuador, is caught up in the UNESCO-ification of the city, while also further entrenching the class and racialised inequalities of this social landscape. Finally, Sin Yee (2017) examines the roles of real estate developers and their agents in facilitating middle-class investor migration in Asia, including Malaysia.

As this literature makes clear, while academic commentators and indeed the media have highlighted the limitations of this model of development—the unintended consequences, and financial perils for individuals and for local state actors—it has been lauded as a successful model and is being rolled out in many nation-states. However, it is important to highlight that the direction of travel for countries pursuing this strategy is not always positive. Indeed, over the years, we have witnessed the

limited success of some such strategies. For example, in the mid-2000s, the Egyptian tourist board promoted Egypt for the purposes of residential tourism. Their marketing strategy drew on similar tropes to those used elsewhere, notably the rural idyll, which always seemed to us at odds with the desert landscape with which the country is ordinarily associated. Perhaps as a consequence of this, paired with the political instability of the region, Egypt never really took off as a destination for this form of investment in the way that other countries did.

As we outline in more detail later in the chapter, the explicit pursuit of migrant capital through property investment is embraced by nation-states as a channel for FDI. It intersects with global markets in tourism, lifestyle, and retirement. Such state-led development strategies, and the marketing thereof, are a significant feature of the structures that support and facilitate lifestyle migration.

Residential Tourism, FDI, and the Individualisation of Risk

While FDI most often refers to investments by businesses and corporations based in one country, in enterprises operated out of another economy, the residential tourism market represents a more individualised form of FDI. Simply put, property development through residential tourism, or what Sin Yee (2017) refers to as 'property tourism', most often relies on individual investment in off-plan housing, either within areas rezoned for residential development or on individual plots, or renovation/refurbishment projects. As we discuss later, the opportunities such zoning opens up are promoted exclusively to foreign investors. Significantly, the upfront investment by individual households often provides the cash flow for property development to take place. In consequence, we see individual households becoming the primary source of (property) development finance, thus attracting FDI (Barrantes-Reynolds 2011; van Noorloos 2011a, b). This model of investment reduces risk to financial institutions, but increases the risk to individual households (and, in turn, to neighbourhoods, communities, and environment). It also inflates the cost of property, which can create patterns of displacement

and marginalisation that resemble gentrification (Torres and Momsen 2005; McWatters 2009; Gómez et al. 2009; Prado 2012).

This mechanism of housing development and its link to national economic development through FDI, with foreign nationals at the level of the household financing property development (rather than state- or financial institutions), is notable. Of the two cases examined in this book, this model of investment is particularly prominent in Panama, linked closely, as we laid out in the previous chapter, to an economic strategy focused not on the development of domestic industries but on attracting trade and investment. With many countries involved in courting FDI through such mechanisms, there is a competitive arena for such investments, an international and global market in international property investment (see also Rogers and Koh 2017). MIPIM (*Le marché international des professionels de l'immobilier*) might be the most high-profile event promoting this market, but less widely known and commented on is the vast industry that has grown up around international property investment including the myriad smaller property fairs, magazines, investment seminars and workshops, and broadcast media (see also David et al. 2015; Hayes 2015). Notably, it is precisely through this industry—targeted at the world's middle classes rather than at the super-rich—that both Malaysia and Panama have been promoted. In other words, lifestyle migration and residential tourism in these sites are situated in the broader global market of international (residential) property investment.

It is also clear that this market is located in a broader context within which changing agendas drive the development of new industries. One example of this is healthcare. As Toyota and Xiang (2012) demonstrate in their exploration of the emerging 'retirement industry' in Southeast Asia, such agendas interplay with wider social structures (see Chap. 1) such as transnational forces where the needs of an increasing elderly population in Japan are paired with the development and promotion of a healthcare industry in Malaysia, Thailand, the Philippines, and Indonesia to produce diverse new structures framing migrations and mobility to these destinations (see also Chap. 8).

What we want to make clear in laying this out is that the international property investment market is more complex and far reaching than the

simple equation that sees the global elite shoring up their capital by investing in 'secure' property markets, creating 'buy to leave' markets, global cities such as London deserted, dark and empty as night falls, left by their owners. The global middle classes, the prime neoliberal entrepreneurial subject, are courted and rewarded, their needs and desires for a better way of life met, through an industry that has been set up to pursue international and individual investment capital. As Sin Yee (2017: 26) has noted for Asian destinations (including Malaysia), 'property tourism' and its intermediaries 'facilitate diverse and multiply overlapped migration mobilities amongst investor-migrants (e.g. tourism, temporary, transnational, retirement)', and not only of Westerners.

Promoting Malaysia and Panama as 'the World's Best Places to Retire'

How residential tourism markets function is not simply a question of economics; how a place is imagined both by those promoting a destination and by (future) consumers is significant in making sense of why some locations are selected over others and why some destinations reach the heady heights of 'The World's Best Places', while others flounder and or disappear into obscurity (as the case of Egypt might suggest). Selling and buying destinations and the lifestyle available there, such as can be seen in the cases of Malaysia and Panama, is a notable dimension of international property investment, this time paired with migration, that is worthy of examination. Significant work goes into making investments of this type attractive in a highly competitive market where states vie for international capital. Putting places on the global investment map involves the careful curation of imaginings about the lives available there, making living abroad imaginable and attractive. As authors including Ono (2014), David et al. (2015), and Hayes (2015) stress, such promotion is facilitated by a global lifestyle industry. While research has focused on the role of property agents in promoting specific destinations (see, for example, Hoggart and Buller 1994; Akerlund 2012, 2013; Eimermann 2015), we focus in particular on the work of international lifestyle media,

and other media and fora within the industry, before turning to consider specific ways in which Malaysia and Panama are imagined.

Lifestyle Media

At the time of writing in 2016, Panama and Malaysia are listed in the top five destinations to retire to in *International Living*'s Annual Global Retirement Index, 'the ultimate resource for helping you find your ideal retirement haven' (International Living 2016a: n.p.). Both Malaysia and Panama have regularly featured in this publication, which started life 35 years ago as a newsletter focused on a simple message, 'You can live better, for less, overseas' (International Living 2016b). Today, it offers a glossy monthly magazine, a regularly updated website, an e-letter, conferences and seminars, and an annual research report, all aimed at equipping its readership to make educated decisions about where best to relocate to. *International Living* is just one of many publications that propound the virtues of moving abroad, providing tips on an improved (retirement) lifestyle paired with the optimisation of financial resources. This exists alongside glossy real estate magazines (such as *Panama Real Estate*), their pages of real estate listings occasionally interspersed with 'how to' articles and up-to-date advice on visa regulations. The narrative writ large through the pages of such publications is underscored by what Hayes (2014) has referred to as geographic arbitrage, where the resources accumulated in high-cost labour countries are used to facilitate lifestyles elsewhere, often in places where the labour market operates at lower cost. The onus is placed on the individual (retiree) to pursue ways of improving their retirement, with increasing insecurity over pensions and the cost of healthcare remaining an invisible context. Living abroad, at least as these publications present it, becomes a way of enhancing or enriching quality of life at a lower cost.

Such lifestyle media then foreground the neoliberal (migrant) subject and provide advice on the locations that would offer such opportunities. This is clear in the way they avoid framing these movements as migration. They appeal instead to the idea of living or retiring abroad, and the contributors who 'inform' the Index and whose stories feature in each

publication are described as 'expats'. This is undoubtedly a deliberate strategy that creates distance between the figure of the migrant and the (Western) retirees whose imaginations they seek to ignite. However, as we have made clear in Chap. 1, such distinctions go right to the heart of the political economy of migration, elevating white, relatively affluent populations to a position where they are considered as outside the migration paradigm, and distorting contemporary understandings of migration. This pairing of (financial) investment and lifestyle as a discourse in support of migration—albeit for those relatively privileged within global power structures—is an addendum that calls into question taken-for-granted understandings of the relationship between migration and economics, both as this is understood in relation to individual migrants and as this is embedded in political discourse about migration and in migration (and tourism) governance structures. Further, rather than benign forces, such lifestyle media promoting geographic arbitrage are caught up in the wider political economy of migration, part of a nexus that also includes property developers and government ministries. And yet, this is a story that is not so readily on view. What we present here develops understandings of the structural conditions that support lifestyle migration to Malaysia and Panama, and highlights how in the contemporary world such migrants are wooed, courted, and actively recruited.

Lifestyle Intermediaries

Such international lifestyle media exists alongside other media which, while it does not explicitly market destinations and the lives there, contributes to overall imaginings. We broadly characterise these here as lifestyle intermediaries, alongside real estate agents and other more obvious lifestyle brokers. Such intermediaries include travel writing, guide books, information leaflets, blogs about living abroad, Internet fora, and location-specific English language media. Both Ono (2014) and Etrillard (2014) have considered the work of travel writing in promoting lifestyle migration; the evocative title of Etrillard's piece 'This book will trigger dreams' clearly conveys the sentiments that inspire Ono's statement that travel writing 'plays an important role in the promotion and diffusion of

the idea of long-stay tourism' (2014: 8). Location-specific publications such as *The Expat Magazine* ('provides information about all things Malaysian to expat residents'), *The Panama Post* ('Revealing Panama to the world'), the *MM2H* magazine (run by an Englishman who has lived in Malaysia for over 25 years) also feed into the ways that these locations as constructed as places to live.

Although they are too numerous to list, specialist 'expat' Internet fora and Facebook pages also provide material on retiring or moving to Malaysia and Panama. And we can't ignore websites like Trip Advisor, which blur tourism and migration in their promotion of destinations. However, it is also clear that individual blog authors are increasingly important; for example, in Malaysia Tropical Expat (https://tropicalexpat.wordpress.com), 'A blog about living in and travelling from tropical Penang' was widely circulated, while in Boquete, Richard Detrich's (https://richarddetrich.com) blog about living in Panama and Boquete Guide (since defunct) similarly provided advice. Through her work with North Americans in Mexico, Bantman-Masum (2015) highlights that such bloggers become 'migration brokers', central to the creation of a community of practice that links migrants to the businesses and professionals that can support them, a point that we take up further in Chap. 7.

Our purpose here is to highlight that such media encourages future migrants-cum-investors to follow suit, by playing

> a fundamental role in creating the perception of lifestyle migration … (presenting) stylized forms of mobility … discursive constructions of lifestyle mobilities are in turn controlled and constructed by pioneer migrants who have their real, personal experiences published and shared via social media. (Ono 2014: 8)

The practice of these lifestyle intermediaries and other media commentators thus clearly lead to the creation of new emergent structures out of the practice of lifestyle migration. We now turn specifically to the consideration of how such lifestyle media and intermediaries promote Malaysia and Panama.

Imagineering Panama and Malaysia

In this final section we focus on the tropes and themes that are used in the promotion of Panama and Malaysia for residential tourism. We start with Malaysia, demonstrating the active role the government takes in promoting Malaysia. This case also provides the opportunity to explore how the imagineering used to attract people to the Malaysia my second home (MM2H) visa draws from that used in the case of tourism. We also demonstrate how migrant testimonials co-opt such imagineering, as is clear in the promotion of Malaysia and Penang in particular. We then move onto Panama, tracking through the different intermediaries involved in the promotion of 'Destination Panama'. In focusing on the imaginings that circulate about Panama and Boquete in particular, we consider how these are taken up by migrants themselves, both co-opted and adapted in their own promotion of the destinations, its attributes and amenities, and their expertise of how to live in Boquete.

Selling Malaysia

In Malaysia, the government plays an active role in curating the country as a destination for property investment. This is paired with their promotion of the MM2H visa, a long-stay visa tied to investment in residential property, which we discuss in more detail in Chap. 4. What we want to draw attention to here is the way that the government, through its portal promoting MM2H, discursively constructs and curates particular imaginings of the country to these would-be investors.

The official portal for MM2H portrays Malaysia as wealthy, multicultural, green, safe, exotic, and offering great local and international cuisine. The first thing the site mentions is that this special visa is sponsored by the government—so you know you would be welcome. The website is in English. Their four banner images are of an Indian couple in a shopping mall, a Western family on a pristine beach, a Muslim couple in an exotic bazaar, and happy locals working amongst rolling green hills. Images are of high-end properties, in gleaming streets, opera, universities, shopping malls, as well as jungle, mountains, and beaches. Such images

depict a very modern Western-facing paradise with a rich history, environment, and culture.

The portal includes testimonial videos from other 'expats', a way of sharing people's personal experience with would-be migrants; such testimonies feed into the discursive construction of the lives available in Malaysia in much the same way as Ono (2014) highlights in the case of blogs. Despite the diversity of nationalities who actually take up the visa (see Chap. 4), three of the four names of those giving testimonials are Western names. The testimonials mention climate, muticulturalism, friendliness, peace and stability, different architectural styles, natural beauty and rich environment, the ability to buy property, and the fact English is widely spoken. Several more testimonials are available on YouTube, via a link from the government website.

The promotion of Malaysia for retirement or second-home ownership is not entirely distinct from its promotion for tourism; indeed, MM2H is promoted as a type of tourism. The themes briefly outlined in the opening paragraph of this section echo those used to encourage tourism to the area. As in other forms of tourism, these are consciously 'imagineered' to sell particular locations:

> city marketing or selling the city has become part of the urban competitiveness strategy. Place marketing which includes physical development as well as the promotion of place image uses imagineering concepts to construct the competitive image. (Teo 2003: 546)

As Philo and Kearns find, 'the conscious and deliberate manipulation of culture' in the selling of places aims at a target which includes the 'relatively well-off, the up-market tourists and organizers of conferences and other money-spinners' (1993: 3), indicating a heavy dose of profit motive behind the imagineering process. To cater to such a wide appeal, places are reduced to a 'few simple recognizable and marketable characteristics' (Ashworth and Tunbridge 1990: 54).

Malaysia has a strong heritage tourism (see Butler et al. 2014), with a rich and diverse religious, ethnic, and architectural heritage as a result of long-term settlement of different communities. Ono (2014) refers to this as 'commercializing Malaysia's cultural diversity'. But this emphasis on

cultural heterogeneity is downplayed because the country is working hard to achieve a sense of collective identity. Instead multiculturalism is celebrated but glossed over in terms of specific detail. 'Malaysia … appears to have identified the importance and strengths of utilising its myriad cultures and ethnic groups to support and further develop a collective identity to attract tourists' (Butler et al. 2014: 202) (Figs. 3.1 and 3.2).

Imagineering Penang

Despite lots of competition in the region, tourism remains buoyant in Penang. Infrastructure and travel routes established over centuries form a bedrock for current visitors and long-stay migrants. Here tourism promotes Penang as the gateway to peninsular Malaysia; for business travel;

Fig. 3.1 The luxurious entrance to a hotel where Karen met one couple for lunch

Fig. 3.2 A beach front for tourists, accessed via an apartment block

for domestic and international tourism; as a centre for arts, culture and education; and for health and medical benefits (Teo 2003: 555).

'While sun and sea, culture and heritage have always been part of Penang's attractiveness … the Imagineering of Penang involves the development of a few core products' (Teo 2003: 555). Such products include nature-based products such as the botanical gardens, conservation areas, and hiking trails; individual heritage attractions including a George Town heritage trail, churches, mosques, and temples, which also serve to promote Penang's multiculturalism (see Fig. 3.3); historical and cultural areas such as Little India and Chinatown; agro-tourism that draws attention to kampong (village) life, cottage industries, and exotic produce; the Swettenham Pier, with its luxury liners and wide berths; and the Chew Jetty, which started life as a home on stilts on the shores for the Chew Clan community (Chinese migrants who worked on the port

Fig. 3.3 A photo sent by Sally, who took part in Karen's research, to illustrate 'multicultural Penang'

in the nineteenth century) and is now an example of living heritage, where inhabitants and tourists co-mingle.

In Penang, 'Festivals and mega events occupy the whole calendar year', and these are in addition to the 'normal local festivals such as Deepavali; Lunar New Year; Christmas; and Hari Raya Puasa' (Teo 2003: 556). Karen witnessed a few of these during fieldwork, and was told excitedly about others by those she met. As Teo (2003) says, these contribute to a year-round carnival-like atmosphere in Penang. Penang is also celebrated for its cuisine, as we discussed in Chap. 2, and more recently, George Town has become renowned for the street art of Lithuanian artist Ernest Zacharevic (Fig. 3.4).

The way that Penang is imagineered has been co-opted in the way that it is presented by those migrants who live there. Numerous of our interlocutors, discussions on online forums, and personal web blogs celebrate Penang's multiculturalism, food, tropical climate, festivals, and friendliness, contributing in their way to the social construction of a space for

Fig. 3.4 Karen on Chew Jetty, standing beside an example of the street art of Lithuanian artist Ernest Zacharevic

consumption. Testimonials from those who had settled there similarly convey this framing of Penang and the celebration of its exoticism and excitement. For example, the following excerpt of an interview with an American expatriate living in Malaysia was published in *Expats Arrivals* (http://www.expatarrivals.com/article/interview-with-michele-chan-thomson-an-american-expat-living-in-malaysia; last accessed June 2016):

> Penang is exotic enough to be exciting but not so exotic that I had trouble adjusting to life here. As a former British colony, many locals speak English in addition to their native tongue, so language has not been a problem. I absolutely love the centuries-old mix of British, Malay, Chinese and Indian cultures. The historic part of the city is a UNESCO World Heritage site, and it's a delight to explore. The food is quite tasty, too. We've done so much travelling since we arrived in Malaysia because of the cheap airfare and close proximity to so many exciting destinations. Although Malaysia is

classified as a developing country, the quality of life is quite high for expat Westerners.

Similarly, this theme of being exotic, but not threatening or dangerous, permeates this account on *International Living*:

> My wife and I moved to the island of Penang in early 2010. A small island—15 miles long and 12 miles wide—on the west coast of Malaysia, Penang, which is connected to the mainland by a six-lane bridge, is just two hours' drive south of Thailand. When we decided to move I wanted it to be to somewhere exotic—somewhere with great beaches, a low cost of living, and a place where I didn't have to learn another language. Penang ticked all the boxes. Our cost of living is one third of what it was before, we enjoy average daily temperatures of 82 F year round, and English is widely spoken here. Even better, when my wife suggested that we move here I knew it would allow me to continue what was quickly becoming my profession. Before I moved to Malaysia, I was a dive instructor, and before that an investment banker. But what I really wanted to do was write, something that I attempted to do before moving to Penang. (https://internationalliving.com/2014/04/i-thank-my-lucky-stars-that-i-moved-to-penang-malaysia/) (accessed 9 August 2016)

What we have drawn out briefly here is the way in which Penang is imagineered as a tourism destination. The tropes that feature prominently within this are also deployed to discursively construct it as a destination for long-stay tourism, closely paired with the MM2H visa. It also becomes clear that these tropes appeal to and are perpetuated by those taking up these opportunities, their testimonials further supporting the promotion of Penang as a place to retire to, or to enjoy. We return to some of these themes in Chap. 6, where we talk about the work migrants put in to making a home for themselves.

Panama for Sale[3]

In this section, we lay out some of the prominent themes within the way Panama is imagineered, represented and imagined within such marketing and promotion. What becomes clear is the extent to which 'Destination

Panama', as Jackiewicz and Craine (2010) so evocatively describe it, is produced through a nexus of migration, tourism, and development.

> Why do so many expats choose Panama? Often the intangibles … the feel of a place … play a big role. But there are also a lot of concrete, quantifiable reasons Panama is so appealing, starting with its modern infrastructure.
>
> Panama's cosmopolitan capital, Panama City, is the only true First World city in Central America. The beautifully maintained Pan-American Highway runs the breadth of the country, making travel easy. High-speed Internet and cell coverage are remarkable … as are the power, air, and water quality.
>
> For expats from the U.S., Panama is also convenient because the currency is the U.S. dollar. No matter where you're from, you're likely to appreciate the fact that there are many English speakers in Panama, especially among the well-trained medical community. The hub that is Tocumen International Airport makes it easy to fly from Panama to nearly anywhere in the world … often with no layovers. (International Living 2017)

International Living has been a long-standing promoter of Panama; its country profile of Panama focuses on the 'First World' credentials of Panama City, the 'modern infrastructure', its easy connections to the rest of the world, but also the US dollar economy and the English-speaking medical service. Branded as 'First world convenience at Third World Prices', Panama is presented as a safe, secure, and relatively cheap place to invest.

In the video accompanying International Living's country profile for Panama, their Panama editor stresses that Panama is a 'land of opportunity' and it offers 'something for everyone', from its cool highlands and laid-back beaches, to the international feeling of Panama City with its high-rise apartments and 'beautifully restored colonial homes', the low cost of living, proximity to the United States, low cost of 'little luxuries' such as domestic help that you might not be able to afford back in the United States, the biodiversity of flora and fauna, and active 'expatriate' communities across the country are presented as further attractions. Within such framings, the people of Panama are rarely mentioned; the

indigenous populations get the occasional nod in the promotional material, presented alongside the account of biodiversity, an example of the richness and colour of Panama. The pitch instead concentrates on the other 'expatriates' who have already made the decision to move to Panama.

It is telling that this image of Panama has a life beyond *International Living*, permeating the literature—notably, the 'how to' guides and comical biographical accounts of settling in a new country produced by North Americans living in Panama. Indeed, the sense of Panama as an investment opportunity is captured in the subtitle of Howard's (2006) *Living and Investing in Panama: A Guide to Inexpensive Living, Retirement and Making Money in Central America's Most Overlooked Country*.

Making Boquete as a Lifestyle Destination

Boquete is one of the sites that has become particularly prominent in the marketing of Panama to North Americans and other residential investors. As the quotation above illustrates, the tropes of investment and opportunity are refined to appeal to the incoming elite migrant population. The narrative that promotes Boquete as a destination is one that privileges residential tourism. The early promotion of Boquete emerged hand in hand with major property development in the area. Indeed, as Winston, a retired doctor explained:

> My wife had been collecting those pamphlets on where to retire to, how to retire to Mexico etc. And we had been reading International Living, and it was about the time when they were focussing on Sam Taliaferro and his development of Valle Escondido … We bought our small finca outside of the town. I guess we have Sam to thank. We were taken in by the *International Living* hoo-ha.

The success of the discursive construction of Boquete as a place to retire is attributed by many of those who have now made Boquete their home to Sam Taliaferro and his development of Valle Escondido. Indeed, this was the first of several major real estate developments in the area marketed to foreign residents—the development that put Boquete on the

(international retirement) map. The site is marketed on the surrounding pristine nature, the raw rainforest in clear view; before development—at least according to the developers—the only people who knew about the area were the local indigenous population. Such imagery is rendered visible in the floor to ceiling murals on the walls of the Tuscan-inspired chapel in the centre of the resort, Valle Escondido depicted as the primal scene in Genesis, the Garden of Eden, home to Adam and Eve, site of the fall of man. As Osbaldiston (2011, 2012) has highlighted, such paradisiacal renderings of destinations are powerful signals to lifestyle migrants. Indeed, this is clearly not lost on the developers of Valle Escondido; at the gates to the complex stands a sign that reads 'Welcome to Paradise' (Fig. 3.5). What this highlights is the way that developers may act as intermediaries within this lifestyle mobility industry—in the case of Boquete, instigating the imagineering of the destination for consumption by North American retirees.

Fig. 3.5 Sign at the gates of Valle Escondido, Boquete

It is also clear that Boquete's promotion as a destination exists within a wider industry aimed at foreign investors to Panama. Perhaps unsurprisingly, marketing highlights the investment opportunities available, the lifestyle, and all the incentives that go with this.

Equally significant is the role played by some of the migrants in presenting Boquete on their terms to a wider audience. When Michaela first travelled to Panama, she noted several prominent blogs authored by individual migrants providing insights into what life in Boquete is really like, almost giving a behind-the-scenes tour. Boquete Guide, a blog that was prominent when Michaela first started her research but which is no longer in circulation, described its purpose as follows: 'As time allows I am going to blog our experiences for all who care to read about them, for visitors and other residents.' While expounding the virtues of Boquete, the beautiful and tranquil surroundings—indeed, its paradisiacal qualities—the proximity to nature, the slow pace of life, these also offered practical advice on managing your daily life in a new environment. Just as the migrant testimonials of life in Penang demonstrate, the tropes common to the ways that Boquete is imagineered are co-opted in these bloggers' descriptions.

The authors of these blogs were some of the first people that Michaela spoke to; they described how these had become go-to sites for potential visitors or migrants, many of whom would get in contact asking to meet up when they travelled to Boquete—a request that was often welcomed by the authors—or with specific questions about living there. Indeed, looking through the posts on Richard Detrich's blog (http://www.richarddetrich.wordpress.com), Michaela found the following request: 'We would like to talk to you directly via email if possible as we are planning a trip to Panama in 2009 to have a look.'

For those living there, however, what Boquete offers extends beyond these headlines of investment and the environment; in this way, they adapt and amend these representations of place. As the Boquete experts—expertise drawn from their own experience of being North Americans living in Boquete—stress in their promotion of the fourth edition of Heidke's (2016) *The Boquete (Not for Tourists!) Handbook*, there is more to moving to Panama than the headlines about the investment opportunities suggest:

> Panama, Panama, Panama … everyone is talking about Panama … Invest in Panama, flip Panama, buy a condo for a song and live like a king for pennies a month … yeah yeah … we've all heard it. We've all seen the retirement websites … BUT listen, before you buy their BS and plunk down your hard-earned $$$$, you'll want to find out if all this stuff is true. Are these people actually experts in the places they tout? Do they actually LIVE in these places and for how long? If you want to know the real scoop on this area and the important issues you need to think about BEFORE & while moving, check out the Boquete Handbook. (Boquete Experts 2017: n.p.)

The customer reviews and endorsements of the books offering advice on moving to Boquete written by and self-published by members of this migrant community (Heidke 2016; Detrich 2014) highlight and the case studies that feature in the promotion of Boquete by lifestyle intermediaries demonstrate that such 'real life' expertise is valued by potential migrants. While people might find Boquete through the promotion by intermediaries, these personal accounts of living there—whether blogs, fora, or publications—become part of the landscape through which lifestyle migration is imagined and facilitated (see also Bantman-Masum 2015).

The case of Boquete, as with Penang, illustrates how migrant bloggers and migrants themselves act as intermediaries within the lifestyle mobility industry. At first site, imagineering appears as a top-down process, engaged in by property developers and promoted through international lifestyle media. However, it is also clear that migrant bloggers and authors also have a voice within this. Presenting themselves as local experts, they co-opt, adapt, and amend these imagineerings to present Boquete on their terms and through the lens of their experience.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined some of the structures that promote, inform, and shape lifestyle migration through the consideration of practices of residential tourism. It has highlighted the ways in which Malaysia and

Panama, Boquete and Penang, are imagineered and promoted to encourage individual foreign investment. We argue that bringing lifestyle migration together with residential tourism—a concept we employ here to draw attention to the practices of attracting foreign investment, the shaping of places, and enabling property development—provides important context about how structural conditions interplay with individual actions.

Specifically, we have presented the emergent residential tourism markets in Malaysia and Panama as thoroughly entangled with not only economic development strategies but also sociological processes and practices. In targeting the needs and desires of particular (imagined) populations, considerable work goes into the imagineering of destinations, the curation of places in which such 'residential tourists'—the prime neoliberal subject—might want to invest both their capitals and ambitions for a better way of life. The success of these imagineerings depends on its uptake by various brokers—the international lifestyle media (e.g. *International Living*), Internet fora, property agents, but also migrant bloggers.

What we have made clear is that the promotion of residential tourism markets in Malaysia and Panama has been particularly successful, with the result that both destinations are regularly listed as the best places in the world to retire. Significant work has gone into making investing in these locations attractive to individuals as they are courted and rewarded by an industry that has been set up precisely to pursue individual investment capital. Through our discussion of Malaysia, we demonstrated the role of the government in marketing international investment in property. The case of Panama makes explicit the work of lifestyle media in circulating these imagineerings, and the further brokerage of sites by migrants themselves, who claim their own lens on the destination.

To conclude, we want to make clear here that the close observation of the workings of these residential tourism markets draws attention to the wider structural conditions that support lifestyle migration. At a national level, both Malaysia and Panama are actively seeking to attract individual foreign investment to complement the FDI they generate through other mechanisms. Making residential investment in Boquete and Penang attractive to such foreign nationals is a feature of wider economic development strategies. While perhaps migration is not the assumed outcome

of this—as in the case of Spain, the population are imagined as temporarily resident—what this makes clear is how lifestyle migration interplays with economic development in ways which have not been fully acknowledged to date. To continue our practice stories of lifestyle migration in Malaysia and Panama, we next move on to the practices of governance, with a special focus on the proximate structures shaping this migration, namely, visa regimes and entry-exit controls.

Notes

1. Residential tourism has also been used by real estate agents, tourism agents, and some state agents as well as academics in Costa Rica, Egypt, and Panama among others (see, for example, McWatters 2009).
2. Huete et al. (2008) rehearse a lengthy and critical discussion about residential tourism as a concept and a phenomenon.
3. This subtitle mimics the title of the recent docu-film *Paraiso for Sale* (2012). Directed by Anayansi Prado, it documents the ongoing struggles over land titles and property ownership in Bocas del Toro Province, Panama.

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4

Governance as Practice: Regulating Lifestyle Migration

In this chapter, we present a case for viewing the governance of migration as a practice; that is, a social process that emerges over time as the outcome of the interaction of structure and agency through the practice of daily life (see Chap. 1). We examine in detail the provisions that have been put in place by receiving states—in this case Malaysia and Panama—to both attract and facilitate these forms of migration; in particular, our argument is to render visible the relationship between the formal governance of elite migration at its intersection with property ownership and other forms of financial arbitrage, in which resources accumulated in high-cost labour countries are used to facilitate lifestyles elsewhere, often in places where the labour market operates at lower cost (Hayes 2014, 2015a). However, we also seek to challenge assumptions about elite migration: the practices of these relatively privileged migrants reveal not only relatively unfettered mobility and settlement, through the creative navigation of existing governance structures, but also the enclosures and constraints that disrupt such an understanding. What becomes clear is that the governance of lifestyle migration, as with any migration, is creative and dynamic and shaped through the practices of diverse agents. The chapter reveals how deep-seated, historical attitudes

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inform the reproduction of long-established structural inequalities, but also how, enacted by agents of state as well as migrants themselves, practices of governance develop and change shape in response to changing circumstances.

Migration regimes and governance are a significant feature of the landscape in which most contemporary international migrations take place; regulated and controlled by nation-states, these structures construct and maintain borders, and frame and reinforce national citizenship and belonging through the construction and exclusion of 'undesirable' subjects. However, the other side of the coin is the invitation extended to 'desirable' migrants. The elite migrants that we have examined in our research on British migrants in Europe (O'Reilly 2000; Benson 2011a), and in the research presented here on lifestyle migrants in Malaysia and Panama, are constructed by states as desirable. These are not the 'desirable' migrant workforce—who provide support and services in many economies, and without whom economic growth would not be possible—but 'desirable' migrants who are imagined by receiving states, market intermediaries, and brokers, as contributing through property investment or consumer power, for example, bringing their incomes, capitals, and investments to the destination. Indeed, such imaginings of investors are central to the construction of a residential tourism market with little consideration of the potentially negative impacts of the migration of these investors for local economies and communities (see also Huete and Mantecón 2012). Perhaps unsurprisingly, these migrations, which take place external to global flows of labour and beyond other frameworks—such as human rights in the case of asylum and refugee movements—are differently regulated, governed, and controlled (Oliver 2011).

Migration Governance as Practice

In this chapter, we argue the case for viewing governance further, as a practice, informed by power relations and sources of capital on either side. Alexander Betts (2011) highlights how, in many cross-border policy areas such as international trade, international finance, and communicable

disease management, international cooperation and agreements are considered preferable and more efficient than unilateral responses. International migration management, alternatively, remains largely 'the domain of sovereign states' (Betts 2011: 7). This is partly because international migration has so many facets, including, *inter alia*, labour migration, trafficking and smuggling, asylum seeking, economic migration, and return migration. Asylum and refugee protection has its own UN organisation, the UN Refugee Agency, but other forms of migration are covered by no such official international governing or even normative framework. This is not to say international migration has no governance, but rather governance is 'bottom up', ad hoc, multilayered, and incoherent. 'The picture that emerges is of a complex and fragmented tapestry of overlapping, parallel, and nested institutions' that govern migration often via other activities such as trade, health, and human rights (Betts 2011: 3).

The existing provision of governance, regulation, and control of what we refer to here as lifestyle migration, mirrors the ad hoc, multilayered, nested governance at work in migration regimes more generally. Conceived of primarily through a lens on consumption (Benson and O'Reilly 2009; Knowles and Harper 2009), with attendant associations to leisure, travel, and tourism, lifestyle migration appears particularly unregulated. In part, this is the consequence of the relative power of these relatively affluent migrants, who are assumed—through their consumer power—to be able to move across borders with significant ease, a privilege not shared by many other migrant populations. The question with which we are regularly faced of whether these individuals should be considered as migrants or expatriates (see also Kunz 2016; Cranston 2017) is perhaps unsurprising given the ambiguity around the governance of these migrant-investor populations within contemporary managed migration regimes.

Indeed, in policy terms, lifestyle migration falls under protections for international travel, consular arrangements—which, under the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations (1963), maintains the rights of consulates to intervene in the affairs of foreign nationals overseas (Oliver 2011)—and the international visa regime. In line with the broader stratification of migration regimes, specialist visas that encourage financial and

property investments by wealthy incomers form part of the landscape within which lifestyle migration is positioned. Indeed, as our discussion of residential tourism in Chap. 3 demonstrated, retired—and wealthy—lifestyle migrants are now perceived as desirable by several host states around the world, and embraced as a form of trade and investment through their consumer power, property purchase, and perceived limited demands on the state following settlement (Oliver 2011; Toyota and Xiang 2012). Both Malaysia and Panama are among nation-states known for offering their own variations on this: for the former, the 'Malaysia my second home (MM2H)' visa, and the latter, the *pensionado* visa, as we discuss further in the chapter. Nevertheless, as Caroline Oliver (2011: 141) has argued, the 'governance of LM [lifestyle migration] emerges as a side effect, rather than a deliberate governance strategy'; in practice, 'bottom up' frameworks influence and constrain these migration flows in complex ways.

The shape these ad hoc and bottom-up frameworks, this practice, takes varies from case to case, and is affected by, sometimes contradictory national and regional institutional frameworks. An interesting and obvious case, as Oliver (2011) suggests, is the free movement inscribed in the Maastricht Treaty (1992): intra-European migrants are entitled to access any services available to citizens of the member state in which they reside. This is a regional policy and yet such entitlement is accessed through national legislations and can be confusing for those with second homes or dual residency. The result is that many lifestyle migrants fall through the gap of entitlement, because they are unaware of regulations attached to their status, because their mobility is fluid or unregulated, because they have more than one place of permanent residence, or perhaps because they intentionally attempt to straddle more than one system (see Ackers and Dwyer 2004; O'Reilly 2007). We illustrate below how this situation is somewhat mirrored for elite migrants in Panama and Malaysia.

Furthermore, state responses to such situations are created by human actors who have their own political agendas, sets of assumptions, habitus, and goals; as Betts explains, governance is normatively embedded; it 'does not exist as a recognized and compartmentalized area but is an integrated part of the larger social system' (2011: 14). He suggests this embeddedness

shapes migration governance where it is regulated implicitly by other issue-areas such as human rights, labour laws, and world trade law. The governance of international migration, he suggests, is thus shaped by power, ideas, and competing interests.

To extend this notion of embeddedness, we argue that rather than merely ad hoc, the governance of (lifestyle) migration should be viewed as a practice, dynamic, and shaped by diverse agents—including national government agents, local officials, intermediary agents, transnational private companies, and migrants—in the context of changing social structural arrangements. As discussed further in Chap. 1, deeply embedded structural and agentic traces of colonialism leave some individuals with the resources to enjoy such privileged migration and result in state agents perceiving those from certain parts of the world as desirable. This even works for Malaysia where, even though the special MM2H visa is ostensibly open to everyone, the take-up varies due to other considerations often linked to language, religion, culture, politics, and economy, as well as long-standing, historical relations between the state in question and the Malaysian state. Recognising the power relations that operate in the governance of lifestyle migration and how these relatively privileged migrants engage with, disrupt, or shape state practices is a starting point in considering governance as practice. In conclusion (as an outcome), there is differential access to mobility as the state operates to regulate and constrain certain forms of movement; some lifestyles are rewarded over others, shaping the patterns and sediments (O'Reilly 2017) of migration flows to particular destinations. We will now closely examine the various elements of practice that make up the governance of lifestyle migration in Malaysia and Panama.

Elite Entry Routes: Visas, Residence, and Capital in Malaysia and Panama

Our starting point in considering the governance of lifestyle migration to Malaysia and Panama as practice is the specialist visas and programmes both countries employ to attract certain migrants (or at least inward investment through a form of migration or temporary settlement).

While Malaysia has recently been celebrated for high economic growth rates, the economy is seen as unstable or unpredictable, and attracting wealthy foreign residents is viewed as a way of ensuring some longer-term stability (Toyota and Xiang 2012). In Malaysia, this is partly achieved through specialist visas such as the MM2H. This is a renewable multiple-entry visa, or social visit pass in their terminology, initially granted as a ten-year permit to adopt Malaysia as the location of a second residence. As its name suggests, it is aimed at those who already own property or at least consider they reside permanently in another part of the world, but can afford to invest income and capital in Malaysia. It was thus designed to attract the 'lucrative retiree market to choose Malaysia as their residence' (Wong and Musa 2013: 141), to boost income from tourism (Ono 2008), and to also attract younger people of independent means. The visa comes with a variety of celebrated incentives: foreigners can buy property, work part-time, bring dependents and a car into the country, and incoming pensions are not taxed. But applicants have to prove themselves financially capable of caring for themselves, will need to deposit a security bond, submit a medical report, and are likely to require medical insurance (though this requirement can be waived for those 'participants who face difficulty in obtaining a medical insurance due to their age or medical condition', mm2h.gov.my).

The current version of the programme has been running since 2002, and the top participating countries are (in order): China, Japan, Bangladesh, Korea, United Kingdom, Australia, Taiwan, Singapore, United States, Pakistan, and India. Since 2002, over 29,000 have registered in the programme (mm2h.gov.my). The fact that it is administered by the Ministry of Tourism, Malaysia, suggests it is viewed more as tourism than as immigration. The MM2H may be used as a route to permanent residency; those applying for this must demonstrate continuous residence in the country for five years (or ten in the case of those married to a Malay spouse) and must apply through a points-based system. Nevertheless, the revenue it brings is thought to benefit the tourism, real estate, and education sectors (Wong and Musa 2014). While those from the United Kingdom are likely to use the visa for residence, it is used by others for travel and long-stay tourism, or even in some cases as security, offering somewhere to go in times of political upheaval in their home

country (personal communication with MM2H agent). It has especially been embraced by wealthy Chinese and by Japanese retirees (Toyota 2006; Ono 2008, 2014).

What is clear is that such visas, 'variously supported by the tourism industry, real estate sector and medical and residential care providers' (Green 2015: 154), are part of a wider raft of development strategies that seek to attract global capital from individual consumers as a way of enabling national economic development, as we discuss further in Chap. 4. Another scheme worthy of note is the Malaysian government's significant investments in the development of an International Medical Travel (IMT) industry (see Chap. 8), successfully presenting the country as a destination for those crossing borders in pursuit of 'world-class' healthcare, a 'lucrative market', in which state deregulation is encouraged as a form of economic development (Oliver 2011; Ormond 2013). As Ormond (2013) persuasively describes in her account of the healthcare market in Malaysia, the economic rationale that underpins such developments is undoubtedly neoliberal, framed at one and the same time by making the individual responsible for their own healthcare while also being in the pursuit of public-private partnerships.

Panama's efforts to attract wealthy foreign residents take place within a very different economic setting and are part of a longer-term economic development strategy to attract foreign investment. Its consistent economic growth even during the Global Financial crisis, its position as the second strongest economy in Latin America, but also its relative political stability work to provide both a sense of security to would-be investors and a very different starting point to our consideration of governance as it relates to lifestyle migration. Pointedly, 'Panama did not generate much tax revenue—*by design*' (Sigler 2014: 7, emphasis added), but these favourable terms, turned as they are towards attracting foreign capital, have historically and in the present day been sites of exclusion for most Panamanians.

Lifestyle migration to Panama is closely allied to its economic development strategy, the shift towards a neoliberal economic structure, and the governance of this trend made on the similarly favourable terms that permit foreign investment in Panama's Special Economic Zones and through which inequality in the country persists. It offers the *pensionado* visa, a

programme specifically designed by the Panamanian government to attract FDI from foreign retirees through property ownership. This provides visa holders with property and import tax exemptions, and a range of significant discounts on the cost of travel, healthcare, and everyday expenses (see also McWatters 2009; Myers 2009; Spalding 2011; Velásquez Runk 2012). The *pensionado* visa is available to individuals and households on the proviso that they have a monthly pension for life exceeding $1000, or, in the case that they own property worth $100,000 or more, with a monthly income or pension over $750. This means that, with the exception of Panama Province (which includes Panama City), where the average household income per month is $826, the income required of foreign residents on *pensionado* visas significantly exceeds average household incomes. For example, in Bocas del Toro Province, average monthly household income is $400, while in Chiriqui Province (which includes Boquete), average monthly household income is $433. In this way, the governance of lifestyle migration to Panama structures the possibility of enhanced social and economic inequalities within destinations (McWatters 2009; Rudolf 2014), and the reproduction of existing class and race relations (Benson 2015; Myers 2009; see also Hayes 2015b, 2018 in the case of Ecuador). Further to this, those wishing to benefit from this scheme must demonstrate a clean criminal record. Significantly—and in contrast to the MM2H visa—the *pensionado* visa is one of two visas offered by the Panamanian government that grant *immediate permanent residency*.

As such visas in Panama and Malaysia demonstrate, government policies and incentives focus on the economic advantages of individuals; these specialist visas privilege those with independent wealth and the ability to buy property. The possession of assets and capitals thus qualifies them for particularly favourable terms of residence or longer-term settlement. Both the MM2H and *pensionado* visas are underpinned by an assumption of consumer power. However, what also becomes clear is that through these routes, nation-states seek specifically to attract incoming populations that are—at least on average—more economically privileged than those of the receiving communities, while offering them favourable

terms that further perpetuate economic and social inequalities in the wider populations. Set within a consideration of practice, these specialist visas and other structural opportunities for would-be migrants are shaped by historical legacies.

While the promotion of elite and relatively free-flowing mobility lies at the core of these specialist visas and residence schemes, they are part of wider managed migration (and tourism) regimes that include regulatory conditions ensuring 'desirable' migrants can come (and stay) and less-desirable ones are excluded, or only permitted temporarily, whereby they are much more closely monitored through sponsorship (often by employers) and more regular renewal of their visas. Visa requirements are therefore deserving of attention in the work that they do to manage and stratify the migration process. As Broeders and Hampshire argue, these can be understood as 'a form of remote control, since they require potential entrants to undergo scrutiny and receive entry clearance before they arrive at a state's territorial border' (2013: 1204). The delimiting of specialist visas by proven income and (financial) investment in property or enterprise, or by nationality (as in the case of the *paises amigos* visa), speaks to longer histories, economic aspirations, and colonialities of power in the framing of the '(un)desirable' migrant, and thus to the embeddedness of governance.

Practising Elite Migration

While the previous account of privileged visa regimes in Malaysia and Panama demonstrates how these are structured in favour of those with relative affluence, consumer power, and economic capital, the ease with which many of the migrants we discuss here navigate through and around managed migration regimes is further telling of their privilege. As we outline in Chap. 5, the migrants that we have worked with varied significantly in terms of their personal circumstances. For some this meant that they did not have the resources and assets to apply for the specialist visas that would facilitate their stay in Malaysia or Panama. However, while earlier we have suggested that visa regimes frame 'desirable' and 'undesirable'

migrants in particular ways, it was also clear that within lifestyle migrant populations, many people found creative ways of bypassing and sidestepping requirements. We illustrate below, through a discussion of 'visa runs', that these migrants were often knowledgeable of the (various) regulations that framed their ability to enter and stay in the country. They also developed ways of manipulating these to their advantage, thus overcoming some of the obstacles and constraints they might otherwise face. Practical advice and knowledge of these 'alternative' routes through the visa regimes of Malaysia and Panama regularly circulate through the communities of practice (see Chap. 1)—for example, 'expatriate' associations and gatherings, online forums—of such migrants.

What we argue here is that the *relative* privilege of these populations is both structuring of and structured by their experience at/of the borders. This is not intended literally, but rather to acknowledge that these migrants cross borders with some ease; for the large part, they do not seem to experience migration regulation as limiting to their ability to enter and stay in the country of their choice. Further, even in cases where they knowingly abuse visa regimes, they do not (always) feel the oppression of border control in their everyday lives, as has been documented for less privileged migrant populations. Instead, they have the fortune of viewing rules and regulations as 'negotiable', finding creative ways of circumventing them. By acknowledging their practices in negotiating with state rules and provisions, we draw attention to the significant agency exercised by such migrants and their relative privilege vis-à-vis other migrant populations (notwithstanding that some lifestyle migrants' lives were still marked by risk and uncertainty, as we discuss below). The framing of this population in terms of their relative privilege is intended therefore as an analysis that positions them within wider social structures—reinforced by persistent colonialities of power—and the recognition and prestige that they are accorded within these structures by accident of birth, including their ownership of passports from particular nation-states, the language they speak, and the colour of their skin, irrespective of the individual, biographical circumstances (see also Croucher 2012; Benson 2013b; Benson and Osbaldiston 2014, 2016; Benson and O'Reilly 2016).

Manipulating Migration Governance

As outlined above, one site at which migrant agency became particularly visible was in their discussions of the so-called visa runs: here we see how the governance of migration is informed by both the embodied habitus and the conjuncturally specific internal structures (see Chap. 1) of the migrant. 'The term "visa running" refers to a necessary practice of renewing one's visa and residential status in a particular nation-state by crossing national borders and/or applying for a new visa at a consulate or embassy overseas' (Green 2014: 3). Visa runs are an example par excellence of both their knowledge and their manipulation of regulations in their favour, often taken up by those who did not have the financial resources to apply for the MM2H or *pensionados* visa, or for those who—for a variety of reasons—did not want to regularise their visa status, perhaps enjoying their liminal, transitory status, as we discuss further below. Most commonly, the 'visa run' refers to the situation where people successively use single entry visas or permits—colloquially referred to as a tourist visa—to enter the country. However, these are time-limited; while Malaysia permits a stay of up to 90 days, Panama's 'tourist visa' permits a stay of up to 180 days, eligibility determined at the border based on holding a valid passport (at the time of writing). In principle, they might also require applicants to hold a ticket for onward or return travel. The use of these visas therefore permits entry into Malaysia and Panama from a wider population than specialist visas, and so they are part of the structure through which the diversity of these migrant populations emerges.

Unlike other visas, which must be applied for in advance, one advantage of single entry visas is that they are granted on arrival at the border. In the case of British Nationals travelling to Malaysia, there is, at the time of writing, no requirement for a visa as long as you do not intend to stay longer than three months; instead, a permit is granted on arrival. Visas for longer stays must be applied for before you travel. When they expire, those using these routes thus tend to exit the country, often just by crossing the border to a neighbouring country—Singapore and Thailand in the case of Malaysia, Costa Rica in the case of Panama—and apply for a new visa or permit upon re-entry a few days later. Importantly, this way of using

single entry visas was not endorsed by the governments of either Malaysia or Panama, and would almost certainly attract unwelcome attention if regularly used by other 'less desirable' migrant populations. As an expert interviewee in Penang remarked:

> Strictly speaking people should not be allowed to come in and out on three-month visas. They go to Singapore or to Thailand to—a lot do the Thai run. They are not supposed to do that and if the Malaysian government or the local official decides to crack down they can just give people two weeks and say 'sort yourself out, either go on Malaysia My Second Home or get out'. We have had people who do the Thai runs who deliberately lose their passport, or say they lost their passport, so they can get a new passport and you can't see how many visas they've got. (Colin, 60s, expert interview)

The above quote is telling in more ways than one. Note that the interviewee says 'They are not supposed to do that and *if* the Malaysian government or local official *decides* to crack down.' This is a clear example of how migration governance is a practice, interpreted by agents in diverse ways, and always informed by how they are perceived and how they perceive others (or embedded, as Betts 2011, would say); simply, in deciding to 'look the other way', such agents demonstrate what we might refer to as migrant blindness, not seeing these individuals as migrants. The quote also reveals the (limited, as we will see later) agency of lifestyle migrants and their own practices of migration, that the desired response can be obtained from officials when their own internalised assumptions about hierarchies and status are appealed to, for example.

Developing knowledge of how to 'manipulate' the system was clearly in evidence amongst Westerners in Malaysia—from subtle forms of negotiation in everyday life to the sourcing of intermediaries who could also facilitate and advise. Diane, a mother of two, who was working as a teacher in an International School in Malaysia, for example, expressed frustration with the bureaucracy in Penang but explained how in the end 'you can find people to pay to do these things for you'. As in Malaysia, those supporting their residence in Panama through successive tourist visas regularly shared knowledge of changes to the terms of these visas—

how many days you needed to spend outside the country, how much cash you needed to have on you—commenting also on the facilities and staff on the Costa Rican border.

Within the communities of practice of the lifestyle migrants we have worked with, practical advice and knowledge of how to best organise visa runs is constantly circulated through face-to-face encounters and online forums, leading to new conjuncturally specific internal structures (see Chap. 1) in which doing a visa run is seen as an acceptable practice. Discussions would evaluate the best and easiest places to travel, with some groups even organising a trip with a coach or overnight stays. They would also communicate real life stories of successes and, to a lesser degree, salutary tales of the challenges people have faced at these borders. What is notable is how openly such practices were discussed, both a common topic of conversation and one which they did not believe would attract undue attention despite the irregularity of their migration status that these strategies convey.

There are diverse reasons for such apparently self-imposed insecurity. Some in Malaysia simply do not have the financial capital to afford the MM2H visa or are working informally or casually and so cannot obtain a working visa. Others, partners of working 'expatriates' for example, may not wish to apply for a 'dependents visa' because this restricts how much and what type of work they can do in Malaysia. Several people are sailing close to the wind, as we discuss in Chap. 8. One example here is that of Harry, a retired labourer from the North of England, who, when Karen met him, lived in Penang during the British winter months each year, in order to avoid paying expensive heating bills in the United Kingdom. He would do the 'visa run' regularly, but eventually he found that difficult because he had his passport stamped so many times that officials started to get suspicious. His solution was simply to 'lose' his passport and apply for a new one.

In some cases, the use of single entry visas permitted the 'trying out' of a country, *en route* to making a decision about where to live—pointing to the privileges that facilitate choice. Indeed, single entry visas are issued on trust—certain populations more readily granted these at the border than others. Within days of arriving in Panama City in July 2009, Michaela had become aware of this way of using single entry visas. Ira had just

returned from Costa Rica. Ira was from Washington State; aged in his 50s, he had taken (early) retirement and was thinking about moving abroad. For the past six months or so, he had been travelling around Central America, and had found himself staying in Panama much longer than he had expected. He did not know how it had happened, but there was 'just something about Panama'; he had come to the end of three months and the time on his visa was up; so he had taken the decision to cross the border into Costa Rica, stay there for a few days before re-entering, eligible for another single entry visa. He then continued, explaining that he was evaluating whether he should go through the process of applying for a permanent residence. The single entry visa gave him the time and space to evaluate his options, to 'try out' living in Panama without having to go through the bureaucracy of becoming formally resident.

In many ways, accounts such as these resonate with the ways that those taking part in our previous research on the British in Spain (O'Reilly 2000) and rural France (Benson 2011a) put off registering, thus conveying a sense of being neither here nor there, metaphorically planting one foot in Europe and the other back in Britain (a practice that is becoming even more poignant since the Brexit vote). Here we extend that earlier discussion of the way lifestyle migrants often locate themselves as in transition, and argue that such actions speak to a sense of circumspection—risk-averse and wary—that is only available to those who have the luxury of choosing where to live in the world and can navigate governance structures in ways that support this. Further, as the following vignette from Michaela's fieldwork demonstrates, this goes hand in hand with the leisure to make decisions and neglect of the need to educate oneself about one's options.

> It is late afternoon and I have been interviewing Sally, the American owner of a small fitness business in Boquete. We are sitting in the reception area of the business, and are wrapping up the interview when two white American women aged in their 60s come in. They have come to pick up their friend, who has been having a massage. They strike up conversation with Sally; first, commenting on how hot and sticky it is outside, and what a relief the air conditioning inside is. This is not the quick

visit that it might have looked on first sight. While they are speaking, one of the women gets onto a nearby step machine, and starts to tread up and down. Sally is friendly, engaging in the conversation initially, even when she moves back behind the desk to carry on with her work. The woman on the treadmill starts to talk about her visa, the rhythm of her voice matching the slow pace of her continued work on the step machine. This is a complaint; her visa has run out and inconveniently, it looks as though she will now have to leave the country for a few days to get a new one! Perspiration dribbles down her face, which is now getting red. She forcefully states that she had been under the impression that the immigration office in David (the closest city to Boquete) used to issue these, which would have meant that she would have saved her both time and money. As it stands, she needs to go to Costa Rica and stay there for 72 hours before she can re-enter Panama, a real inconvenience. More to the point, she really doesn't know how to get to Costa Rica from Boquete. Will Sally let her use the computer and the Internet? She gets off the step machine and manoeuvres around the edge of the desk into the seat that Sally has just vacated, talking all the while. She sits down and navigates the browser to the Boquete Community Forum where she will post a request for information.

This ethnographic passage in highlighting the indignation expressed by one woman in respect to the inconvenience of having to leave the country to renew her visa draws attention to her complacency about the legal right to be in Panama, a sentiment shared by some other members of the North American population. It speaks to the structural and systemic privilege of this population (Benson 2013b), that means that they can cross borders with ease—and indeed, believe that they have the right to do so—but also not live in fear of the sanctions that might be placed on other undocumented migrant populations. In addition, it shows how knowledge circulates within this community; the Boquete Community Forum, a long-standing Internet forum that operates in English, is a popular resource for information and knowledge sharing, and announcements about news and activities.

The focus in this section on single entry visas highlights how these exist alongside specialist visas and the work that they do for those who use them. Nevertheless, specialist visas remained very popular and often

shaped the migration of these relatively wealthy individuals. For some in Malaysia, they provided a great deal of flexibility as well as security despite being temporary. Joe, who we will introduce further in Chap. 5, who has lived abroad for much of his life, is now married to an Indonesian woman and living in Penang. He could apply for full residence in Malaysia, but he prefers the MM2H visa because if he has residence, then each time he travels elsewhere he has to apply for a visa and, as he told Karen, 'some places, like the US, are reluctant to give visas to people coming from Muslim countries, because they think you are all terrorists'. In the following chapter, we include many other stories of migrants/settlers attracted to these destinations by such visas and permits. However, our point here is to illustrate how the governance of lifestyle migration is taking place as much through the practices of migrants as through the practices of the state, and is informed by the habitus and conjuncturally specific internal structures (Stones 2005) of both. It is the constant negotiation and creativity of structures that concern us here as well as the sedimented nature of these (O'Reilly 2017).

Mobility-Enclosure, Practice, and Elite Migration

Irrespective of the emphasis in the previous section on the creative agency of these migrants in the practice of their daily life, and through their communities of practice, we have also observed that some lifestyle migrants in East Asia lack agency and are suffering (or could suffer) social exclusion. As argued with respect to the British in Spain (O'Reilly 2000: 7), social exclusion is 'the dynamic process of being shut out … from any of the social, economic, political and cultural systems which determine the social integration of a person in society' (Walker and Walker 1997). It usually occurs as a combination of adverse social situations, for example, unemployment, unfavourable work situation, low earnings, poor health and/or living conditions, and the inability to build social networks. Here, we are more concerned with the impacts of living with insecurity, constant change, flexibility, and confusion that results from precarious residence status and confusion about regulations around living legally.

A counterpoint to the flexibility allowed by single entry visas is the insecurity that these might entail for some people. This is particularly pronounced in Malaysia. As illustrated above, some lifestyle migrants are living on 90-day visas with the insecurity of not knowing when they will be prevented from continually renewing their visas. Others are living with no (or with inadequate) health insurance, with all the risks that entails. Usually there has been a combination of circumstances that have led to this current situation. Privilege may co-exist with precarity (Boterill 2016). As Paul Green (2015: 154) notes in his ethnographic research with older Westerners in Penang, 'some live very comfortably in retirement, whilst others have very limited income and have to think carefully about daily expenditure'. Contrary to widespread assumptions about Westerners living abroad, there are many 'marginal migrants' (Howard 2008; Green 2014) living within an otherwise privileged group. Tom, a retired man in his 80s, for example, had so little income, no family, no capital, and not even enough money for a return flight to the United Kingdom that he would keep offering to be interviewed by Karen again and again as long as she was providing meals and drinks. An older woman, Lydia, was left in Malaysia when her husband died, and she had no family to return to in the United Kingdom. She was struggling to get by, relied on the tourist permit because she had insufficient funds to obtain a ten-year visa, and had very little health insurance. One migration agent we spoke to told us he even advises his clients not to bother to get health insurance, as the prices for treatment and medicines are so cheap that migrants can afford to 'pay as you go'. And if things get too difficult, they can always go home, he assured us. Similarly, insurance companies tend not to provide cover for the very old and the very needy. Some people we spoke to had difficulty qualifying for insurance due to their age or level of health. Then there are those who have even moved to Malaysia in older age simply because they can live life more cheaply there. Of course, if people are not helped to live safely and grow older comfortably, they may eventually return to the United Kingdom when their needs become too much to cope with. But this is not necessarily a safe or viable option for all. Paul Green (2014, 2015) has many more stories of Western migrants in Penang who are struggling to get by on a daily basis, and we discuss this a little more in Chap. 8.

An outcome of the practice of migration governance is that Malaysia is not only attracting the wealthy, temporary, retired, second-home owners they seem to want to invite. People of all types and backgrounds are moving to East Asia for a more exciting, adventurous, rich, multicultural, warm, and comfortable life. The complicated and regularly changing rules, perhaps designed to exclude them, in fact make the lives of some migrants rather precarious.

Towards a Flexible Governance of Elite Migration

As we outlined at the start of this chapter, we understand governance as a practice rather than a set of fixed rules and regulations; it is practised both by agents of the state and by the agents being governed, and it thus develops and emerges over time. The relationship between the state and the agents governed through these mechanisms is iterative. What becomes clear is that just as the migrants' practices are a response to the particular routes into a country available to them, creatively navigated through a range of practices, state practices emerge and change shape in response to these practices. But to what end?

As Bridget Anderson (2010, 2013) so clearly identifies, migration governance introduces systems of dominance and subordination, with the state taking no responsibility for the harm that they wreak. Behind migration governance there are often implicit, unspoken, and unacknowledged goals; that is, governance is embedded. In the case of these elite migrants, we believe that governance is being practised by the relevant states to maintain the immigration of wealthy migrants and their investments in property given the significance of this to economic growth—the temporary stay permissible until wealth and contribution are ascertained—to the exclusion of 'less desirable' migrants. Indeed, the binaries that characterise a lot of migration governance—the good, the deserving, versus the bad and underserving—are similarly at play within the governance as it is practised and managed in relation to elite migrant populations. As Green notes,

> bureaucrats view older, Western migrants through the virtues of economic imperatives. The official MM2H website, overseen by the Ministry of Tourism Malaysia, provides a symbolic, visual window into this government's understandings of an 'ideal' quality foreigner, in the form of 'MM2H participant video testimonials'. In one video, a golf-loving British woman talks about initially visiting Malaysia on holiday and falling in love with both place and people in just three days. Thanks to a recommendation from a solicitor friend in Kuala Lumpur she and her husband soon decided to enrol on the MM2H programme. (Green 2014: 5)

Despite such attempts to attract foreigners as discussed above, there is some evidence that the Malaysian government also continually monitors and alters initiatives in order to restrict entry to those who are less desirable. One possible explanation for this is that the MM2H visa is not restricted in terms of which nationalities and age groups can apply. It is 'open to citizens of all countries recognised by Malaysia regardless of race, religion, gender or age. Applicants are allowed to bring their spouses and unmarried children below the age of 21 as dependants' (mm2h.gov.my). But the MM2H is a social visit pass not a residence permit and in providing only ten years of entry it already restricts one's ability to make long-term plans. While the eligibility and requirements seem straightforward at first glance, in practice they are constantly amended and updated in diverse ways, with numerous, ever-changing financial requirements that sometimes vary across different local administrations. The amount required to be held on deposit in Malaysia, the amount one is permitted to spend on purchase of a property (with a lower limit), and rules about car importation are subject to regular changes (Green 2014; Ono 2008). The complexity of applications for special visas means that many applicants apply through an agent, which adds to the cost. And it is not just visas that are confusing but also other regulations around living in Malaysia (see Green 2015): there are confusing and changeable regulations governing when a foreign-owned house can be sold; though a car can be imported duty-free, the duty may become payable if it is subsequently sold. In our survey, while 53% found understanding the regulations around living in Malaysia easy, 42% found it problematic. Similarly, those migrants we spoke to were often confused and frustrated about

property and other regulations and how to understand them, and debated them amongst themselves, sharing (often erroneous) advice and experiences. One couple, concerned over the lack of building regulations and their fear that 'anyone can build right up to your boundary any time', intentionally bought a house on the edge of a mountain. Furthermore, the financial criteria for residency demonstrate the emphasis placed on relative affluence of retired lifestyle migrants (Green 2015). The amount of money required to obtain a special visa is substantial in the context of the Panama and Malaysian economies, but it is also a lot more than many would-be migrants can easily afford. As Paul Green (2014) has noted of British retirees in Malaysia, some simply do not have the financial capital with which to buy into the MM2H scheme.

The sense of powerlessness and confusion are summed up well by Sarah, who talked to Karen about how things are often seen as TIM's fault. TIM, she said, stands for 'This Is Malaysia'. By this she means, as understood by 'expatriates' more generally, that they have to remember that though they might sometimes object to how things are done, they are guests in a foreign country: 'you have to keep quiet as you are only here under duress, they don't really want us here, especially us old colonials'. She told Karen people feel that their job situation, their tenure, can be threatened if they speak out too much:

> They really do want to bring people in. Have you heard of the PR, permanent residence, is really difficult to get. You have to know people who are really high up, and it is really difficult, they lose your papers and all sorts and it takes ages and people give up, but now they really recently brought in RP, Residence Permit. This is a new initiative, by the Prime Minister's department, whereby expats that have lived here over two years and who earn a certain amount and can show two years of tax returns, they can get a ten year, a ten year residence permit! And they can move company. Because at the moment you can't change company, it's all a real nightmare. RP. They are trying to appeal to all the upper echelons, management and specialists, they are trying to bring in all these, which they've never wanted before, because they've realised if you want to bring in all these new things like the new railways you have to bring in guys that can do it. Well, no one wants to come if they're going to be chucked out in two years so they're offering this RP, and it's done by talent-corp Malaysia. But of course, it all changes all the time. We are not powerful

> as people think expats are. If you put a foot wrong, especially if you work under the radar as I do, you can be kicked out at any moment. (*Sarah*)

There is also some evidence that doing 'visa runs' (attempting to continually renew a tourist visa) is not the solution it might appear: recent policy changes aimed at limiting irregular migration have made this more difficult, and, as discussed by some expert interviewees in Malaysia, it can lead to insecurity for migrants who, if caught, can now be immediately expelled from the country. The UK government has advised, 'The Malaysian authorities are running a vigorous campaign against illegal immigration. Don't overstay your visa, or violate the terms of entry. Even if you overstay for just a few days, you can be fined, detained and deported' (https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/malaysia/entry-requirements). A news article in ExpatGo, 'a website dedicated to publishing news and lifestyle articles for living better in Malaysia' warned:

> *Malaysia Steps up Pressure on People Doing Visa Runs*
> A Swiss couple were detained at Penang International Airport and placed in a "Not to Land" room because they had apparently made several quick exits from and returns to the country. They spent two nights sleeping on the floor before the Director of Immigration ordered their release. This was ostensibly due to their plight being highlighted in the New Straits Times; however, they were only given a one-week visa and not the usual three months that Europeans enjoy. There are quite a number of expats who choose to live and even work in Malaysia and travel out of the country every three months to get another 90 day visa. However, it seems that the immigration department may be starting to clamp down on this practice if the passport shows more than three exit and returns within a short period of time. (ExpatGo Staff 2015)

This illustrates both how common a practice doing the 'visa run' has been (and see Green 2014) but also how governments try to regain control, and then in turn how other governments intervene. These cases illustrate governance as a practice of ongoing negotiation informed by prejudices, habitus, and conjuncturally specific internal structures (see Chap. 1) that serves to include and exclude without overt and explicit (or expressed) intention.

In the case of Panama, this is illustrated in current proposed changes to the management of migration and tourism in Panama, which seeks to address the misuse of these visas by the so-called permanent tourists; within the media reporting of these changes, Colombian and Venezuelan populations are explicitly named (see, for example, Avila 2017). However, at the heart of these changes are attempts to prevent measures intended to facilitate tourism from being misused by those who are resident in Panama. In January 2017, the changes were initially reported as including the introduction of a maximum three-month stay, an announcement which caused significant concern within the North American community in Panama, as is clear from the Internet forums. As Long (2017a) reports, this was a misunderstanding, but it nevertheless marked the start of changes to the terms on which these visas may be used. These include the requirement to spend at least 30 days outside Panama before readmission, a change from the 72 hours previously assumed (see Long 2017b, c). Although not explicitly targeted at those North Americans similarly overstaying their visas, such changes will have an impact on these populations, but might also be met with similar adjustments. Indeed, those North Americans whose residence in Panama is built around the manipulation of these visas are already sharing information on Internet fora about what this means for their continued residence and how they might have to adjust their practices to accommodate these changes.

Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the governance of lifestyle migration to Panama and Malaysia. We have described the governance of migration as an ongoing practice in which diverse agents engage—including governments, private agents and corporations, elite investors, and lifestyle migrants. We have argued that while states seek to promote lifestyle migration to attract rich incomers, they are more reluctant to accept the problems they might bring. While on the one hand, it seems as if lifestyle migrant governance is an after-thought or 'side effect' (Oliver 2011), on the other hand, there is complex micro-management taking place. Lifestyle migrants see themselves as making individual lifestyle choices

(and as guests in a host state), so rather than fight for rights, they tweak their own personal circumstances to negotiate existing structures. They are not always as powerful to resist or disrupt state interventions and control as we might expect, and the ambivalent practice of managing this migration can lead to vulnerabilities. Some are living on 90-day visas, with the insecurity of not knowing when they will be prevented from continually renewing their visas. Others are living with no or inadequate health insurance, with all the risks that entails. Resources are a key variable in determining how secure or privileged the experience of lifestyle migrants is. For those on lower incomes, the options of healthcare, visa, and property security are much more limited. The differential experiences of lifestyle migrants shows that there are serious gaps in its governance, and the attempts to regulate and promote lifestyle migration in Panama and Malaysia falls far short of the needs-based, ethical governance that Oliver (2011) endorses. The privileging of elite investors suggests that lifestyle migration is flexibly governed and to some extent influenced by private sector actors, such as estate agents, who target particular markets and lobby government to attract elite migration (Oliver 2011). There are a range of more vulnerable lifestyle migrants whose experience is constrained through financial insecurity and limited access to certain social rights. As such, both privilege and precarity are hallmarks of lifestyle mobility in postcolonial settings (Botterill 2017; Hayes 2015a); as O'Reilly notes of British migrants in Spain:

> Some can respond to the ambiguities of mobility and enclosure by occupying a liminal space in flows, for others borders are reasserted through rules and regulations, through cultural and language differences, through social and economic isolation, while assimilation remains elusive. (2007: 285)

In this chapter, we have focused on visas and residence as a way into thinking about the governance of lifestyle migration. Rather than a comprehensive policy review, we have sought to describe governance as practice, weaving in policy and practice by giving space to consider the practical application of certain laws and policies, from the perspective of lifestyle migrants. This helps us to see migrants as agents, but also the state as enacted by agents. Furthermore, it provides the opportunity to

observe that those who are structurally privileged (as a result of past state relations) do not always have as much power as we might have thought. This is, perhaps, related to the increasing power of private enterprise, and the neoliberal governance framework that facilitates it in 'emerging economies' such as those of Malaysia and Panama (see Chap. 2).

This knowledge of how to 'manipulate' the system speaks not only to the privileges of these migrants, but also, as O'Reilly (2009) has argued elsewhere, to the ways in which neoliberal societies place the onus on individuals to take responsibility for their own futures. Beyond their migration, the decisions that these migrants take about how to manage their presence in Malaysia or Panama and how to use the visa regimes to their best advantage, speak of personalised solutions rather than societal change (see also Ackers and Dwyer 2004; O'Reilly 2007). Simply put, there is little attempt to bring about systemic change, but lots of evidence of manipulation and negotiation in the practice of migration governance.

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5

Diverse Lives: Weaving Personal Stories

In the previous chapters, we have emphasised the wider structural conditions that frame migration to Malaysia and Panama. We have examined the geopolitical histories of the two nation-states to locate such migrations in a longer trajectory of Western involvement and to draw attention to the global construction of whiteness and privilege, over time and place. We have looked at how the (im)migration of white Westerners to these destinations is currently sought after, enabled, and encouraged, and how the nature of these migrations is shaped by the way destinations are marketed and thus imagined by specific migrants in specific ways. In Part II, we move our focus to the migrants' own personal stories and experiences as told to, and interpreted by, ourselves. This enables a focus on the ways in which the various structural frames outlined previously are embodied and enacted by migrants as agents. It also permits a lens onto the ways in which even the initial decision to migrate is a process, shaped by habitus, by conjuncturally specific internal structures, by communities of practice, and by diverse contingencies as they are confronted by people in their daily lives.

We start Part II here with a series of vignettes that provide a rich description of the lives and stories of a small number of migrants. We

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thereby illustrate the diversity of routes and trajectories into lifestyle migration, and illuminate the richness of their lives lived within the destinations. The stories reveal some of the ways in which imaginings of a better way of life underpin decisions to migrate and the ways they live, but that decisions are made based on a whole host of experiences, expectations, assumptions, and resources. As our examples illustrate, while relative privilege might characterise the lives of these migrants in relation to some members of the local population, it is not universally the case that they come from privileged positions within their countries of origin. In particular, we focus here on deconstructing the relationship between economic wealth and privilege in elite migration. This sets the scene for a discussion of how the dynamics through which privilege is reproduced (and resisted) in these migrants' lives are complex, often acting independently of objective measures of wealth and affluence, and extending into their imaginings and daily practices.

In focusing on migrants' biographies rather than solely on their own migration stories, we locate their migration in the wider context of their lives, histories, relationships, and socio-structural frames. In other words, we seek to view migration as a practice, informed and shaped by wider and historical structural conditions, as well as actively enacted by migrants in their daily lives. Among those we worked with in Malaysia and Panama—just as among the British populations we have previously worked with in France and Spain—biographies were diverse. Individual histories often included past experiences of living abroad, for work, military service, or for experience, with trajectories ranging from lives led almost exclusively outside the country of origin, to brief sojourns abroad. However, there were also those who had never lived outside their country of origin. We wish here to give voice to this complexity and richness in their (his)stories, while also highlighting the diversity of the population in terms of age, class, national identity, and ethnicity, for example. This approach challenges received understandings of this form of migration, disturbing the image of wealthy (and/or retired) individuals that governance practices, marketing strategies, and other practices seek to attract, as outlined in Part I. Similarly, emphasising the diverse routes into, through, and perhaps out of these destinations challenges understandings of lifestyle migration as a one-off, unidirectional flow, to and from particular locations.

Biographies and Migration: Writing About the Lives of Others

Migration literature, and popular and policy understandings of migration, tend to focus on the decision to migrate, on the push and pull of geographical locations as points of departure and arrival, and/or on the large-scale structural conditions that promote movements from one place to another, as if these are distinguishable from the individual choices of agents (O'Reilly 2012). While such considerations are undoubtedly important in making sense of contemporary migrations, we approach the telling of migration from both a broader temporal and a more personal/biographical perspective. This emphasis draws out the significance placed on their actions by individual migrants, and allows us to consider how the structural conditions are interpreted, embodied, and enacted in the practice of a life. We are interested in the ongoing interaction of wider structural and geographical conditions, through migrants' daily lives and choices. This involves thinking of migration more broadly as a trajectory rather than a one-off act or project (Benson and O'Reilly 2009; Benson 2010, 2011a).

The conceptual and methodological work that underpins this perspective rests on a distinction between individual histories and biographies. Simply put, while life histories are produced by individuals to account for their past experiences, biographies are best understood as analytical devices, socially constructed and attuned to the wider historical and material conditions that continue to structure experience. The biographical portraits that we include in this chapter should be understood in these terms, as analytical devices authored by us; they draw from and interpret the life and migration histories of those taking part in our respective research projects.

Our approach here elaborates earlier arguments for a biographical approach to migration that foregrounds the collection of migration histories and recognises the location of migrations within the wider biographies of migrants in order to 'gain appreciation of the intentions implicated in the migration decision' (Halfacree and Boyle 1993: 343; see also Rogelja 2015, 2017). This biographical approach shifts focus from the

structural conditions that promote migration to the complexity and cultural framing of migration choices (Ni Laoire 2000). But we innovate this further by highlighting more precisely how migration is a practice, continually produced through the embodied interplay of individual circumstances and histories, structural and material conditions, privileges and constraints (Benson 2012; O'Reilly 2012). Further, the focus on biography enables a sense of migration as a lifelong, ongoing project; as Morawska describes, 'outcomes of the negotiations by actors of the societal structures, resulting from immigrants' different sociocultural backgrounds and their changing situations' (2009: 6).

In prior research, we have both made clear the limitations of uncritical presentation of migration stories (Benson 2011a; O'Reilly 2000). Asking migrants to account for their decision to migrate often produces post hoc rationalisations, or (re)constructions that impute coherence and logic in the (re)telling of stories. Social scientists have long understood history as a narrative construction, 'the value of the subjective in individual testimonies' (Samuel and Thompson 1990: 2), that life stories are 'remembered lives' (Davies 2008: 206), and that as people discursively account for their actions, they often frame them, retrospectively, as conscious intentions (Shove et al. 2012: 3). When migrants explain their migration as a conscious choice, linked to their personal histories and sense of self, they thus produce reflexive accounts that (re)align their sense of identity with their actions. Anthropologists and sociologists must interpret stories, analysing the way they are told, while remaining aware that in the telling we are also engaging in an act of representation. In this chapter, we prefer to do this openly and consciously by weaving our interpretations with the personal stories of migration we were told. Through this approach, we produce an overt analysis of the migration as practice (see Chap. 1).

Migrants often understand their lives as part of a journey and, as we interview them or chat with them, they narrate coherence into their former, present, and future lives. In this narration, the act of migration is often depicted as a watershed moment, both a time and location of radical transformation. However, in our research presented here, as well as in our work in France and Spain, we find migration usually represents more of a tipping point, an act undertaken on the basis of continual

re-evaluations of lives led, a culmination, if you like. This interpretation has been prominent in understandings of lifestyle migration, understood as a case par excellence of the reflexive project of the self (see, for example, Hoey 2005, 2006, 2014; Benson and O'Reilly 2009), the lifestyle migrant a self-enterprising neoliberal figure in Rose's (1996) terms; but it is also clear that for other, less privileged migrants, this process is also at play. Indeed, as Ni Laoire (2000) demonstrates in her work on rural Irish youth and their decisions to migrate, migration may be produced through long-term evaluations of how best to live and projective imaginings of the actions required to bring this about. In other words, migration is a practice, shaped by habitus and internal structures, in the context of constraints and opportunities, and in the frame of the communities within which we learn how to go on.

Choice also looms large within these tales of self-transformation. Best captured by Bousiou's (2008) characterisation of the lifestyle-seeking 'nomads' visiting Mykonos as Mykoniots d'election—people of Mykonos by choice—the ability to exercise choice underpins practices of lifestyle and elite migration. The danger inherent within this alignment of (lifestyle) migration with the project of the self lies in taking on face value the assertions of individualism and free will, obscuring the workings of structure that mean that these populations can move with relative ease (see also Benson 2011a; Korpela 2014). As Skeggs (2004) reminds us, choice is a privilege; it speaks to the agency of individuals and the ability to act, relatively unconstrained, based on choice. Within migration stories, this presentation of choice is crucial to claiming legitimation for migrants' actions to move to and live in a particular location.

To conclude, the biographical approach to migration is often pitted as an antidote to the overly structuralist approaches to understanding migration, revealing instead the complexity of the decision to migrate through a focus on individuals and their lives through rich, qualitative research (Halfacree and Boyle 1993; Ni Laoire 2000). However, in revisiting this body of literature, particularly with the focus on practice stories that we advocate in this book, we emphasise that there is a need to recognise the partiality of the accounts of these migrants, based as they are on 'remembered lives' (Davies 2008). In moving towards an understanding of migrant biographies as an analytical device, it is imperative to further

excavate the structural factors that interplay with these narratives. In practice, what this requires is a deep reading and rewriting of autobiographical accounts, weaving stories informed by practice theory. In this way, we reveal not only what these personal stories say about how migrants make sense of their relocations but also for what this can tell us about the wider social (and economic) structures they continually negotiate (and perhaps reshape).

A Snapshot of Diverse Lives

The migration biographies that we discuss below are illustrative of the diverse lives led by those who took part in the research. The migrants in the pages of this book are of varied social backgrounds, with diverse sets of experiences and current circumstances. Each of the biographies presented in this chapter reveals multiple themes that could be pursued and enquired into, but our intention here is simply to draw attention to the complexity of these human lives, how these individuals variously make sense of their migration, and what this tells us about the way they enact and embody societal structures. Before we embark on the presentation of these biographies, however, we wanted to provide a flavour of the diversity of these populations.

For the most part, our participants were North American (in Panama) and British (in Malaysia). In both locations, this was complicated by complex migration histories and genealogies. In Malaysia, this was notable in the national identities of those from diverse parts of the United Kingdom, mixed parentage, and even the extent to which participants expressed a *feeling* of Britishness. We therefore include, inter alia, a woman whose parents are Chinese and English; a woman who is American by birth (and citizenship) but who has spent the majority of her life in England and is married to an Englishman; a man who has relinquished his British passport with no intention of ever returning; and an Irish man who wished to be part of the research but insists he is not British. In Panama, while Canadians and those from the United States made up the majority of those participating in the research, it should also be noted that people originated from different parts of these countries and claimed

a range of ethnic backgrounds, although these were most frequently white European backgrounds. However, the research also included an Englishman married to a Panamanian woman, who had lived and worked in Panama for over 40 years; a man who had been born in Cuba, moving to Florida as a child and taking US citizenship; a Greek national who had lived outside Greece for his whole life; an English woman who had lived in the United States for many years before moving to Panama; and an English man who had retired to Florida and was in the process of moving on from Boquete to Mexico. Despite the differences in their backgrounds, we stress here that an overwhelming majority of our participants were white.

Our participants have lived in the destinations for anything from a few months to over 40 years. They include those who are there temporarily, on the way to somewhere else, as a short break from life in their home countries, as part of a long migration trajectory encompassing many other countries, or permanently having decided to make a new life there. Our research includes men and women aged from 20 to 95 years. Some are retired, many are working—as lawyers, tax advisers, journalists, teachers, environmental workers—many are self-employed or running their own small businesses (see Chap. 6). There were also 'trailing spouses', who have found themselves in the destination because their partners (usually husbands) have employment as 'expatriates'. This is more the case in Malaysia than in Panama, and several of these are engaged in voluntary work or some small-scale, part-time work.

The biographies presented below, and drawn out as illustrative of particular themes that were prominent, emerging through migration histories, should be understood within the context of this diversity.

Migration Histories

Our starting point in laying bare the diverse routes into migration is to highlight the work personal histories of travel and migration do within the migrants' narratives about what brought them to Malaysia and Panama. This reveals some of the sociological characteristics of the populations and

highlights that this is a more mixed population than might be assumed on first sight. This allows us to develop a deeper understanding of how structural privilege and the resourcefulness of individual migrants coalesce within these migrations.

For many of those taking part in our research, the ability to move was part of a longer, personal and family history of migration—individuals that Hammerton (2017) in his social history *Migrants of the British Diaspora since the 1960s* refers to as serial migrants—and thus inscribed in their habitus. This includes those we might think of as corporate expatriates such as Joe working in Malaysia as an engineer and consultant, or Laurie who had first moved to Panama to work for a large multinational bank.[1] Some worked within organisations, such as Leslie's husband, and some independently, or freelance, such as Julia. There were teachers, like Deb in Malaysia; business owners such as Jack, who runs a tax consultancy firm; and remote workers such as Ben. Of course, this long migration history is not the case for all of those taking part in the research. For those in Boquete, it was less common for migration to follow from a long-term stint living abroad; the exceptions to this were Britons including Mary who had moved to the United States early in her working life, getting married and raising children there, and Terry, who had worked in Panama for over 40 years. It was more common for those settled in Boquete to recall their spates of living abroad earlier in their working lives and for brief periods of time, mobilising these within their migration stories as formative experiences that had given them the feel for life in other, often unknown, destinations. For Winston and his wife Tricia, living in Guatemala early on in their married life, and Winston's experiences of growing up in the countryside, had inspired their migration to Panama when they retired. However, it is also important to acknowledge that younger or working-class individuals might have different or limited histories with international mobility—for example, Richard and Louise living in Malaysia, who had limited experience of travel and had never lived outside their country of origin. Even where they worked as corporate expatriates, there was also the possibility that this might be a new posting, as with Leslie and her husband.

Introducing a gendered dimension to these migration stories, it became clear that several of the men who participated in the research in Panama

had, at some stage in their life, been in the armed forces, working for long periods of time overseas; even for those who had not been career soldiers, military service was common, as many of them were of an age where they may have been drafted to serve in Vietnam. These experiences abroad were very much part of their narratives of how they had come to Panama, with some of them additionally having spent time there in the 1960s and 1970s, their experiences forming part of the rhetoric by which they had persuaded their wives and partners to consider it as a migration destination.

Chris, for example, had been in the US Army, had spent considerable time in Panama in the 1970s, and had worked on an expedition to cross the Darién Gap, visiting Boquete for respite.[2] His wife, Jane, had worked for a government agency in the United States and had never lived abroad, even though she and Chris had travelled extensively. When Michaela met them, they lived in Boquete part-time, spending the remainder of their time back in the United States, illustrating that migration to Panama might not even be full-time. Similarly, Bill and Sarah's decision to move to Panama had been inspired by Bill's travels there with the Navy. They had moved to Boquete in 2008, when Bill was in his 70s and Sarah in her 60s. As Sarah explained, he really had been the driving force behind the move, and what was she going to do? Divorce him? She loved him too much for that.

In Malaysia, Karen met several women who were living in Penang because their husbands had been posted to Malaysia for work. We also spoke to several whose migration stories began as children as 'Third culture kids' or 'Army brats' such as Sarah. There were those with extensive histories of travelling abroad for leisure and work, such as Sally, Renee, and Tess, who have lived in many different places in their lifetimes. In these cases, their life stories were migration stories.

In more unusual cases, the migration stories reveal hardships, flexibility, combined with a resourcefulness and sense of adventure. Although a Greek citizen, Paul had lived outside of Greece his whole life; growing up in Africa, he travelled back to Greece only for holidays. While he had spent some of his working life in Africa, he had later moved from Africa to Costa Rica and then to Panama where he ran a small shop and bar in Boquete. In Penang, Clare, in the following section, reveals the resourcefulness of some migrants in the face of adversity.

Clare: A Story of Resourcefulness in the Face of Adversity, from Volunteering in Sri Lanka to Running a Bar in Penang

When Karen met Clare she was running a bar and café in Penang, which was not doing very well, and Clare was thinking of moving on before her savings ran out. Her visa status was unclear, and it was also uncertain where she would move to next. Clare began her migrant life in Sri Lanka as a volunteer for the VSO (Voluntary Services Overseas). It was supposed to be a temporary posting, but she fell in love with a local man and stayed on longer than she had intended, living partly on her savings and partly on doing odd jobs. When that relationship ended and Sri Lanka was getting dangerous for foreigners, she moved to Penang where she knew another woman she had previously met in Sri Lanka. Since then Clare has run two different beach cafes in Penang, both times with partners who were having to do 'the visa run'. She is clearly just getting by in Malaysia, and yet spends some of her time doing voluntary work in an orphanage with other white Westerners, and is a member of an International Women's Association.

Other migration histories included those who had been immigrants to the United States at an earlier stage in their lives, having now become naturalised US citizens, such as Ed, who had been born in Cuba but had moved to the United States in 1961; he had studied in the United States, spent his working life as a lawyer in Florida, and aided by his ability to speak Spanish retired to Panama after realising that Spain, which was his number one choice, was too expensive on his pension.

Mary: A Story of a Trailing Spouse and a Diverse Migration History

Mary had been born and raised in London, but had moved to the United States and married a US citizen in 1958. She had moved around the United States as her husband's job required, living in Indiana, New York State, Chicago, and Texas. In each place, she took on some work, building on her experience of having worked for the British government prior to her own migration. When she had her three children, she worked part-time, but they continued moving, spending nine years back in the United Kingdom, but also spending a couple of years in Puerto Rico before moving back to New York State in 1983. When her husband died in the early 1990s, she decided to continue with their planned move to Florida, and it was here that she met her partner Jakob. He was Jewish and had fled Poland during the Second World War, settling in Shanghai and then moving to Hong Kong after the war. Later in life, he had moved to the United States.

Drawing out these longer migration histories lays bare some of the different routes into migration. It is also clear that these interplay with explanations of the decision to move to the current destination. For those who have previously travelled to Malaysia or Panama, their prior experience instilled in them a knowledge and understanding of what it offered as a place to live.

Nicola: Coming 'Home' to Malaysia and Migration as Self-Realisation

Nicola, who had moved to Malaysia as a freelance writer in 2012, felt as if she was coming home. She had spent her early years, from the ages of 4 to 10, in Penang with her parents, and she spent much of her conversation with Karen reminiscing about old Penang. She felt as if going to the United Kingdom was like moving to a foreign country, and she never got used to it: 'I had never worn a coat, I wasn't used to wearing shoes, I had never worn a Woollie. I just couldn't get used to these different clothes, I had always worn flip-flops, I ran around in shorts and t shirts.' She moved back to Malaysia as soon as she could afford to fund the move, after years of depression. Nicola thus portrays this move as an act of self-realisation, a fulfilment of her identity.

Deb: Living Abroad as an Ongoing Negotiation

For Deb and her husband, who both worked as teachers in Kuala Lumpur when Karen met them, the decision to move to Malaysia, after a spell in Kuwait and then Seoul, was because they had learnt to love living abroad. But, by this time, they had three children and wanted to live somewhere safer than their previous destinations. Deb told Karen she loves the fact the children can play outdoors safely, and that they all can travel easily to nearby countries to experience even more of Asia. But Deb was also missing her family in Ireland badly and was even considering returning there after her current contract ended.

Deb's story thus reveals, as we discuss below, the constant negotiations and compromises involved in migration trajectories. This presentation of the different routes leading to Boquete and Penang is intended to highlight how histories of migration articulate with the most current migration decision. What becomes clear through such accounts are the various

ways in which these lifestyle migrants draw on their past experiences to demonstrate that they have the skills and knowledge of how to live abroad, which equips them for their lives in the destination. Situating these within broader rationalisations of migration trajectories, below, we engage in the undoing of (relative) privilege in ways that further reveal the diversity of the population and the linear understanding of the migration 'act'.

Incremental Practices of Lifestyle Migration

In this next section, we draw attention to migration as a trajectory, to the ways in which decisions to migrate and over how to live are made in the face of ongoing contingencies; always informed by the internalised structures (habitus and conjuncturally specific), and the norms and expectations of those around us, in our communities of practice; and enabled (or not) by access to power and diverse forms of capital. In the vignettes presented below, we draw out the different motivations and experiences of those taking part in the research. These are stories of active and informed choices made by resourceful individuals, stories of leaving and arriving, stories that—as we often see in lifestyle migration—speak positively of the (imagined) place they were travelling to. But these stories rarely sound like the result of choices made on the balance of pros and cons, carefully planned, or rational profit-maximising choices. Rather, they are actions taken over long periods of time, in tiny increments, in the face of diverse contingencies. They are stories of lives as woven rather than driven. Indeed, even the fact we/they can call this lifestyle migration is often a reflection or reconsideration of life and migration that has been shaped by other forces. Someone choosing to migrate for a better job, for example, might also decide it is only worth taking that job if it also improves quality of life in other ways. Life's path takes unexpected twists and turns, despite the desire to follow a track, yet human agents retrospectively reconstruct their stories as journeys. As in films and novels, they make their lives linear in order to tell them. Our analysis, here, instead reveals these twists and turns and contingencies in a telling that disrupts this desire to be linear.

Actively Choosing a New Life

Many described their move as an active choice, in search of certain things, often shaped by social imaginaries, as described in Chap. 3. In telling these stories of choosing to go somewhere, they often reveal their desire to depict a cosmopolitan identity, an openness to cultural experience, a desire for rich experiences, and for travel. But they also reveal their need to be safe and secure, and thus their choice of somewhere politically stable, and religiously acceptable (just as we see in tourism literature). Some reconstructed home as somewhere to leave, where others spoke nostalgically of home. Some were rich in resources, others were just getting by.

For those in Malaysia, the move was often as much about the exotic pull of the Southeast Asia region as about Malaysia itself. Richard and Louise, for example, simply had a dream to move to Asia, maybe Hong Kong, maybe Singapore. They ended up in Malaysia because of the MM2H visa. Many Karen talked to spoke of being able to travel widely in the region (and cheaply) in order to experience other places. Travel, experiences, and multiculturalism are central themes in the stories of those in Penang, and with a special emphasis on food. In this way, these migrants are showing themselves to be open-minded, cosmopolitan, open to new experiences, and often fond of the great outdoors too. Jane, for example, told Karen: 'I spend a lot of my time outdoors so it suits me here.' Sarah, an army brat (in her own words) who had lived abroad much of her life, wanted a rich life, not rich in money but rich in life.

> As a teenager my parents had this huge house in Singapore with hot and cold running water, servants and all that. Not that I wanted that, but I loved the flavours, I loved the travel, the holidays, I loved the food.

Rebecca, an American who has lived much of her life in other countries, including the United Kingdom, and is married to an Englishman, said:

> Now, America, there's a problem with the health insurance. I don't have a health insurance there and I couldn't get one at this stage or it would cost me so much per month, I would be, you know, it would have eaten my savings. The UK is expensive and David doesn't want to go back … (so) we couldn't live in his country or my country and to tell you the truth, we

> weren't very eager to. I love my country but I don't necessarily need to live there … And, so we had to find a place to live and we liked Penang, we knew how cheap it was; we knew that culturally it suited us. He loves the spicy food, I like the multiculturalism and all this stuff, meet other people.

In Panama, this move was often framed rather generically as a change in lifestyle. Ben who had moved to Boquete from Arizona when his children left home to go to college, and who still worked, but remotely and from home using the good Internet connections available, described his migration as 'a move to quality of life rather than how many things you own'. The temperate climate—which set Boquete apart from the rest of Panama—the affordable healthcare, and the community of other North American incomers also featured prominently in accounts. It was also clear that leaving the United States was significant in the way that many of the people explained their migration to Michaela. For example, Ted, who had retired to Panama, but supported many philanthropic activities in Boquete, explained that he had felt stifled by life in the United States, while moving to Boquete had brought him individual freedom. For Alison, the move to Boquete for eight months of the year was a direct response to her divorce and her subsequent re-evaluation of what she wanted from life. It was clear that her time in Panama made her feel alive, '… here, I'm a person', enjoying the sense of community, the climate, affordable cost of living, which also meant that she could save money that she put towards travelling.

Alison: A Story About Moving to Boquete as Offering a New Lease on Life

In her own words, Alison had been born with a silver spoon in her mouth and was used to the good things in life. Explaining her migration story to Michaela, she said, 'I started coming in 2007, November … 2005, my husband says he wants to divorce me. I'd been retired so I had no income really … In the back of my head, I'm thinking, I'm going to be alone, I might as well do something, get out here, stretch your money, you know, what can you do? … I'm really thinking seriously about getting out of Canada, so I get on the phone, get on the Internet, and everything said Panama. All the write ups say Costa Rica's passé, it's more expensive, there's more crime … So I decided I'm going to apply for a *pensionado* and move to Panama having never been here. I had to have all this paperwork … I spent all my time on the phone. I got everything I needed somehow. I thought, I'll stay for a

month or so, I found a little place online to rent … I had a booking to leave, but I didn't want to go home … I went back to Canada for three months, and then I came back here in April and did three months … I live in Canada in the summertime … but I'm here eight months'. She continued, explaining that the relatively low cost of living made Boquete 'so livable … just the meals alone, 25% off, and 25% off all airlines, it's amazing … I'm single, and I'm adventurous, but you know, it's not for everybody, because you have to accept the way of life … it was a new lease on life to be able to know that I can survive on alimony'.

Mary, who we introduced above, explained 'I had wanted to leave for many, many years, but I just couldn't leave'. She described how she had first hoped that she might be able to move to Paris or to Southern Spain but found that she could not afford it; the exchange rate had not been in her favour, and then the housing market in Florida had crashed and she had not been able to sell her house. In this way, she described a lack of choice at other times in her life. Eventually, the decision to move to Boquete was made based on a variety of contingencies.

In Malaysia, the search for the exotic was somewhat ameliorated or conditioned by also a search for somewhere safe and secure. Karen got the sense that when people were telling her how exciting it was to travel to these other parts of Asia, they were also implicitly saying Malaysia was somewhere safe to come 'home' to. Migration to Malaysia was often a decision made as part of a longer trajectory. The MM2H visa, the sense of security, the fact English is widely spoken, all helped people whose jobs or contracts had come to an end, who wanted to try to set up on their own (as entrepreneurs), and even women whose husbands had left them for Asian wives, or men who had married (or met) Asian women. Renee and Karl, for example, chose Malaysia because it felt more like home (we discuss this more in Chap. 7).

Renee and Karl: A Story of Contingencies, Balancing Pros and Cons, of Friendship and Finding 'Home'

Renee and Karl had spent most of their lives abroad and, as Karl said, 'the question came when we had to retire, will it be here, London, Hamburg, Luxemburg. South Africa was still a candidate, but as we had spent so much

time in Asia we thought probably here, and as I had retired relatively early we thought that I could perhaps do something again here, or at least if not that, some travelling'. It was a balanced decision for them. Hong Kong and Singapore were too expensive and crowded; in Thailand, there is the language to deal with and you are not allowed to buy property as a foreigner; also, Thailand did not have the same health benefits as Malaysia. 'Here it is very easy, they have the Malaysia my second home, for ten years, its relatively easy. It's centrally located, relatively, and so we decided on here, and yes, we knew a few people and we got to know a few more'. Karl continued.

But ultimately, it came down to where most of their friends lived. 'There was a time in our lives when we thought all our friends from different places would retire in the green belt of London, but that hasn't happened at all', Renee said. Apart from family, no one they know lives in London, the weather is awful, it is too expensive, and you can't get help there (by this they mean domestic help, which we pick up again in Chap. 7). Interestingly, one reason they would have liked to return to London is because of the culture—arts shows, exhibitions, theatre, and so on. So, culture has different meanings depending on context.

Notable in the way that people described their move to Panama, to Michaela, is the extent to which Boquete features little in these accounts; it seems to be a place that they can afford to live but also that they can make of it what they will. AJ, a man in his 40s, described his move to Panama as having 'cut loose and run', packing his bags and leaving the United States for good. However, it is clear that within the community living in Boquete there was considerable difference in what they had liked and disliked about the political system back in the United States and how significant this was to their decision to migrate.

Tessa: A Story of Leaving the United States and All It Represents

Tessa and her husband had moved from the suburbs of Seattle to Boquete in 2008; she was in her 60s. 'I could not afford the US. I don't have a pension and in order to afford healthcare, I had to work'; indeed, during her working life, her employer had contributed towards her healthcare costs, which she stressed as costing $400–500 per month for a couple. As she listed to

Michaela the elements that made up the cost of living in the United States—the healthcare, tax, the costs involved in maintaining a house and keeping it up and running—it became clear that economic considerations were prominent within their decision to relocate. Further, while they had not been overly interested in US politics, they felt that they were always backing the wrong side, the issues that they were concerned about—anti-war and pro-life—never fully addressed.

They had done a lot of research on the Internet and travelled to Boquete in 2007 on vacation with the idea that this might be a good place for them to live. They fell in love with Boquete, the climate, vegetation, and the Hispanic culture reminding her of San Diego, where she had grown up in the 1950s, describing how this similarity made Boquete 'feel like home'. The Catholic Church in the centre of the town offering a weekly service in English and an English-speaking church community were further incentives to move to Boquete.

'I did not want to live in a gringo community. I wanted to live among the local Panamanians … I like that multicultural thing. I really enjoy that part of things … I like to think that I'm a little more invested in the community.' It was clear that she had invested in making connections and friendships with her Panamanian neighbours and members of the church community; she knew she had Panamanians that she could turn to for help and support, to whom she in turn offered help and support.

For Tessa, moving to Boquete was the consequence of careful planning and evaluation of the costs of moving, but also the consideration of whether this was a place that she and her husband could feel at home, becoming part of the community. Her account conveyed a strong sense of nostalgia for how things had been when she was a child, growing up in San Diego. Similarly Sarah, mentioned earlier, told Karen 'I love England, and I love Pimms on a summers day watching the cricket, and I love English sausages, and there's so much you miss apart from your family and friends'. However, she had no intention to return home permanently, as was the case for most of those Karen met. Even Deb, who was missing home so badly, missing her family and the Irish way of life, ended up taking a further foreign posting, this time working in Vietnam as a teacher. In Boquete, a different Sarah described how desperately homesick she had been for the first few years after migrating, returning back to Tennessee for 2–3 months at a time to visit friends and family.

For some the sense of community was important. Tessa was unusual in making clear her desire to be part of the community and to actively and consistently work towards developing relationships to these ends. Her children had rarely visited, the conditions of their working lives in the United States making it difficult to take the time off in order to travel. This perhaps made it even more important that they developed a support network of Panamanians. But this narrative also make clear the costs associated with ageing in the United States and how this might operate as an incentive for people to seek alternatives elsewhere. It also illustrates, as does Renee and Karl's story, how important the local 'expatriate' community in Malaysia and Panama become for migrants within the new destinations, as we discuss further in Chap. 7.

Migration as a Series of Contingencies

Despite their own emphasis on what and how they chose, most of these stories also reveal diverse contingencies, and a complexity of choices made incrementally. There are stories of job opportunities, of lost opportunities, of constant renegotiations of where and how to live. They may be stories of moving, of moving on, or even of not going home.

Colin's story, for example, was not so much a story of choosing Malaysia as somewhere to live as a matter of choosing to stay. He had been working for an American company in Malaysia, and when that company restructured and the section he worked for moved to Singapore, he and his family decided to stay in Malaysia, because by then they had three children and felt quite settled. Despite intending to stay for 2 years, 29 years later they were still there. Colin's wife, Jill, laughed and said, 'we couldn't find the airport'. Similarly, Julia's husband worked for a large company in Kuala Lumpur, and she had moved to Malaysia with him six years ago. But two years after moving there, her husband left her for a Malaysian-Chinese woman. Julia loved Malaysia by then and didn't want to go back to the United Kingdom, so she set up her own events-management company.

Joe: A Story of Choosing to Remain

Joe had been working in different parts of Asia for over 30 years, as an engineer and then as a consultant. Joe was first married to an English woman and had two children, then later to an Indonesian woman and had two more children. When he separated from his second wife, he decided not to return to the United Kingdom because his children there are grown up 'and got established lives' and his children who still live in Penang are younger and he feels they need him more. But more than that, 'I had been here so long I had got used to living in Malaysia, I liked the people. To me, it was home, and like I said I will never go back to the United Kingdom'. Interestingly, Joe said he holds all his capital in the United Kingdom and draws on it as he needs to as he is concerned that Malaysia is less secure. But he has the MM2H visa. 'I could have stayed on the three-month Visa and gone out every three months, but I didn't really want to do that because the more you do it the more immigration start to ask what are you doing back? So, I didn't really want to jeopardise that so, I had heard about the MM2H visa and I looked at the things we had to do and … said well let's go for MM2H'.

For those who found themselves staying put, it was clear that this was not always by design; it was rather the case that a series of contingencies were at play that supported and facilitated this practice.

Similarly, in the case of some of those we spoke to, it was precisely these contingencies that brought about migration to Malaysia and Panama in the first place. Mary and Ed, who we met earlier, described how the relatively high cost of property in Spain, which had been their first choice of destination, had placed this possibility out of their reach, finding Boquete instead. Alison, who we met earlier, described how her divorce from her husband had spurred her to pursue 'a new lease of life', to 'get out of Canada'. She applied for a *pensionado* visa without even visiting Panama; as she explained, 'you can imagine what it would be like landing in a country and you're going to live in and you've never been there'. For Leslie, the decision had been to try something new, and Malaysia presented itself as an opportunity. And Sandy found herself living in Panama part-time on the advice of a man who had come to fix the engine of her boat. As these two latter examples demonstrate, there is a certain degree of serendipity involved in these migrations; just as for those who find themselves staying put, migration is not always fully plotted out in advance.

Leslie: A Story of Contingencies, New Migrations, and Adventure

I loved my job but it was quite stressful and emotionally involving, and Jamie basically hated his job because it was draining him. It was such a highly politicised environment that it would leave him emotionally exhausted at the end of the day. So, we had a big, kind of, life summit—February 2011 it must have been—and we both agreed that if the stress level of my job hadn't changed by April/May I would hand in my notice. And he promised to hand in his notice by September whatever. And so he started looking for other jobs, kind of knowing he only had a few months to go before handing in his notice. And within two months, I mean no time at all, he received this kind of, not an offer as such, but an 'oh we are interested in you' from a guy he knew at one of the big tax and audit companies; basically, they said 'we've got loads of opportunities would you be interested?' And in this life summit we had said to each other that by my birthday in 2012, we would either be living in the countryside with a dog or we would be doing something completely wild that we never thought we would. So, when this opportunity came up, we were like, oh my god, this is what happens to other people, so let's do it, let's see where it leads. Then, by August, he had got a job offer on the table from Malaysia. We were like, yes! We have to say yes, don't we?

Toni: A Story of Contingencies, Habitus, and Conjuncturally Specific Internal Structures

Toni used to be a jockey, until, she said, 'I ate myself out of a job'. She moved to Penang in February. They chose Malaysia, as they like Malaysia. They thought Kuala Lumpur was too hectic and didn't want to live in Jakarta, so chose Penang. Toni's stepdad had been to Penang from Jakarta as a medical tourist and her mother came too and really liked it there, so Toni thought they would give it a try. But next she might try Cambodia or Thailand, she said.

Toni's husband is quite a bit older than her and retired, and they have two children. While she had originally home-schooled the children, her son is 13 and just gone back to America to live with family—which was very hard for her at first—and her 15 year-old daughter has just started a new school in Penang. Both her children are adopted. They adopted one while on honeymoon (she was late getting married too, she says). They were on holiday in Jakarta and a friend had adopted there and they went to check on it. Toni described meeting her daughter, who is Indonesian, for the first time, 'and they said "do you want to take her home tonight?" and we said yeah, and she was three days old!' Their son, alternatively, is a blue-eyed, blonde-haired Texan, and people mistake him for her biological son.

Richard and Louise had hoped to move to the Far East when they retired, but took it step-by-step, first visiting locations for a few days at a time before spending a longer holiday in Penang, where they have now settled. They described a series of chance encounters and coincidences—mostly with other Britons who had lived there—that made them feel that the move was meant to be and that eventually led them to settle in Batu Ferringhi. Jonathan too described how he and his Japanese wife had tried living in different places, evaluating what they offered—the visa regimes and incentives, the prospects for property investment, language—before settling in Malaysia.

Richard and Louise: A Story of Less Privileged Migrants, of Opportunities, Chance Encounters, and Serendipity

Richard and Louise, a working-class couple who had not lived abroad before, were simply looking for somewhere to retire. Richard had had a dream of moving to Hong Kong since he was very young even though he had never been there. They explained to Karen how they had travelled to Hong Kong, with Penang as a two-day stopover on their way home. The next trip it was Bali, and then it was Thailand. They had done this two or three times. This was 16 years ago. As Louise explained, 'we liked Penang so much that we came back for a two-week holiday. We really enjoyed it, it was nowhere near as built up as this. Two years running we came and spent a couple of years here, we really liked it. Then we started to think about retirement, didn't we? So then, because we had only been to Penang, we had a look round at other places as well. We did a sort of a fly drive all around Malaysia. We started in KL, and then we already had the last week already booked in Penang, and coming over the bridge it felt like we were coming home. We felt it was a place we could actually live, as opposed to just have a holiday. So, you won't believe the rest of it. We had a week in Batu Ferringhi, and we thought let's just have a look at a couple of houses. We got talking to this bloke and it turned out he had a greengrocer's where we used to live and so, he said yes it's a good life. He had been here about five years and he said have a look round my house. It was on a new development and there were plenty of empty houses already built, so we got a telephone number and looked around some of the empty houses. Then we saw this one and the agent said, "the owner lives in England", and we thought "oh this is just meant to be!" Everything felt right'.

Jonathan: A Story of Mixed National Identities and Compromise

Jonathan is English but grew up partly in Australia, then spent ten years living in the United Kingdom. He then went to Japan because he wanted to experience a different culture, and he met the woman who is now his wife. After Japan, Jonathan and his wife tried living in Australia again, but they didn't really like it, so they moved to the United Kingdom. He was not happy in his job, so decided he could just about afford to retire early. He tried Thailand for one year to see if they would like to settle there, but they decided against it. Then they tried Malaysia. His wife's family was in Japan, his family was in Australia and the United Kingdom, and they had family in Europe, so Asia seemed a good midway. He said Thailand was a problem because of the property laws and the language. His wife doesn't like Japan, even though she is Japanese herself, because of the mentality of the people. They thought about Latin America, especially Panama because it has such a good retirement package, 'But I think that a lot of Americans go there which could be annoying. But I think it is a very good system. We didn't really consider Indonesia at the time. Really in the end it was the retirement visa that they have here, it is really very good', Jonathan told Karen.

These stories of contingencies also reveal that not all the migrants are rich; choice and imaginaries creatively interplay with individual biographies, habitus, and resources in the ways that people rationalise their migration and settlement. Angie, a woman in her 60s who had recently moved to Panama, described to Michaela how she and her partner were living on limited resources in Boquete, but that these stretched further than they had done back in the United States. She told her story through the gloss of the adventure of living somewhere different.

Angie's Story: A Story of Less Economically Stable, of Adventure, of the Importance of the 'Expat' Community as a Social and Financial Resource

Michaela and Angie shared a taxi from the airport to Boquete one rainy evening. Chatting excitedly over the course of the 50-minute journey, Angie described how she and her partner had ended up in Boquete. While originally from Louisiana, she described her life as a series of adventures that at one stage had seen her living aboard a sailboat in the Caribbean. She compared her life to that of her sister, who thought she was mad to move around so much.

A year earlier, she had travelled to Bocas del Toro with a girlfriend, and had loved the laid-back lifestyle and atmosphere of this Caribbean destination. Returning to the United States, she had persuaded her partner to give it a go, the latest in her series of adventures. However, the heat and humidity of Bocas was too much for him; rather than return to the United States, they thought they might try Boquete and had moved there just three months previously. They were renting an apartment in the centre of the town, paying only $350 per month in rent. The forensic detail she supplied about how much cheaper everything was in Boquete indicated that she was not as well off as some of the others living in the area. This extended beyond the cost of medical care and electricity and into the consideration of food. As she described, on a trip to the local market place—a covered maze of stalls next door to the municipal buildings—she had been amazed to find that she could walk away with two large plastic bags full of food for $2. Angie had also found she could afford small luxuries, such as a massage for $30, a pedicure for $7, and a manicure for $2 in the town.

Even though they had only been there for a short while, she was familiar with many of the 'expat' meeting points. This community was also a source of income for her; she explained that she was a seamstress—only the other week she had sold 20 handbags that she had made, and raised $800. Angie was a regular visitor to Amigos, the 'expat' bar in the centre of Boquete, where she could be found chatting with other North Americans.

Contingencies and the incremental development of migration trajectories that we have highlighted above may be as clear in the narratives of younger migrants, those pursuing work—as we saw already in the case of Leslie and Jack—as it is for those who are retiring. For example, in her early 30s, Emma had sold her house and given up her job in the United States, to go travelling for a year. Coming to Panama as part of a trip that had taken her to 26 different countries, she eventually decided to settle in Boquete where she had a strong feeling that she could make a difference, setting up a non-profit organisation. Since living in Boquete, she also pursued new opportunities, most recently starting up a yoga studio.

Emma: A Story of Youth, and a Leap of Faith

Emma was one of a small group of people aged in their 30s who had relocated to Boquete from the United States or Europe. She described how the move to Boquete was about rebalancing her life.

She had been living in Boquete since 2006—a move she described as 'a leap of faith'—setting up a small volunteering programme there. The programme drew in international volunteers either through its intern programme or as voluntourists. When Michaela met them in 2010, Emma and her husband were thinking about having children. Working with the children's home in David, Emma had met many children who needed a home and family and had started to explore whether there was a possibility of adopting. In the end they did not adopt, but they now have a young son who they are bringing up in Boquete. More recently, Emma has trained as yoga instructor and now runs a yoga school.

These stories reveal the rich diversity of migrants in Malaysia and Panama; most importantly they are stories of people rich with choices as well as stories of those just getting by, muddling along, and making a life for themselves as they go.

Futures

In this final section, we reflect briefly on the temporalities and permanence of these lifestyle migrations. Just as these migrations might build on mobile pasts, imaginings of mobile futures challenge the idea of migration as a one-off move. We met people who, since the research, have returned to their place of origin. Both Victoria and Sandy who Michaela had met in Boquete had gone back to the United States; Victoria—who we introduce further below—described how she had developed a greater appreciation for how things functioned there after living in Panama, and Sandy explained that she had wanted to be closer to her grandchildren. What this shows is the different contingencies, relationships, and ties that might influence future mobilities. But it is also clear that, especially for those who have been outside their place of origin for a long period of time, the presumed 'home' that they might otherwise return to is unfamiliar and often presented as unappealing after their experiences of living elsewhere, a place they definitely do not want to return to.

Sarah: Making Sure Her Children Feel British (and at Home Anywhere)

Sarah and her husband have four children—two are adopted and two are their biological offspring. Their adopted daughters are Malaysian Indian girls; one was adopted at four weeks old and one from an orphanage at four and a half years old. They are now both in their 20s, the older of the two is at university in England. Sarah explains that her older daughter 'feels British in a brown skin', while the younger one, 'she says, "I'm a coconut you know, because I'm brown on the outside and I'm white on the inside" and she's got this posh accent coming out of an Indian face. It's hysterical'. But they can choose, she said. 'They can go back to London, because they've got British passports. They can travel the world because they've got a taste for it. That's alright. As long as they don't feel discontented everywhere. That's why I tell them, Carpe Diem, you know, grab what you can … that's my philosophy. I don't want them to feel like third culture kids that don't belong anywhere. There are a lot of third culture kids that don't know where they belong. That's why we specifically asked our kids, you know, lots of them want to go to Australia, but we said you need to go back in your formative years to know what it is to be British. You are British'.

There are also those who, like Mary, envisage ending their days in these locations; as she explained to Michaela, 'The only thing that would change that is if I had a serious illness and my daughter would probably insist I go back.' For Sarah in Malaysia, who had two adopted daughters, sending them to Britain for university was a deliberate strategy to instil in them a sense that they were British while also encouraging them to feel that they belonged anywhere in the world. However, it is also clear that there are others—for example, Renee and Karl, Chris and Jane—who spend part of their time elsewhere in the world. Such peripatetic migrants might imagine one day settling in one place or another, but for now continue to move between places.

And then there are others who consider Malaysia and Panama home for now but have ambitions for future mobilities. Tim, a British man Michaela met in Boquete, was moving on to Mexico within days, the next destination for him and his wife in their 'slow walk towards a better life'. As this quotation clearly demonstrates, getting to the good life may be achieved not all at once but in incremental steps. Deb was adamant

that their move to Malaysia was semi-permanent, that they are lifestyle migrants not expatriates, and that they want to savour living there and contribute to the local community. Leslie, who we met earlier, had moved to Malaysia, her husband Jamie taking up the job offer that he had received. She later trained to be a teacher, explaining it is not only so that she can also work there, but also because of the opportunities that this might open up for them to move onto other places in the future. Importantly, she hopes for a mobile life in the future, even though this is not part of her personal history or habitus.

Tim: And the Slow Walk to a Better Way of Life

Tim, a British citizen in his 50s who had lived abroad since selling his company and retiring at the age of 40, was leaving Boquete after spending eight months living there, renting accommodation as they tried out the life there. Boquete had not fulfilled their expectations; he listed the weather, the lack of things to do, and the paucity of good restaurants among their reasons for moving on. His wife, who he had met in the United States, had gone on ahead to Lake Chapala in Mexico—a location known, among other things, for its large North American 'expatriate' community, a further requirement on their list of desirable qualities in a place to settle. This might suit them, it might not, but they would only know if they tried it out.

But there are also people for whom the move does not turn out as they imagined, their circumstances and relationships change, and experiences do not match up to their imaginings of the lives they might lead. The breakdown of marital relationships was one example of such changes. Carol, who was in her 70s, explained that she had originally moved to Panama with her husband; they had left the United States because they had borrowed as much as they could against their house and their monthly social security payments were barely enough for them to live on. But a few months into their time in Boquete, her husband had left her, returning to the United States. It was also clear that this had happened to several other couples in Boquete, with one partner choosing to stay and the other to return. For others, the maintenance of relationships might be a reason to leave; after spending six months in Panama City following his

retirement, Mark was intending to return to the United States to be reunited with a woman he had met in Panama City but who had to return in order to work. His plan was to go back to see if they might work as a couple.

Beyond relationships, there were other sudden changes in circumstance that might suddenly change the tack of these migration trajectories. The rumours circulating around the 'expat' community that following a car accident—for which they feared they would be found guilty and would have to spend time in a Panamanian prison—a couple had fled the country moving back to the United States, were revealing of how a (dramatic) change in circumstances might influence decisions about onwards migration. Burglary was one such event; as Alison had pointed out, her neighbours had decided to move back to the United States after their house had been broken into. For Victoria, the theft from her rented property of her laptop and jewellery her now-deceased husband had given her was the last straw in the nightmare of her efforts to settle in Boquete. She listed a flood to another property she had rented, the difficulties with getting workmen to build her new home, her perception of lack of recourse for foreigners through the legal system, and repeatedly feeling as though she had been 'ripped off' as reasons for returning to the United States.

Migration stories reveal the time spent settling, the relationships formed, and the ways in which people are changed by their experiences. This takes our analysis forward to thinking about how people project into the future, and how these are shaped by habitus, conjuncturally specific internal structures, and contingencies (see Chap. 1).

Conclusion

This chapter has shifted focus from the structural conditions that shape migration, to the ways in which these conditions are embodied and acted upon by the migrants. In particular, we have explored this interplay of structures and habitus through the deep reading and rewriting of the migrants' autobiographical accounts of their migration, and then weaving in our interpretations informed by practice theory. In this way, we

have been able to reveal how the migrants interpret their migrations, demonstrating how through migration they navigate and negotiate wider social and economic structures and daily contingencies.

These biographies have also provided a snapshot of the populations we worked with in Boquete and Penang. Selected to illustrate the diversity of such populations, the migrant biographies presented over the course of the chapter trouble the understandings of these migration flows—such as those that underscore the promotion and marketing of Boquete and Penang as places to invest in—that see them one-dimensionally as wealthy and privileged. In this way, it becomes clear that while the marketing and promotion of destinations may be intended for particular populations (as we outlined in Chaps. 3 and 4), it inadvertently attracts others, those who might not meet the 'ideal type' of migrant-cum-investor that governments, intermediaries, and brokers have in mind.

Finally, these biographies seek to disturb the linear account of migration, demonstrating instead the twists and turns that migration and the pursuit of a better way of life might entail. What this means is that migration is incrementally achieved, interwoven with contingencies that both provide and limit opportunities. The resourcefulness of these migrants in navigating and negotiating their way through this is made visible in the migrant biographies presented throughout this chapter. Similarly, shifting focus in this way allows for the recognition of the impermanence of migration; simply put, future mobilities are not off the cards, once more, the contingencies, needs, and desires interplaying to bring about the conditions through which people are able to stay put or move on.

Notes

1. Later in the chapter, we introduce some of those who took part in the research in more detail.
2. The Darién Gap describes the 100 km of rainforest that engulfs the border between Panama and Colombia that marks a break in the Pan-American highway, which otherwise links uninterrupted all of the countries of the Americas. It is possible to transit the gap using off-road vehicles, with a history of such expeditions dating back to the Marsh expedition in the 1920s.

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6

Working Towards the Good Life

Here we again draw from the practice theory approach outlined in Chap. 1, in order to frame an understanding of the relationship between work and migration for privileged migrants. We shift focus from the diversity of lives prior to migration, which we examined in the previous chapter, to the lives as lived in the destinations. This will illustrate how (a) work and privileged migration variously interplay and (b) the creative navigation of changing structures by those who work, as well as by those who engage in voluntary and entrepreneurial forms of occupation. We argue here that work is not as central a defining feature of privileged migrants' lives as assumed in popular conceptions, and some academic work to date. Nor can we assume all privileged migrants are or have been wealthy expatriates, mobile professionals, or part of a business elite. Nevertheless, work and occupation shape identities and relationships to place, informing why or how migrants moved in the first place, how they funded the move, their relationships to each other, and their daily lives.

The themes we draw out below are intended to challenge the focus of much of the literature on privileged migration and work, which has centred either on retirement or expatriacy. Here we look at both, but also at the complexities of each as well as at many other forms of work

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and occupation. Included amongst British in Malaysia and Americans in Panama are what Fechter (2007) has termed corporate expatriates (see Chap. 1); some of these, as we will see, are on excellent remuneration packages, with extremely high wages, some employed by highly ranked transnational companies. However, these were not of central interest for our research, with its focus on lifestyle migration. Furthermore, as we will go on to describe, such 'expat packages' are on the decline, organisations are trying to employ more local labour, and some of the packages or contracts can be quite insecure. We will illustrate how the role of free choice in privileged migration is not as straightforward as it might appear from a cursory glance. Furthermore, thinking of the classic 'trailing spouse', or corporate expatriate wives (Fechter 2010), we will see that some of the wives and partners of corporate expatriates have perhaps not specifically chosen the migration path at all; rather, it was imposed on them. We will also introduce women who had been left behind in Malaysia (or had chosen to stay behind) when husbands met other life partners or their work took them elsewhere. Some of them were quite entrepreneurial. We also met men who were entrepreneurial and had blurred the boundaries of migrant life and local life. We discuss the way teaching was a job several we met had chosen, perhaps as a way of experiencing an area and funding travel. Women and men were involved in this, but contracts were often short, so it can be a difficult decision for a family. Among those we met and spoke with were many who were retired, as in the work of Paul Green (2014) in Malaysia; we also met poorer people, who were struggling financially, and we will show how many of these are heavily involved in other types of work such as in the associations. We will illustrate how, beyond the realm of paid work and entrepreneurial activity, there is large amount of volunteering and charity work being engaged in by our lifestyle migrants. Some of this is located in the clubs, as we have discussed in the previous chapter, and some is more individual.

This chapter thus highlights local articulations of the practices of postcolonial living. The focus on diverse forms of work and occupation, that we outline in more detail below, gives us the opportunity to examine the ways in which quality of life is not only sought but achieved, the flexibility of migrants' lives, and the myriad ways in which they are able (or not)

to respond through the practice of daily life and in their communities of practice to the many contingencies, twists and turns, with which they are confronted. We see that their responses are locally meaningful, responsive to proximate structures and to conjuncturally specific, rapidly changing conditions they meet on the ground.

Beyond the 'Expatriate Package'

One of our goals in this chapter is to contribute to and extend academic debates about the relationship between privileged migration, work, and occupation. As has now been recognised by a number of scholars (Conway and Leonard 2014; Fechter 2007; Fechter and Walsh 2010; Green 2014; Kunz 2016), there has been a tendency to conflate Western migration, privileged migration, and skilled migration, or expatriacy. This is based on, we suspect, a further, more deep-seated tendency to see labour as the primary motivation for any migration that is not otherwise for asylum or refuge. As we discuss in Chap. 1, there is a tendency to classify migrants drawing on assumptions about class, country of origin, and economic status, and this lexicon is carried over into the academic literature where, rather than talk of Western (im)migrants in Indonesia or South Africa, for example, we hear of mobile professionals (Fechter and Walsh 2010), skilled expatriates (Beaverstock 2002), business or corporate expatriates, or mobile young people (Amit and Dyck 2010). Even when popular literature and common lexicon refer to 'trailing spouses', the link to formal work is made through reference to its absence (see Coles and Fechter 2008). This tendency to conflate privileged migration and highly skilled work is further evidenced in the more recent term 'self-initiated expatriates' (Butler and Richardson 2013) to distinguish those who choose to move abroad for work (as opposed to being sent by their organisation). Furthermore, these studies all tend to look at work lives, careers, or related experiences.

Similarly, where the literature on privileged migration is focused on retirement migration, the assumed link between work (in this case, end of work life) and migration remains as taken-for-granted prior condition. While these conceptual framings work to distinguish these privileged

subjects from other migrant populations, they understate the changing conditions of the global labour market that affect those moving for work, irrespective of their background. As Green (2015) emphasises, what we might term an expatriate is changing; for the large part, the 'expatriate package' is on the decline (as discussed in Chap. 1), and while corporate and diplomatic postings remain privileged postings, they co-exist with other forms of working. As Butler and Richardson (2013) has identified, the current landscape is markedly different from 'conventional expatriacy'; there are diverse entry routes into this from the corporate expatriate to those seeking foreign placements, indicative of various relationships between labour and migration. The extent to which choice is possible within this also varies; for example, some individuals choose to move, but not where to go or for how long; and some are uncertain where they will go next, as we will go on to illustrate.

Corporate Expatriates and Mobile Professionals in Malaysia and Panama

Some of those who took part in our research would fit with these broad understandings of the relationship between privilege, labour, and migration; there was evidence of comfortable levels of wealth, people on good-quality 'expatriate packages', and those owning large companies. In Malaysia, especially in Kuala Lumpur (and to a lesser extent in Penang), several men and some of the women worked for large transnational companies located in or around the free trade zones. Examples include a man working as a writer for a multinational analytics company in Butterworth; an independent tax advisor; an editor for a large online 'expatriate' magazine; a chartered accountant; a diplomat; an executive chairman of an Asian-based education company; Asia-Pacific president of an electronics company; and several who declined to name the company they worked for but who were on those very comfortable expatriate packages discussed in Chap. 1. As Christian, who had worked himself for many years as a tax adviser, told us, many of the larger local companies in Penang continue to hire expatriates despite the express intention in more recent years for companies to employ more local labour:

> if you look at any local companies, like all those electrical companies near the airport, they all have their foreigners. Not necessarily, let's say, a German company has a German, but they might have an American or an English, or they might have an Indian even, but, yes, they are normally expatriates.

In the research in Panama, the primary focus on Boquete means that such corporate expatriates and mobile professionals were not such an evident presence. Nevertheless, when visiting Panama City for short research trips, Michaela would meet those we might more comfortably call expatriates or mobile professionals. In some cases, these people worked for transnational companies—for example, in shipping and banking—but it was also clear that some had chosen to move to Panama City because of the opportunities it offered, with several of them attempting to set up their own businesses. Even these brief insights to life in Panama intimated some of the complex ways in which privileged migrations are tied to working lives: certainly, the relationship between work, employment, and migration is more complicated than a model of 'conventional expatriacy' permits (Butler and Richardson 2013; Green 2014).

There were a couple of exceptions to this in Boquete. Laurie, a young woman in her 30s, had moved to Panama with the multinational bank she worked for, having previously worked in various locations around the world. She gave this up though, moving to Boquete with her Panamanian husband, seeking a less frenetic life; they now ran a tourism business. Terry, who we met in Chap. 5, was another exception. An Englishman, now in his 70s, married to a Panamanian woman, had moved to Panama from Indonesia in the 1970s, and worked first piloting tankers at the oil trans-shipment terminal and then, when work became scarce, moved across to pilot ships through the Canal. This made him unusual within the context of Boquete, which was telling in how he understood the broader population of 'gringos', 'That's why I'm different' he said, 'I had to conform to the labour code of Panama, and of course learn the language.' What this trajectory demonstrates for us, however, is a flexibility to changing employment circumstances that allowed him to stay in Boquete, where he had family. We discuss this flexibility of migrants and the resourcefulness to respond to changing circumstances in more detail below.

As discussed in Chap. 7, the luxurious residential developments in these urban environments are part of the landscape within which such privileged migrants live and work, as illustrated in the photos that those taking part in Karen's research in Malaysia sent her. Indeed, many of the condominiums in Kuala Lumpur and Penang are built especially for wealthy investors and are populated by those who have become known as internationals or expatriates, terms that indicate that this is not restricted to white Westerners but also includes mobile professionals from other Asian countries, and even Malaysia itself. As Panama's ambitions for a more prominent position in the global economy have been realised, there have been similar residential developments in Panama City; these at one and the same time provide homes for the expatriated workers and are promoted as investment opportunities for international buyers (see also Chap. 3).

So, true to the common assumption among academics and publics alike, our migrants in Malaysia and Panama do include privileged corporate expatriates or mobile professionals who move with work. But our main goal here is to trouble the notion of the 'expat'. Indeed, we avoid the term wherever possible, precisely because of its many connotations but also because our participants themselves often did not fit this mould (see Chap. 1). At the heart of such a challenge is the assumed relationship between work and migration. As we demonstrate in the following sections, the choice to be mobile that is characteristic of contemporary forms of corporate expatriacy and mobile professionals is paired with insecurities, flexibilities, resourcefulness, and practice; this reveals how even such privileged migration is structured and constrained by, and shaped in response to, a range of forces.

Choice and Insecurity in Working Lives Abroad

In this next section we show how what we might still call 'corporate expatriates' (Fechter 2005) were sometimes sent or invited by companies and sometimes chose to go, or self-initiated (Butler and Richardson 2013). As outlined in Chap. 1, expatriate packages are now in decline or less attractive, especially for families. Organisations are trying to employ local labour more; the 'expatriate package', which included certain securities—for example,

healthcare and insurance, income in the currency of the country of origin—is being supplanted (as discussed in Chap. 1); and 'expatriate' life can be insecure, rapidly changing, and part of this is the classic 'trailing spouse'—women (and men occasionally) who have perhaps not chosen this path at all. Migrants and their partners who seek work are subject to the practices of governance, as discussed in Chap. 4. In each case, these migrants respond in practice to changing circumstances, and may have to be very resourceful and flexible when confronted by a limited set of choices, potential insecurity, and risk. While it is still true that some individuals (and families) are sent abroad by their companies for a temporary posting, in many cases people actually seek this out either from the opportunities offered by their current employer or by applying specifically for a posting abroad. This was the same in the research by Butler and Richardson:

> Indeed, our respondents had 'self-initiated' their foreign placements by searching for jobs in Malaysia (or typically within Southeast Asia) through job websites, recruitment consultants or via contacts they had made within industry networks. This is an important factor in the formation of our decision to avoid the term 'expatriate', particularly as conventional expatriates have been predominantly identified as professionals who are assigned to locations around the globe without choice. (Butler and Richardson 2013: 253)

Seeking a foreign placement is telling of the privilege and agency of these individuals, while also, at least to their minds, distinguishing them from expatriates; indeed, several of those Karen spoke to in Penang and Kuala Lumpur spoke of choosing to go abroad for the experience, the travel, to experience new cultures, and they appreciated our use of the term 'lifestyle migration' as it enabled them to be distinguished from the lifestyles and stereotypes of corporate expatriates.

Choice also came into play as migrants made decisions about their future mobilities; as the British Consul in Penang explained of his residential biography:

> [I] worked for an American company, and then in 2004 it restructured. They moved the section I was running down to Singapore, but we wanted to stay here. We do have permanent residence, so we can stay here. So we decided to stay on.

What this also reveals are the ongoing changes to the proximate and wider structures that facilitate these migrant lives and employment; companies change their foreign operations—perhaps in response to changing regulations and governance, or the emergence of new overseas markets—and this has direct consequences for the people working for them, or for the opportunities available to those choosing to live abroad. Such restructuring and change can also be an insecure experience. As Julia described, she had spent years moving with her husband who was on short-term contracts, including time spent between the United Kingdom and Malaysia while her children were at college or university. Eventually, Julia's husband was fired for low performance, as his company went through restructuring. When Karen spoke to them, he was looking for new employment and Julia herself was also thinking of looking for work. But, to illustrate the ongoing contingencies and various forms of capital that enable such migrants to cope with complex circumstances, Julia's children are growing up, which frees up some of her time, her husband fought the decision to fire him and was made redundant instead, getting a small payout, and they now have MM2H visas (see Chap. 4), both the payout and their visas helping them deal with gaps between jobs.

These stories of redundancy, unemployment, short-term contracts, and insecurity are also stories of resourcefulness, flexibility, and an 'expatriate habitus' in the practice of daily life. These privileged migrants seem able to deal with the structural changes thrown their way and to adapt positively to changing circumstances. Ultimately, as with Julia, who could rely on some invested capital and the MM2H visa, to see her through the difficult times, most privileged migrants do not really experience destitution.

Sally, an interpreter, is a good example of someone who, with her family, 'travelled where the work was'. She had lived and worked in many different countries before marrying a British man and settling in Hong Kong for a while, where he had work. They both then returned briefly to the United Kingdom before her husband took another posting, this time in Bangkok, followed by one in Kuala Lumpur. Their residential trajectory reflects the short-term contracts, redundancies, and uncertainties about where the next work would come from, all the while matched by a desire to not return to the United Kingdom. At one stage, when her

husband was made redundant, they moved with their four children to a chalet on the French/Swiss border. But, she says, 'we learnt that we were not ready to be Heidi and Peter up the mountain! So, back we came to KL and he started his own company, with me as a director.' The company is now 13 years old, and they are doing well. At the time of talking to her, Sally and her family had been in Kuala Lumpur 20 years and were very happy.

Other postings abroad (sometimes self-initiated) included people working as teachers of English but also in schools teaching different subjects. This was also common amongst those Karen met in Penang. However, again this was often precarious work, as many of the teachers were on short-term contracts of two to three years. Some were happy to move on to different countries as they started a new contract; others, however, were bringing up children and wanted to settle more long-term, an ambition complicated by the short-term contracts.

Gender and Expatriacy

Another significant dimension of the research on expatriates is gender, particularly as this has been articulated through the concept of the 'trailing spouse'. This is particularly prominent in this body of work because of the ways in which expatriate postings reproduce the gender inequalities within the labour market (see, for example, Fechter 2010; Walsh 2007), the jobs of male breadwinners often being privileged over those of their wives and partners. Our research in Malaysia and Panama provides further insights into the negotiations that take place between couples within the decision to migrate, and relationships beyond migration, demonstrating that these are more complex than they might appear at first sight.

Leslie, who we met in Chap. 5, shows the difficulties some women have in finding a place for themselves as 'trailing spouses'. When her husband was offered a short-term contract in Malaysia (two years extendable to five), they moved there. Neither of them came from 'expatriate' backgrounds, and neither had lived abroad before. She described thinking she could simply be, as she put it, an expat wife, and live by the pool, but she

was bored within three weeks. She started to look for work, and was quickly offered what she thought could be her dream job, in HR in Penang. But then she stopped herself:

> when we came out here I made a promise to my husband that would we would not compete for the alpha job—you know the right to be stressed, the right to not be the one making dinner that night. If I took the job I'd never be able to start a family, I'd be reneging on everything we agreed. So, 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 want for 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. So, to finally answer your question, 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. So, all these things that create opportunities that just wouldn't exist in England. I suppose that's it …. I think perhaps we are a kind of new generation, *a new style of expat*. I wouldn't be surprised if lifestyle migration didn't just take off, if the recession doesn't put it off. (Emphasis added)

We also met women who had been left behind in Malaysia (or had chosen to stay behind) when husbands met other life partners or their work took them elsewhere. Some of these were quite entrepreneurial. Melanie, for example, had moved to Penang because her husband had work there, but he left her for a Malaysian woman he met. She now runs a small business, running workshops and classes, organising tours and day trips, talks, exhibitions, and social events. In a way, she is using her energies, and making a living, marketing and selling (and creating) the Penang she wants to live in.

These brief examples illustrate how different employment conditions interplay with the experiences of such (privileged) populations abroad in ways that complicate the commonly held image of the relationship between work and privileged migration. Even an expatriate posting can be challenging, limited, short-term, or risky. While for many within these

populations, migration is a choice, working conditions cannot be guaranteed and may be more of a compromise. But we also see that these privileged migrants can be resourceful in the practice of their lives as migrants, drawing on economic and human capital, pulling in their communities of practice, flexible in their attitudes towards migration, safe in their awareness they can return home if necessary, and rarely curtailed by borders, because despite not always being absolutely wealthy or secure, they are still the 'desirable' among migrants (see Chaps. 3 and 4).

Decoupling Work and Migration

In further troubling the notion of the expat, we decouple the relationship of work and migration at its heart. Through our discussion of lifestyle entrepreneurs, the role of work in the creation of the good life, and the ways in which migrants, through teaching, draw personal benefit from having English as their first language, we highlight the various ways in which work or occupation, migration, and lifestyle articulate with everyday lives and the reproduction of privilege. As these examples further demonstrate, changing personal circumstances interplay with the entrepreneurial activities of these migrants. While in the case of 'corporate expatriates', work and migration appear to be inseparable, the case of these lifestyle entrepreneurs demonstrates a more flexible, active, and creative relationship between them.

Flexible Work(ers) and Lifestyle Entrepreneurs

In both Malaysia and Panama, we found examples of people who we might refer to as lifestyle entrepreneurs. Our use of the concept here echoes that of Stone and Stubbs (2007), who argue that, in some cases, entrepreneurial activities act as a way of supporting the better way of life that people seek. Entrepreneurial work is, then, as much about creating a life for oneself in ways that fit with one's self-perception, as a simple means of providing income. There were many routes for our participants into entrepreneurship: while some had migrated with the idea that they

would see what opportunities arose once they had settled, a priori deciding that they would set up a business, for others it was a creative response to changing personal and political circumstances. It is also clear that there are different stakes within this; for some, the livelihood from these enterprises is crucial to supporting their day-to-day living, while for others, it merely supplements a private income from pension, savings, stocks, or other investments.

Emma, who we met in Chap. 5, had fulfilled her ambitions of setting up a not-for-profit organisation tailored towards helping disadvantaged members of Panamanian society. As she explained, she felt that the difference that she could make in Panama as opposed to the United States was tangible. In addition, the presence of a high volume of US citizens in the locale, for whom non-profits—with their possibility of empowering people—were part of their culture meant that she had a ready population of people who wanted to be involved in charitable work. The organisation offered a range of volunteering opportunities, to those visiting the area for a short period of time and more permanent residents, and offered an international intern programme. Since her son was born, Emma has shifted focus, and she now runs a yoga centre, providing regular classes and also training up yoga teachers. What this shows is the extent to which entrepreneurial activities might change over time, perhaps adapting to the opportunities that present themselves, while also matching onto new interests of the entrepreneurs themselves and their changing personal circumstances. This is thus an example of the practice of social life, as outlined in Chap. 1.

Despite the seemingly easy progression from a not-for-profit to a yoga studio, it is important to register that the success of these lifestyle enterprises is not guaranteed. Various factors may intervene that interrupt this. We met Clare in Chap. 5. Although her path to Penang had been a rocky one, with many twists and turns, Clare noted to Karen how privileged she felt being able to get a passport to anywhere as a Westerner, when her partner only got a short-term visa and had to keep going in and out. Having left Sri Lanka and trying to run cafes and bars in Penang, Clare and her Sri Lankan partner eventually had to give up. Property rental prices in Batu Ferringhi were too high—'they saw two foreigners coming, and thought oh, oh we can make a killing here', she told Karen, and the

savings Clare had been using to shore up their businesses were disappearing fast. In the end, Clare walked away from the café and from her partner, and, at the age of 63, she was living very modestly on her teacher's pension and a small amount of savings.

It was common to find these stories of travel and work that run counter to the commonly held understandings of the relationship between work and expatriacy. Paul, who we also met in Chap. 5, had lived and worked in Africa for 33 years—working in private security—before settling in Boquete where he ran a bar, art gallery, and two furniture shops. Nicola who tells her own story, below, illustrates an even more flexible adaptation to changing circumstances.

> I got so ill I thought I didn't have very long to live. And I thought, I'm not staying around in London. I was 45 then, and I thought I'm going to die, and I thought I think I'm going to live in the East. So, in 1998 I booked a holiday in Sri Lanka and I fell in love with Sri Lanka. It just reminded me of the Malaya of the 1960s. Of course, I had been back to Malaysia so I knew things have moved on there, whereas in Sri Lanka I could just live an easier life and it reminded me of how things had been in Penang …. And I did get better from my illness, and in the end I bought a little bit of land there … Various things happened and I got into financial difficulties, and so I decided to become a teacher of English … Eventually that got pretty boring and I thought I've got to move, so where shall I go? So, I went and had a look at Langkawi. But that was a shit hole really … So, my next holiday I took a trip to Penang, and I went in the British Council and I said have you got anything for an hourly paid teacher and they said, can you start this afternoon?

Nicola moved to Penang shortly after that. The teaching wasn't easy, she said, because the students were not keen; they were often rich and didn't really know why they were studying English. So, she set up her own business, teaching English, but that failed as well after a bad experience with a business partner, and eventually Nicola started freelance writing on the Internet. She did some ghost writing for a university professor, and now does bits of journalism.

The entrepreneurialism of such migrants reflects wider approaches to their careers; Carol, who was using her social security payments from the

United States to support her life in Panama, had worked variously as a systems engineer, a notary signature, training in psychology in later life, only to find that she was unemployable because of her age. She had borrowed against her house in the United States as much as possible, but still found that life on a pension in the United States was unaffordable. Since moving to Boquete, she has written a book of poetry and has been working on a novel.

Gary worked for a large electronics firm, living in Malaysia, then Singapore, and then China; he got divorced (possibly as a result of being away so much, he wonders), then worked as a freelance consultant for four years. He met and married an Indonesian woman, and they moved to Penang, where Gary now has the MM2H visa. He was recently asked to join a colleague in setting up a catering company—a field he has never worked in before, but when Karen met him again he had decided to give it a go.

We have spent considerable time sharing these stories because they are so rich and powerful in undermining the simple association between privileged migrants and corporate expatriates or professional employees, which is so common (see Chap. 1). They also highlight the incredible flexibility and creativity of these migrants in creating the work they need to support their lives and to give it its quality. But, of course, it is also clear these migrants have sufficient diverse forms of capital to structurally underscore the creativity and fluidity of contemporary Western lifestyles inscribed in the habitus of these flexible individuals.

The Role of Work in the Creation of the Good Life

Many of the activities of these entrepreneurs aim to provide services or develop activities that are reliant on the support of other lifestyle migrants. Such activities are made possible by the establishment of communities of practice, in turn supporting and perpetuating this. In other words, much entrepreneurial work serves to help create the communities of practice, the conjuncturally specific external structures, and the new emergent structures that serve their pursuit of the good life.

The market that takes place in the Boquete Community Theatre every Tuesday morning is perhaps the best illustration of this. The market is

bustling; those selling goods are almost without exception members of the migrant community, as are those purchasing the goods for sale. Angie sits at her small table, her hand-sewn and embroidered handbags and purses on display. She had come to Boquete with very little money. The handbags, which are intricately detailed and colourful, are one way that she can raise the funds to live from day to day. Lindy had worked as an academic back in the United States, but had retrained as a masseuse, drawn to the spirituality and healing that this offered, moving to Boquete, which she felt was more 'sacred'. She runs her massage business from one of the hotels and also has a stall in the market, a way of making people aware of her business. Outside, there are several food stalls, including a soup stall run by Carlos; previously a chef in Argentina, this is not a way of supporting his life—he and his wife live in a large house in one of the new residential estates around Boquete—but a way of continuing the work that he had enjoyed.

While the entrepreneurialism of these populations, demonstrating their creativity and flexibility, might speak to their privilege, this is not without insecurities. Moving to a new location might necessitate these more flexible modes of working, or it might be unduly skewed towards those who are predisposed to such ways of working. But what is also notable is that work has different meanings and significance for those who undertake it, framed by their access to resources to support their lives for some, but also by their sense of who they are and their place in the world, for others. The relationship between work and migration—at least for these lifestyle migrants—is far more complicated than other models for understanding this might allow.

Capitalising on the English Language

While earlier we touched briefly on teaching English as a form of 'foreign posting', it was also the case that there were more informal routes into teaching English, in both Malaysia and Panama. Indeed, teaching English—whether remunerated or not—was among the most frequently listed activities of these migrant populations. We comment on this in particular here to demonstrate the persistent value placed on the

English language, but also as a way of reflecting on how an innate, unquestioned ability becomes transformed into a skill, re-evaluated within the destination.

At the time of the research, Malaysia had invested in a major government programme aimed at improving education and English proficiency amongst teachers and students. In particular, the programme promotes the delivery of maths and science education in English, a move that maps onto the government's ambitions to improve the prospects of the country. This has resulted in a recruitment drive in the fields of English as a second language, teaching English to teachers, and training fellows to deliver teacher training (from personal interview with training provider). In the case of Malaysia, designated 'foreign postings' to teach English are part of the landscape of work and migration; for individuals, they serve as a way of travelling or experiencing an area over a period of time. They thus exploit an innate ability in order to fund the opportunity to pursue quality of life through migration.

In Panama, teaching English was also widespread; at the time of the research, opportunities to teach English in Boquete were limited. Those who did teach English—or in English—often had to travel to David, the local city. As Margaret explained, the arrangement for her to teach literature in English at the local university had been initiated after she worked closely to establish an exchange programme with a US university. She had no experience of teaching literature, having previously worked as a psychotherapist. Her encounters and interactions with those working in the university thus paved the way for her to enter the local labour market—admittedly with fewer qualifications than would be required of a Panamanian—the value and recognition placed on her skills providing her with an opportunity to continue to use these rather than 'retire' them. In this way, teaching at the university gives her a sense of being useful, while also exercising her mind.

The question of what teaching English does for the migrants themselves is also complex, and somewhat related to the home-making practices we discuss in Chap. 7. For Rebecca, who was retired on a modest pension in Malaysia, teaching English was a way of earning a little bit of extra cash and of feeling she had a place and a role: 'So, I do private teaching over here, but I'm not really allowed to do it here, due to age, you

know … It makes me feel needed; it keeps my head there.' Greg who had been living in Panama for 15 years—first moving there when he was in his mid-30s—worked various jobs to support the simple life that he led; while at one point he had run his own English school from his house, he now worked as a handyman—building on his training as a carpenter back in Canada—but also taught English at the local university. 'I didn't know what I was going to do when I came here. I didn't think I'd be teaching English. But whether you're here or there, you've got to do something.' Others among those living in Boquete might help out at the local schools, teaching English, or they might provide informal teaching at their homes after school to the children of the neighbourhood. The framing of this informal support as 'helping out' by many of these migrants is telling of the ways in which their elite status was so taken-for-granted that benevolence was a norm.

It is in the case of teaching English that the significance of language in the reproduction of privilege is laid bare, and the postcolonial framings of their migration were made visible. Here we find Erel's (2010) work with Turkish female migrants living in Britain and Germany particularly useful. As Erel describes, speaking and understanding lesser known dialects and languages was taken as a sign of lower social status within Turkey. However, these migrants discovered these language skills were valued within the new labour markets they entered. As Erel (2010: 655) points out, though this signals the active agency of migrants, nevertheless '[T]his process cannot be reduced to individual resources but is bound up with wider historical, socio-political and institutional factors.'

The de facto privilege of the migrants in our research renders this equation slightly differently. It speaks to inequalities between the place of origin and the site of settlement that translate into the positioning of these migrants—irrespective of levels of education and income—in positions of power and dominance in local settings. The creation of new cultural resources that Erel (2010) highlights requires less work from these populations, a result precisely of the historical and material conditions that support their migration. Nevertheless, it is important to remain mindful of how these articulate with personal circumstances and biographies, and the various meanings that are placed on teaching English.

Retired but Not Retiring

In this final section, we consider the lives of retirees and what they might variously reveal about how work and privileged migration interplay. Retirees featured highly among the populations in both Malaysia and Panama, and yet their circumstances varied significantly (see Green 2014).

Living (Well) on a Pension?

We know from the early work on retirement migration in Spain that cultural attitudes, expectations of increased social and recreational activities, and notions of self-transformation frame attempts at and experiences of positive ageing through migration (see Gustafson 2001; Casado-Diaz 2006; Oliver 2008; Haas 2012; O'Reilly 2000). As Caroline Oliver's (2008) ethnography so evocatively details, the act of migration and ability to live in another country often is interpreted as a positive act of agency in which control and autonomy contrast starkly with visions of the degenerating body and mind that are more usually associated with old age. Such migrants continually celebrate their new lives, contrasting the lives they would have led had they stayed put in their country of origin, with a discourse about life in Spain, where they are welcomed, are more active, feel happier and healthier, and feel less of a burden (see also O'Reilly 2000). This is all discussed in more detail in Chap. 8.

As we discussed in Chap. 5, the cost of retirement—in particular healthcare and tax—in the United States and Canada was a common tale, motivating migration to Panama, a lower-cost economy (see also Hayes 2014). But there were other mitigating factors that helped to explain this migration at this point in people's lives. Carol, who we introduced earlier, explained how her house in Florida was 'under water'; her mortgage on it was greater than its value. Tessa described how many people moving to Panama were literally leaving the keys in the front door of their homes in the United States—anticipating the foreclosure on these properties—and walking away, shipping off to places such as Boquete—lock, stock, and barrel. More than anything, this narrative tells of the timing of the research and its coincidence with the financial

crisis. But Howard's (2008, 2009) research, in Thailand, also complicates assumptions of privilege and economic power amongst Western migrants; his study confirms that significant numbers of former tourists and retirees live in Thailand on limited financial resources. In Malaysia, some of these more 'marginal migrants', as Howard terms them (2009: 195), have even resorted to begging (Green 2014: 2).

However, it is clear that there were others who had substantially more resources. Richard and Louise, who we met in Chap. 5, had initially retired to Malaysia as much because they wanted to be somewhere warm as for any other properties it might have. They thought about Spain but decided there were too many British there. Richard liked Asia, so they looked at Hong Kong and Singapore but found them too expensive, and they thought Thailand was too tacky. In Penang, they can get by speaking English, even with their Chinese friends; it has a good climate all year round, it is good value for money (for their British pensions), and they could afford to apply for the MM2H visa. Similarly, Tim, who we met in Chap. 5, a British man who had retired at the age of 40, had previously lived in Brussels, Florida, and was just about to move on from Boquete to Mexico.

While narratives position this within the context of positive ageing, an individualised pursuit of a better way of life by neoliberal subjects, it is also clear that this is made possible not only by the ubiquitous promotion of some destinations as offering a better way of life, but the active curation of the lives available by those who have already made the move (O'Reilly and Benson 2015). This is clear from the many online forums and blogs, which simultaneously act to provide advice and support to those thinking about moving to these destinations and also become hubs for sharing information among those living in these locations (see also Chaps. 3 and 7).

One example of this is a group of retired men and women in Penang who had set up an online forum where they shared ideas about where to visit, what to eat, where to buy certain goods, and information about visas and taxes and so on. This group also met face-to-face quite regularly. The members of the forum were majority male, and British, and one thing that was noticeable was how derogatory these people were about Britain. They complained about high immigration, high taxes, poor

weather, liberal government, and 'political correctness'. The forum (which has since closed down) was ostensibly to enable retired people to settle and understand the way of life and especially the bureaucracy in Malaysia. This particular community of practice, then, endorsed running down the United Kingdom and using the Bad Britain discourse (O'Reilly 2000) to justify all sorts of behaviour in Penang, including tax avoidance, and sharing among themselves the capital lump sum they would use, in turn, in order to support their applications for the MM2H visa.

In Boquete, several Internet-based communities exist and play an important role in communicating about events, but also issues of concern and interest to its English-speaking residents. The communities of practice that build up around these fora, become a significant part of the landscape in which the positive ageing of these retired populations takes place. As with the discussion in the rest of this chapter, we see here the complexity of the relationship between work, or retirement, and supposedly privileged migrants. These people may not all be absolutely wealthy, even in retirement, yet they are being creative in their co-creation and management of how they understand the good life.

Working Retirement

While the equation of migration with retirement might suggest the end of working lives, as should already be clear from the discussion in this chapter, this is not necessarily the case. Migration instead marks a shift in how these migrants conceive of work. As Nicholas—a resident of Boquete—describes on his blog, his retirement keeps him busy; Ben also describes how the challenges for retirement lie in not knowing how to stop working, but also that in continuing to work, he adopts a different pace. The theme that underpins both of these narratives strongly articulates with the ideas of positive ageing outlined above, and in Chap. 8, but with work continuing to play a role within this. At the heart of this is a consideration over the work that is required to produce a better way of life.

We illustrate this here by turning to Boquete and the production of coffee. The rezoning of agricultural land—most often large coffee-growing estates—for residential development was one of the factors that

led to the establishment of the area as a retirement destination. In consequence, those migrants who have purchased individual plots or properties outside the town and gated developments have often built on land that was previously used to grow coffee. On their (relatively) small plots, several of them have chosen to reuse the land to produce their own small crop of coffee. Nicholas and Tracy described to Michaela their experience of cultivating coffee:

> My wife who all our married life, I'd buy her a plant and she could kill everything, and suddenly she's got this great interest in agriculture and growing coffee and she's very good at it … *It's a lot of work* … I'd never really drank coffee that much. It's a little like, there've been comparisons made between Boquete and Napa. If you go up to Napa the whole focus is wine, and it's kind of like that here with coffee. (Nicholas)

When they originally bought the plot of land where the coffee farm is, they had no intention of reviving the farm. They just liked the land, with its views of the mountains. It was only after they bought it that Tracy started to investigate the possibility of getting the farm up and running again. She told Michaela that it was very difficult to find information about growing and harvesting coffee; even on the Internet there is very little information. Then she met a young man who needed a ride, and he became her local teacher on how to make coffee. He had taught her carefully and clearly how to read her plants, how to know when they were not well, which plants to prune, and which to let grow. She also explained how, over time, even the people who she takes the coffee to once it has been harvested accept her. Standing there, she realises that her coffee is of a good quality—it looks better than that of the local Panamanian farmers. Her pride in mastering the art of coffee production speaks to issues of connoisseurship, and the social distinction that this permits. In many ways, this echoes the significance of claims to 'authentic' living among the British residents of rural France, the subjects of Michaela's previous work (Benson 2011a, 2013a). And yet, while this led the reproduction of the British middle classes, what appears to be at stake in the case of these North Americans in Panama is somewhat different; with its local significance, this knowledge and understanding of coffee production combined with land ownership

locates Tracy—and others like her—within the local hierarchy in ways that speak to the ongoing reproduction of privilege within this setting.

In Penang too, several of the people we have met are already combining work and retirement. Rebecca, for example, was doing some English teaching, and others were doing odd jobs, perhaps helping in a café or working in an art gallery. This was not anywhere near on the scale Karen had seen previously on the Costa del Sol, partly because the migrants in Penang were generally more well off and partly because of the regulations around working that are more closely monitored in Malaysia than in Spain. The work they did served to earn a little extra money, but was often more about finding a place for themselves and a community of friends, as in the work of Casado-Diaz (2006) and Haas (2012). They were practising lifestyle migration by working towards the creation of the lifestyle they had imagined (and reimagined over time).

Volunteering

In this final section, we would like to spend a little time talking about work and migration in a very different way: voluntary and unpaid work. In the following chapter, we describe the work that is done by migrants in making a home for themselves, and the role of associations in this. Although this is not usually paid work, effort expended in running and organising events within these organisations and associations can be quite time-consuming and labour-intensive; in Malaysia, in particular, this labour is very gendered.

Of course, there are those who avoid all organisational life altogether, but many of those Karen met in Penang were either involved in associational life or in doing some voluntary work elsewhere. And in many cases, both associational life and volunteering were combined. Here we are usually referring to what we have elsewhere referred to as 'trailing spouses' (Chap. 5), to retired people, or those of independent means. It is arguable that Western migrants who are not in full-time work feel a moral imperative to appear active, influenced by what Cole (2007) terms the 'moral discourse of work'. For these lifestyle migrants, volunteering is viewed as an unquestionable good, an expression of social responsibility (Kiy and

McEnany 2010), and a worthy use of one's spare time. However, volunteering is also a product of—and has the potential to reproduce—the inequalities between these migrant populations and local populations. As Michaela has argued previously in the case of North Americans in Boquete, philanthropy and charitable work

> emerge out of postcoloniality and relative privilege; the inequalities between these migrants and the local population on both structural and systemic levels make this almost inevitable … [T]he practise of philanthropy and charity thus relies upon the privileged position of the migrant community and their social networks. (Benson 2013b: 326)

The ways migrants spoke to us about their volunteering revealed both the moral discourse behind their actions and the implicit hierarchies that supported these. Jane, talking about the Malaysian Cultural Club, told Karen, for example:

> There are some women there who are very keen on volunteering and they do some marvellous things, they do things for the disabled, for children, I mean people are doing a lot. Where women may not be working they are actually doing other work in a good way and leaving a good legacy … these are often well educated women with time on their hands and they put it to good use. They are a good asset.

It is clear, here, that work (in this case voluntary work), just as with work as a corporate expatriate, is not labour the locals would be doing; it instead serves to distance migrants from others not like them. Rebecca similarly said, explaining why she enjoys her life in Penang so much:

> I don't mind the climate, I love the people, and volunteer work is entering into it too, becaus' I didn't have much opportunity to do that in Japan … here there is a plethora of volunteer activities that you can do; and the one that I chose is to go to the St Nicholas home around the corner and read books into the computer to make audiobooks for the Blind, given my husband … So I like that one, it suits me, I can go at my own speed and 'f I don't go, like last week'or if I'm out of town or something like that, 't doesn't matter. I like to read, I know the value of books, I know blind people value books, I like the sound of my own voice (laughs). I just love it.

Later, Rebecca said, 'life here is full, and I know I'm doing good work'.

Similarly, in Panama, philanthropy was a significant feature of the daily lives of many of the migrants; this was visible in the active presence of the Lions and Rotary clubs—international organisations that coordinate community service—the volunteering through the Catholic church, new community groups, the establishment of a global volunteer network in Boquete, and ground-up initiatives based on perceived local needs. Indeed, the extent to which volunteering—for the benefit either of the local population or for the migrant community—was part of everyday life was notable (see also Benson 2013b). However, it was also made clear that these migrants had been similarly involved in such activities before migration (see also Kiy and McEnany 2010); it is important to acknowledge this context in explaining what work volunteering then does within these migrants' accounts of their lives in Boquete. We stress here the way in which discussions of volunteering demonstrate the significance of the local within the claims to belonging that we discuss in more detail in the following chapter.

Indeed, volunteering was often—although not exclusively—organised around perceived *local* needs. To be clear, this volunteer work was so common among those Michaela spoke to in Boquete that it was unusual for her to come across people who did not volunteer in some way. It was precisely the extent to which people were interested in volunteering, charity, and philanthropy that had led Emma, who we met in Chap. 5, to establish her volunteering programme in Boquete.

On an individual level, people described how they supported individual children in buying the school uniforms and shoes they required if they were to attend school and taught local children how to read and speak English. But it was also clear that beyond these relatively one-to-one activities that there was a bigger programme of fundraising ongoing within this migrant population, with regular news about the amounts of money that they had raised through the annual auction and other activities spread throughout the year and donated to a variety of local charities. Almost every Tuesday Morning Meeting would end with announcements about the latest fundraising event—bingo, quiz night, murder mystery night, soup kitchen, a dance—demonstrating the way in which this is part of the everyday life of this migrant community. Fundraising and donations also drew on the wider links that these migrants had, as they encouraged coordinating funds and contributions from their friends, family, and acquaintances back in the

United States and Canada. Indeed, it was clear that those in the local chapters of large international organisations—Lions and Rotary—applied for support from these; others might organise this through their own interpersonal relationships, as in the case of Sarah, who regularly organises for a container of donated goods to be transported to Panama where she arranges its distribution to those in need.

What does this do for the migrants themselves? Ed, who we met in the previous chapter, described to Michaela how his volunteer work—which included his roles in the local Rotary Club, the Boquete Community Players, and in setting up a local hospice—was a response to staying active following migration (and retirement). However, as he talked about his dislike of gated communities, the insularity of the people who lived there and their unwillingness to take part in the local community, he highlighted that it was important for him to be involved with and contributing to the local community in some way. In this way, it became clear that through their organised activities, members of this migrant community made a clear statement about their contribution to Boquete, actively working for the benefit of the local community. It was also clear that these activities gave them a sense that they were giving back. It is also clear that volunteering brings members of this migrant community together and is central to the formation of communities of practice, as we discuss in Chap. 7.

However, it is important to remember that the volunteering of these migrants is embedded within global power inequalities (see also Benson 2013b). We recall here a tale—intended as a parable rather than a statement of fact—that was in constant circulation around the migrant community at the time of the research that illustrates this well, while also highlighting that among the migrants there was some awareness of their relative privilege. The tale was about an individual who had been negotiating a donation of emergency services equipment from the United States that would be a significant upgrade to what was locally available. However, he terminated the negotiations because it became clear that the local emergency services were not prepared to alter their working practices, a necessary requirement—in his opinion—for the new equipment to be put into use. As this last example illustrates, such philanthropic activities may be sites where global power inequalities are rendered sharply and uncomfortably visible.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we reveal how work is a practice, shaped by habitus, enabled by resources, and linked to the production of a better way of life. This innovates lifestyle migration research—which is so often focused on consumption— by viewing work and volunteering as creative in the practice of lifestyle. Although clearly powerful and resourceful agents of their own destinies, these migrants shape their lives in the context of conjuncturally specific external structures (or learning how to go on in new surroundings and communities of practice). In doing so, differences between Panama and Malaysia, related to context, historical structures, resources and diversity of the migrants, and opportunities and constraints are revealed. Recall that while Malaysia was formally colonised, Panama was not, and this is somewhat reflected in the nature of occupations they choose. For the North Americans in Boquete there is very much a shift towards postretirement life, whereas those in Malaysia have often been corporate expatriates before, and are finding ways to experience the good life, perhaps supported by secure pensions or high wages. Those in Panama are responding to what is locally meaningful, adapting rather than imposing their skills or experiences onto the setting (coffee, food, botanicals, art), while those in Malaysia seem more likely to reproduce colonial relations in their work and volunteering. Those in Panama, who have often moved directly from the United States, are much more likely to be engaged in geoarbitrage than those in Malaysia. Furthermore, it must be remembered that the research in Malaysia was undertaken mainly in Penang and also in Kuala Lumpur. These are what might be referred to as global cities, while Boquete is not, and this different geography brings with it different possibilities and opportunities. There are no corporate expats in Boquete, for example, and in Penang we see little opportunity to work on the land or to liaise with locals in any other way than through employment of help in the home, via the international associations, or by volunteering. The structural context of constraints and opportunities thus interacts with the habitus and conjuncturally specific internal and external structures to produce diverse outcomes and sedimentation (O'Reilly 2017) that reproduce inequalities in different ways.

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7

Home-Making and the Reproduction of Privilege

In this chapter, we examine in detail the home-making practices of the lifestyle migrants we spent time with in Malaysia and Panama. Home-making is used here as a shortcut to understanding the more elaborate and extensive processes involved in making a life for oneself, of creating and developing comfort and belonging. It is a way of describing the attempts to settle and find a sense of place or 'regrounding' (Ahmed et al. 2003) in a 'new' destination while also maintaining relationships elsewhere. Home-making takes as its objects both the materiality and material practices that go into making the physical home. It also embraces what we might otherwise call 'homing' (following Fortier 2000), which encompasses the social and emotional investments involved in making oneself feel at home. To illustrate this, we focus in this chapter on the daily ongoing practices and processes of material home-making, social home-making, and emotional and autobiographical home-making.

Though we separate out these aspects of practices, we acknowledge at the same time their constantly interwoven nature, and that practices of home-making encompass multiple elements and scales. The analysis of

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processes and practices of home-making in this chapter intends, following Brah (1996), to recognise home-making in its affective dimensions—feeling at home as derived through lived experience—and its physical aspects—of home in multiple locations as the site and creation of imagined belonging. As we see it, home-making is a complex, multidimensional process that incorporates not just the domestic or the local, but also the wider neighbourhood, the nation, and the globe, in terms of how these different scales of belonging inform each other (see also Blunt and Dowling 2006). Further, to extend the work of Blunt and Dowling, our approach draws on an understanding of broader and historical social structures, inferring the role of colonial traces in the (re)production of privilege.

With respect to the practice theory that informs all our work in this book, we understand home-making to be a practice that is partly shaped by wider and historical social structures. Over the course of the preceding chapters, we have highlighted the structural conditions that allow the relative ease of movement of privileged populations. Chapter 4, especially, examined the 'energy that is expended in establishing or prohibiting migrations' (Ahmed et al. 2003: 1). In Chap. 5, acknowledging the role of habitus, we turned towards considering the biographies and life trajectories that predispose some individuals and households to the migrations that we describe as lifestyle migration. What has become clear is the extent to which living or staying in Malaysia or Panama is an active choice; these migrants can usually elect to return 'home' or move elsewhere should they need to—albeit that such choice is always constrained by economic and other conditions. It is telling of their privilege that they have this apparent freedom both to choose where to live (in the world) and to articulate this residential choice as the product of unique residential biographies and the predispositions these incur.

For these lifestyle migrants, home-making practices are thus at once a way of adapting to life in a different place, maintaining translocal belongings, and making themselves at home in privilege. Often, however, it is exactly these mundane practices that serve to make visible the privilege on which they are based and reinforce the racial marking of these (majority) white bodies. Furthermore, while becoming what Fechter (2005) refers to as 'the White Other' is narrated as a disturbing experience for

many of those we worked with in both destinations, rarely were they able to relate this reflexively to the discriminatory practices that exclude non-white bodies in the parts of the world where they originated.

Through a close analysis of the material, social, and emotional aspects of home-making practices, our focus in this chapter thus lies in making visible the social and emotional investments at the heart of such home-making and highlighting the complex ways in which these lifestyle migrants make living in Malaysia and Panama work for them. Set within the wider literature on home, belonging, and migration, and drawing on lived experience, this chapter illustrates how, through quotidian home-making practices, the relative privilege of these migrants is both resisted and reproduced, under what conditions, and with what outcomes.

Home-Making Practices, Privilege, and Migration

As Mallett (2004) emphasises in her critical review, home is a complex concept, subject to diverse interdisciplinary discussion and debate (see also Despres 1991; Blunt and Dowling 2006). It may at once refer to a physical place, to a feeling, to experiences, and to practices; it has material form and political and symbolic significance; it shapes and is shaped by identities and subjectivities; and it takes place as a process, denoted through the sense of making oneself 'at home'. Home is also a sense of orientation—the means through which we symbolically create and communicate a sense of location within specific social, temporal, and spatial orders (Dovey 1985).

For us, home-making—an ongoing and dynamic process through which home in all its forms is made—encompasses all these aspects, but our approach is principally inspired by phenomenological approaches in which the home is seen as a way of 'being in the world' (Bhatti 2006) This approach enables us to consider the themes that emerged in our interviews and conversations in the field of materiality, sociality, and emotionality, themes that Bhatti (2006: 321) has also identified as 'key elements in the practice of everyday life'. However, because of the need to

also identify themes that we witnessed in the field but which were not necessarily highlighted by our interlocutors (e.g. themes around structural reproduction and imaginaries), we are further informed by Blunt and Dowling's conceptualisation of a *critical geography of home*, which places at its centre an understanding of home as spatialised, imaginary, and political:

> By this we first mean a spatialized understanding of home, one that appreciates home as a place and also as a spatial imaginary that travels across space and is connected to particular sites. Second we mean a politicized understanding of home, one alert to the processes of oppression and resistance embedded in ideas and processes of home. (2006: 21–22)

The material dimensions of home—the physical building, the interior design, the furnishing, the objects that make home—are significant in understanding belonging in that they draw attention to the ways in which consumption, identity, and belonging are co-constructed. Following scholars such as Miller (1998, 2001) and Cieraad (1999), we understand the materiality of the home as both reflective of the identities of those living within it and shaping of these. Beyond this, the significance of the home draws from imaginings of home, idealised, culturally framed, and valued. What becomes clear is that home is an affective space (Blunt and Dowling 2006). As Rowles (1983) has pointed out, home-making is also emotional and autobiographical, shaping and shaped by our sense of who we are. It is something we bond or merge with, somewhere we can relate to, identify with, feel we have a place; home connects us with the past and the future.

However, this process of home-making is also social, a locating of oneself in relation to others in the generation of 'feeling at home', even if this does not explicitly relate to a specific place called home. We can feel at home with others like us, or at work, or even when out for a walk, because home might also signal when or with whom we feel we belong. It is therefore, as we discuss below, a process of familiarisation. In respect to the participants in our research, this is a process that draws from and reveals a sense of cosmopolitan belonging, into which we critically enquire, recognising, following Blunt and Dowling, the political dimensions of

home-making. Indeed, what we particularly highlight is home-making as exclusionary as well as inclusive; a dialectic, between outside and inside, somewhere we return to or yearn for. We must, through practices, appropriate it, create it, live in it. It is not simply haven or retreat, but also a contested space (Meijering and Lager 2014). Finally, home-making practices (such as the consumption and display of goods and artefacts, or the employment of domestic labour) 'involve the construction of class, national and diasporic identities' (Blunt and Dowling 2006: 27).

Home, Migration, Belonging

Before moving on to the empirical detail, we will first spend some time here exploring how the relationship between migration, place, and belonging has been conceptualised. Within migration research, questions of belonging have been deployed as a way of thinking through the experience and effect of displacement and marginalisation brought about by migration. At the heart of such evaluations of the relationship between home and migration lies the assumption that home can be geographically located and fixed; belonging enacted in and through (one) place. And yet, in an increasingly deterritorialised world, we might ask instead whether belonging is necessarily located, and if so, where?

Such questions characterise ongoing discussions about migrant homes and belongings, with now well-rehearsed arguments rejecting essentialised understandings of the relationship between identity and place. Brah's (1996) *Cartographies of Diaspora* makes clear that the home at the heart of diasporic experience captures both imagined belonging—a 'floating and rooted signifier' (p. 3)—to, for example, the nation, and the site of quotidian lived experience. In this way, she carefully teases out the possibility that diasporic subjects find home in multiple locations. Indeed, it is precisely the multiple locations of belonging that lie at the heart of the literature on transnationalism spearheaded by Basch, Glick Schiller, and Szanton Blanc (2005; Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004), speaking to how belonging is negotiated in a global and deterritorialised world, recognising that the bonds that make belonging exist in circuits of relationships are not (necessarily) bound to place. Indeed, it is precisely this framing is

central to Gustafson's (2008) considerations of transnationalism in retirement migration (see also Lardiés Bosque et al. 2016 for an account of the transnational practices of North Americans in Mexico).

In much of this literature, the concepts of transnational and translocal—recognising the continued significance of localities to identity and belonging (Conradson and McKay 2007)—provide valuable interventions in highlighting the symbolic geographies of home and, yet, these seemingly overlook the micro-geographies of home: domestic space and everyday home-making practices (for a notable exception see Walsh 2006). Ahmed et al. (2003) think, with the conceptual issues that migration raises in respect to home and belonging, to ask questions about the relationship between place (attachment) and belonging, both for populations who move and those who stay put. Through the paired concepts of uprooting and regrounding they significantly reinvigorate the discussion of belonging *beyond* migration recognising the enactment of home affectively materially and symbolically (see also Fortier 2000). We have found especially useful their concept of embodied inhabitance, to refer here to the daily practices of familiarisation engaged in by migrants.

At Home in Privilege

In many ways, the study of privileged migration reveals similar tensions around questions of belonging, and of feeling at home, to that found among other migrant populations. Literature on other elite and privileged groups has highlighted the challenges of making home in and through movement and the attempts made by migrants to emplace and ground themselves in unfamiliar environments. Just as with other migrants, this can be an unsettling and moving experience, throwing into sharp relief the contrast between the life the migrants imagined in the new destination and the actual, daily lived experience as an 'elite' migrant (see, for example, Walsh 2006, 2012, on British in Dubai). As Michaela has said before in relation to British migrants to rural France:

> The emotional registers through which migration and settlement are experienced highlight that *even for these relatively privileged migrants the*

> *experience of migration and settlement is characterized not by a smooth flow that aligns with the ease with which they can cross borders. It is rather a rougher and perhaps more turbulent encounter as indicated by the unsettling capacity of finding home and belonging …* Lifestyle migrants make social and emotional investments in the destination, a site that is often highly localized, but this does not negate the possibility of maintaining such investments elsewhere. (Benson 2016: 491; emphasis added)

Rather than the rootless and footloose cosmopolitans that those such as Rapport and Dawson (1998) discuss in their work on the fluidity of home, feeling grounded has been shown to continue to be an important element of the lives and identities of more privileged migrant populations such as lifestyle migrants, elite travellers, and 'expatriates'. However, as Blunt and Dowling (2006) remind us, where these claims to belonging diverge from those of other migration populations lies exactly in the privilege of these populations. This locates contemporary home-making practices—and the conceptions of home that underscore these—within histories of colonialism and imperialism, carrying with them colonial traces. Home-making is thus political, even if inadvertently on the part of the actors.

Multiscalar Geographies of Home in Elite Migration

The emphasis on the structural framing of migration, as both condition and practice of the reproduction of privilege, leads us to the multiscalar understanding of home that Blunt and Dowling (2006) advocate. This approach examines how home-making is practised through its articulation at different scales. It allows for the description of attempts to settle and find a place in the 'new' destination while also maintaining relationships elsewhere, but also the materiality and material practices that make home alongside the social and emotional investments that go into making oneself at home. Furthermore, home-making is informed by and invokes the national, the global, and the historical, as well as the local. It is this multiscalar geography of home that we orient our argument around here.

Located within the everyday, we reconsider the relationship of belonging to place, asking what the significance of Malaysia and Panama, Penang and Boquete, is to these migrants' sense of themselves. As phenomenological accounts make clear, home at once refers to physical and local emplacement, but also infers a way of being in the world (see, for example, Ingold 1995) that allows for the recognition of how materiality, sociality, and emotionality coalesce in the practice of everyday life (Blunt and Dowling 2006; Bhatti 2006). To these ends we explore the practices, actions, and behaviours through which the migrants become familiar and knowing of 'local' ways and means. We also examine belonging as relational, transnational, and autobiographical, exploring how meaning is constituted through their interactions with others, and how in the building of personal memories in place—often associated with major life events—it takes on deeper significance. In the process, we will attempt to continually refer to the role played by the political, the symbolic, the temporal, and the structural. The following sections will examine processes of material home-making, social home-making, and emotional and autobiographical home-making for the lifestyle migrants we met in Panama and Malaysia.

Material Aspects of Home-Making

In this section we focus on the material culture of the home—the physical manifestation of dwelling, its structure, decorations, and furnishings—and what this reveals about home-making practices among these lifestyle migrants. We recognise, following Walsh (2006), that these relatively privileged migrants engage in processes of (re)construction of a sense of belonging, or 'regrounding' (Ahmed et al. 2003). Our reading here is very literal, the (material) home viewed as the grounds upon which a sense of home and belonging might be produced. At the same time we recognise that the regrounding achieved through the physical and material home is brought about precisely through the interplay of material culture, consumption, and identities (Miller 1998, 2001; Cieraad 1999).

Expatriate Dwellings

As we outlined in Chap. 3, both Malaysia and Panama encourage wealthy migrants to invest in property through their visa regimes. Although this was not always the case, nevertheless several of the lifestyle migrants we worked with, in both Penang and Boquete, lived in what might best be described as grand or opulent dwellings. Often, this mapped onto their location in the employment structure or their employment status; as discussed in Chaps. 5 and 6, these populations were diverse in terms of class and economic status. The location of such dwellings was also notable. In Penang, as Green has observed, '[M]any, if not all, working expatriates, later-life migrants and retirees choose to live near the coast, in a 'condominium belt' on the northeast coast of the island of Penang. The apartments and condominiums in the area typically offer sea or partial sea views of the Strait of Malacca' (2015: 674). In Boquete, some of these migrants lived in gated communities, exclusive spaces that allow the elective residential segregation of wealthy populations (see, for example, Low 2001, 2003; Atkinson and Flint 2004; Atkinson 2006; Atkinson and Blandy 2006); they are often encircled by walls and entry is permitted only through securitised gates, which are guarded and monitored around the clock. Recently constructed—their construction in part driven by the way that land was zoned for property development as much as by the demand of their incomers—by the time of the research, these were both home to incoming lifestyle migrants and the location of second homes of members of the Panamanian political and upper classes (McWatters 2009), a continuation of the historical identification of the area as a vacation destination.

The extent of the spatial dislocation of these gated communities became highly visible to Michaela when, for example, Nicholas and Tracy (who we met in Chap. 6) drove her to their home in one of the gated communities. The entrance was on the outskirts of town, a short distance from the low-slung residential neighbourhoods of Boquete; a guard waved Nicholas' large SUV through the smooth, tarmac road—a contrast to the potholes in the roads outside—winding its ways through a lush grassed landscape—a golf course—for about 5 minutes, before houses and other buildings came into view. Walking this stretch on another

occasion, it took Michaela 45 minutes to get to the centre of the community from the front gate. As Nicholas had explained on the drive, the house was on the market; although it had been a good starting point for their lives in Boquete, they did not like the exclusivity of their surroundings and the disconnect from the wider community (see Fig. 7.1).

Similarly, the sense of arrival and seclusion communicated by arriving at the entrance of a gated community was echoed for Karen, in Penang, by Lydia (who we met in Chap. 4). In response to a call for participants to send in photographs or films that they felt expressed what life in Malaysia meant for them, Lydia sent a photo of the luxurious entrance to her apartment building and its opulent swimming pool as a way of demonstrating the agreeable life she can afford to live in Malaysia compared to the one she had living in a flat and working very long hours in London. While this environment signals home to Lydia, the mechanisms of exclusion that function in gated communities might also be at play in such environ-

Fig. 7.1 Spanish Villas in Valle Escondido

ments. Indeed, the photo of the construction of a new residential environment shows how quickly right of access and way to local populations is interrupted by the development of these new communities (see Fig. 7.2). It leads to further questions about who is being made to feel at home in these spaces, and who is being deterred and displaced in the process.

The residential segregation of the gated community, or the work of exclusion—people kept out either by gates or made to feel out of place and therefore unwelcome in such environments—draws attention to the colonial traces within these contemporary practices of migrant home-making. In making this claim, we are inspired by Blunt and Dowling's description of 'the home as a lived place and as a spatial imaginary … mobilized and contested in ways that shape and reproduce the discourses, everyday practices and material cultures of nation and empire' (2006: 142). Indeed, for British in Malaysia, there is an extent to which, being a former colony, it already has reminiscences of home. For Nicola, this was actually the case,

Fig. 7.2 A new residential development in progress in Penang

since she had spent her early years in Penang as the daughter of a British government official. However, Lydia's explanation that she felt lucky to be living in a place so opulent, as with Nicholas and Tracy's discomfort at the exclusivity of their home within the gated community, demonstrates their consciousness and reflexivity about such privilege.

This ambivalent nature of the (re)production of privilege leads us to remind the reader that some of those who took part in the research lived outside of these more exclusive compounds and developments. In Boquete, while the high-profile gated communities such as *Valle Escondido* had attracted a lot of people to the area, often they set up their homes outside the town on land that had been coffee fincas. Ed, who was Cuban American and had worked as a bilingual—Spanish and English—lawyer in Miami, had chosen to live a 15-minute drive up into the hills above the main town. As he explained, '[A] lot of Americans feel more comfortable living with other Americans … I didn't want to live in a development; it's less adventuresome!' Others chose to live in the mixed residential neighbourhoods closer to the town. Michaela's visit to see Tessa—who we met in Chap. 5—had coincided with a visit from the daughter of their housekeeper; she was training to be a lawyer, but today was conducting an update and virus check on Tessa's laptop. Tessa described to Michaela that what she and her husband had been looking for was community:

> I did not want to live in a Gringo community. I wanted to live among the local Panamanians. I felt very strongly that if you are going to go to another country, you should try to become part of the culture … We just have quite a support system of Panamanians … I think it is important when you live in a country to have a support system of people from that country … I don't understand why you would want to come here and isolate yourself.

Living within walking distance of the town; Tessa continued to explain that every time there was a fiesta or public event, they could hear it clear as day!

Examples such as this were common in both Boquete and Penang, complicating the image of exclusive, enclave living that is often associated with such populations. In Penang, for example, Jonathan, who we also met in Chap. 5, explained to Karen that he chose to live in amongst the locals in a small side street in Penang, away from the condominiums and

the familiar 'expatriate' communities. He enjoyed gardening, walking, learning about the history of Penang, and liked the spirituality Penang offered for him. Nevertheless, Jonathan also saw himself as 'a customer' of Penang and said that 'if the government or Islam encroached too much, then I would move on'. Other lifestyle migrants lived in mixed neighbourhoods, in Georgetown or Batu Ferringhi, but, nevertheless, these neighbourhoods were generally populated with wealthier than average populations. In many ways, this pattern of residential segregation reflects the wider social organisation of Penang along class and ethnic lines (as discussed in Chap. 2).

Above, we have considered the location of homes and how these stand out in contrast to the wider residential landscapes of Penang and Boquete, but also how some lifestyle migrants resist the temptation to enclave themselves. We now move on to other aspects of the material home.

Domestic Belongings and Home-Making

In this section, we shift our gaze to the insides of homes, the décor and furnishings, as a 'site' through which material culture, identities, and consumption intersect (Miller 1998, 2001). Material possessions play a significant role within the home-making practices of migrants—material possessions that travel with the migrants from place to place producing continuity to the past, the cultural and individual biographies of these objects significant in the production of memories (cf. Parkin 1999; Hecht 2001; Attan 2006). As Walsh (2006) demonstrates so eloquently, objects from DVD box sets through to art displayed on walls have the capacity to evoke these memories; they are telling of transnational belonging. However, as we demonstrate below, these souvenirs from 'back home' often co-exist with those from travels and residence in other parts of the world, and from Malaysia and Panama—past, present, and future lives coalescing within the materiality of the home. Homing practices then are not only about continuity, but can also be about forging new sites of belonging through unfamiliar material worlds.

Empirically, our starting point here is the 'home tours' that we were often treated to by those taking part in our respective research projects;

this focus is essential to deepening 'discussions of homes and belongings in the broader sense of relations to place, landscape and material culture' (Blunt and Varley 2004: 4). As people showed us around their homes, they would highlight certain items and objects. These were often telling of connections and relationships to the place of origin; to other parts of the world visited, lived in and travelled to; and to the destination.

Visiting Rebecca's apartment in Penang, Karen was particularly struck by the number of Japanese objects she had on display. This is one of the ways that Rebecca makes herself feel at home in Penang, displaying objects from the country where her husband lives, and where she has lived for some time. She also proudly showed Karen her husband's 'man cave', the room he uses when he visits, where he can play music, do his work, or engage in his other hobbies. A further room was filled with craft materials that Rebecca herself uses in her charity work with disabled people. Her home is home because it contains all the elements of her life, past and present, the husband she misses, and memories of where he is. It also reveals their comfortable, cosmopolitan, and well-travelled lifestyles (see Fig. 7.3).

Fig. 7.3 Rebecca's Japanese objects on display in her living room

Louise and Richard's home similarly told of their travels and lives elsewhere in Asia; they chose to settle in Penang after travelling through Thailand, Bali, and Hong Kong. Their home, a house in a new development targeted at wealthy locals and foreigners alike, which from the outside looks similar to many Western homes, is decorated inside and out with expressions of their taste and identities. There is a beautifully crafted garden with many objects of art from their travels in Asia, especially Thailand (Fig. 7.5), and an Asian feel to the interior of their home achieved through the display of photographs, furnishings, and objects of art (Fig. 7.4). However, there is still an undeniable Western flavour too, especially when it comes to their very large, comfortable sofa, which faces a very large television screen, and a bank of English and American DVDs to choose from. While reminiscent of a longer-standing fashion for the display of Chinese products in British homes—which, as Cheang (2008)

Fig. 7.4 Richard and Louise's home, decorated with objects from travels in East Asia

Fig. 7.5 Richard and Louise's garden, decorated with objects from travels in East Asia

argues points to imperial dimensions of British identity-making through the home—paired with the 'comfortable' sofa, the autobiographical significance of this domestic space is also notable.

Where Louise and Richard collected and carefully exhibited souvenirs from their travels, others, such as Susan and Bill in Boquete, produced a distinct material culture in their homes through bringing together objects from this, their latest place of residence, and those from their lives before migration and their wider travels. Susan and her husband Bill live in a low-slung single storey dwelling with three bedrooms, located in a mostly Panamanian neighbourhood, the entrance to their property marked by a large wrought iron gate that remains open during the day but is closed at night as a security measure. Both Susan and Bill have their hobbies; Bill enjoys carpentry, carrying this out in the purpose-built workshop in the backyard, while Susan engages in a range of handicrafts including quilting, embroidery, and knitting. The bedrooms are furnished to resemble a country home motif, rag rugs on the floor

and home-made quilts in pastel colours serving as counterpanes on the plump double beds. In the sitting room, Susan has hung three banners that she made herself; each has at its centre a *mola*, a piece of reverse appliqué famously produced by Kuna women—one of the indigenous groups in Panama. She is also part of a knitting group—in itself unusual in Panama because any yarn has to be imported—whose primary product is blankets and baby clothes to be donated to the Ngäbe, the biggest and most impoverished of Panama's indigenous groups. For Susan, engaging in these handicrafts and displaying them in her home are ways in which she makes herself at home in Boquete, using her prior skills and knowledge to create objects infused with meaning from her new surroundings.

This focus on domestic space reveals the ways in which these lifestyle migrants attempt to marry their biographies to the places they have travelled and to their new environments. While there is no doubt that residential segregation and spatial exclusion are central to the experience of some within these migrant communities, this by no means captures the diverse living arrangements of these populations. What these indicative narratives demonstrate is how intimate practices that bring together material culture, consumption, and identity meld past trajectories and belongings to current circumstances. Through such curious grafting, a sense of home is produced.

Social Aspects of Home-Making

It is this idea of familiarising difference that reinvigorates our discussion here of the relationships between these privileged migrants within the destination, whether formalised through organisations and associations or more casual or informal. As has been demonstrated in the case of lifestyle migrants elsewhere, socialising and making community with others 'like them' is an important dimension of daily life (see, for example, O'Reilly 2000). While this tends towards exclusivity and is telling of privilege, the lives of these migrants often taking place in an 'expatriate bubble', it is also clear that these relationships are sites for the formation

of communities of practice that complicate this vision. Practising and creating social relationships within the destination helps migrants to feel at home, and serves an important purpose as sites for the circulation of knowledge about how to live in an unfamiliar environment.

Formal Associations

In both Boquete and Penang, organisations and associations proliferate that, in their primary purpose or as an unintended by-product, bring members of the migrant community together. Charitable organisations, social clubs, and expatriate business networks are all part of this landscape and offer sites and opportunities for the development of social networks. Many of those who took part in our respective projects were members of such organisations, and although there were those who self-described as eschewing the 'expatriate life', the mere fact that they pushed off against expatriate connections was telling in itself. As Fortier (2000) describes in relation to Italians in London, community organisations offer opportunities for the performance and creation of ethnic identity—these are the sites and moments for ethnic intimacy, the construction of home and belonging. This analysis is also highlighted in contemporary social history research on the associational life of English and Scottish migrants, which highlights how 'clubbing together' is central to the formation of diasporic subjects and ethnic community-making (see, for example, Bueltmann 2014; Bueltmann and MacRaild 2017).

In Penang, numerous associations and organisations brought these migrants together around shared interests; long-standing or initiated by the migrants themselves, it was common to find these described by the migrants as a part of their daily lives. The prominent organisations were often, but not always, organised by women, their membership also gendered. These include, inter alia, the American Association of Malaysia, Association of British Women in Malaysia, German Expat Group, Royal Society of St George, St Patrick's Society, International Women's Association Penang (which appears to have folded), and the Japanese Ladies Association. It is important to note these associations were not all

English-speaking, not all Western, and not all nationality-based. However, they were all, in some way, designated for non-Malays.

Many of those taking part in the research in Malaysia described the sense of community and support these organisations provided. As Sally Addington, the Chair of the Association of British Women in Malaysia (ABWM), explained to Karen, 'When you move to a new place it is like having the rug pulled out from under your feet, and all the structure in your life is gone. Associations like the ABWM offer a micro-community with lots of support, activities, socialising, advice and fun, of course.' The ABWM organises a monthly glossy magazine and a weekly email newsletter, social events such as weekly coffee mornings with presentations and talks, monthly lunches, social events and sporting events, games (Mahjong, Bridge, etc.), cultural trips, and an opportunity to do fundraising or volunteering at local charities. Membership is also telling of attitudes to national identity and belonging (http://www.expatgo.com/my/2013/04/17/expat-organisations-in-malaysia/). Sally reveals the explicit intention of some organisations to include people of all nationalities, 'the ABWM is open to anyone with a connection to or affiliation with the UK. Those who enjoy British pastimes and all the other activities available to members.' But it would be difficult to imagine someone non-British joining an Association of British Women.

In Boquete, there were similarly a number of different organisations that brought these migrants together. Particularly prominent within this was the Tuesday Morning Meeting (TMM) hosted by the Boquete Community Players (BCP)—originally an amateur dramatics club that brought together incoming North American migrants with longer-standing residents of Boquete. Information about TMM describes it as a 'long-standing and ingrained part of life in Boquete' (Chiriqui Life 2016). While they originally had to make do with rented space in local hotels after a fundraising campaign, BCP was able to renovate an old bar, making this into a generously sized theatre and community space. It is here that the weekly TMM now takes place, external speakers brought in to speak on a range of topics including taxation, healthcare, and immigration advice; local history; crime prevention initiatives; and complementary and alternative therapies. A weekly event that continues,

unabated, year round, the TMM offers the time and space for community-making. As in the case of similar organisations in Malaysia, while the meeting is open to all, the topics—which often relate to how to live in Panama and catering to the needs and interests of the incoming population—and the use of English as lingua franca have the effect of excluding non-English-speaking local populations. Similarly, in the market that accompanies the meeting, it is notable the businesses selling wares tend to be those run by the migrants themselves. For those few hours each Tuesday morning, the lifestyle migrant community of Boquete is made visible. However, these migrants were also active in a range of philanthropic organisations including the Lions and Rotary Clubs; they might also volunteer with programmes run by local churches and other local third sector organisations that take them beyond the 'expatriate bubble' as we discussed in Chap. 6.

To give a further example how expatriate spaces can be created, in Penang, Karen attended a networking and showcasing event for 'expat' businesses, which was held in a five-star hotel and organised by a woman who, finding herself alone after her husband left her for a Malay woman, had set up her own business organising such events to bring expats together. Just as Fortier (2000) explains in the case of Italians in London, these 'expatriate' spaces provide a degree of grounding, a sense of reassurance amidst what can be an unsettling experience. As Sarah, who was the chairwoman of a large British 'expatriate' organisation in Kuala Lumpur, told Karen, while proudly extoling the virtues of her organisation: 'We all feel like fish out of water when we first come, no matter how confident we are.' For Sarah, the job of her association was to help expatriates to settle and to find things to occupy their time. In Boquete, those who had been living in the area for longer periods of time described how important TMM had been in the early days, but now that they were more settled, it was no longer the life line that it had been to start with. In this way, they demonstrate its significance in grounding them in Panama when they had first arrived. What these examples make clear is that these organisations are not the only spaces they occupy, but act as a place to come home to within unfamiliar surroundings.

Expatriate associations—which form part of the social and institutional life of these populations—offer possibilities for the emergence of

communities of practice; engaged in forging a way of living in unfamiliar surroundings, this is explicitly organised around common practice (O'Reilly 2012). While this might offer an interpretation that distinguishes these practices from processes of ethnic community-making, we emphasise that it is important to remain attentive to the extent to which these communities of practice are classed and racialised formations. These organisations welcome a mix of nationalities, but members are mainly Western and English-speaking. The careful observation of these expatriate associations and close reading of interviews thus demonstrate the extent to which the sense of feeling 'at home' maps onto their interactions with mostly white, English-speaking people.

Transnational Connections

While these organisations are an important aspect of migrant lives, their lives of course extend beyond these organisations. As with all social groups, making oneself feel at home involves spending time with people 'like them'. This can involve sharing time with other compatriots, or other middle-class professionals, but also virtually with family and friends who live elsewhere, and through visits to and from other places. Such transnational connections need to be set within the context of who they spend time with locally.

Most people Karen spoke to seemed content to know only a few local people and to mainly spend time with their own or other Western nationals, even where they had expressed an identity as not 'an expatriate'. In the project survey, for example, respondents were asked the nationalities of people they spend time with on a regular basis, and while those in Malaysia listed over 40 nationalities in their responses, those classed as friends were mainly British, followed by Malaysians, and then Australians. Work colleagues were most frequently listed as Malaysian and British. Many respondents to the survey felt they were well integrated and that it was quite easy to make friends in Malaysia, but in interviews, some talked of it being difficult to make *good* friends as they never knew when people would leave. Here, they reveal a deep-seated, unacknowledged assumption that their friends will be other 'expatriates' or Western migrants.

In Malaysia, a class orientation framed their (limited) encounters with members of the Malay population; as Melanie described, 'We do have some Malay friends, but I have to admit they are people like us, if you know what I mean.' While questions of class are deployed in order to describe these relationships with Malaysians, they are notably absent in the discussion of their white, Western friends and acquaintances. In Panama too, where these migrants described their relationships with Panamanians, it was often the local landowners or business people that they talked about. They might describe talking to the mayor, attending a lavish party thrown by a property developer from Panama City, or their conversations with members of the Founding families (see Chap. 2) about the commercial future of Boquete. Similarly, when Panamanians attended TMM, these were often government or municipal officials. Tessa's experience of having 'a support network' of local Panamanians who she could turn to was rarely replicated among these lifestyle migrants, their relationships with local Panamanians more commonly those of employment and patronage. Indeed, this was particularly clear at a dance held at the Boquete festival hall; organised by members of the North American community, this was intended to raise money for local charities and to bring members of the local community together with new North American residents. The dance partnerships were mixed, the Panamanians patiently walking their (most often) less-accomplished North American partners through the quick footwork of the Merengue and Salsa. The main organiser of the event explained excitedly to Michaela what a success the night was; it was the first time that they had managed to attract so many Panamanians to an event! But talking to the other men and women around the large round table, Michaela noticed a trend; keen to point out their connections to the Panamanians on the dance floor, they identified their gardeners, their hairdressers, and others who worked or provided services for them. This observation makes visible the classed relations of these existing connections.

Beyond the development of social relations with their compatriots and other relatively privileged migrants living locally, an important feature of such migrants' daily lives and thus of feeling at home is the effort they make to keep in touch with family and friends elsewhere in the world,

perhaps in their first-home country, or other places they have lived, or where their friends have moved to. These transnational connections were especially central in the lives of those in Malaysia. In the survey, over 80% of respondents had been visited in Malaysia during the last year by friends or family. In Boquete, it was also very common for people to travel back and forth to visit family and friends. But, when it comes to contacting family and friends who do not live with them, email and Skype (or a similar service) are the preferred means for daily and weekly contact. Maria, who was married to an English teacher, told Karen she keeps Skype on all the time on her phone or on her computer at home. That way, at any time, she can connect to her friends in Penang, her friends back home and elsewhere in the world, and her reading group in Penang. The high-speed Internet in Panama meant that such communications were easy and convenient for those who had made Boquete their home; they were regularly in touch with their children (and grandchildren), and kept in contact through Facebook. However, it is also clear that through migration, relationships with those 'back home' are recalibrated, our participants describing how they have changed since moving and how the relationships are strengthened or weakened as a consequence.

Such socialising outside of the associations can reveal belonging in its transnational dimensions, and the contexts and conditions that shape these.

Emotional and Autobiographical Home-Making

While in the previous sections we talked about how belonging takes root through domestic and social practices, here we turn to the consideration of the routine practices that our participants develop to communicate a sense of being 'at home' in the wider environments of Boquete and Penang. We noticed this in different ways, locating themselves at one and the same time as biographically 'back home', elsewhere, and 'here' in the new destination; through the performance of significant events; and through narratives of self that declared a cosmopolitan belonging.

Life Events in the Process of Home-Making

At a general level, as well as social home-making, some home-making takes place through locating oneself emotionally in a place. Whether it be where we are now or where we were, we have a sense of belonging to places where emotional or meaningful events have occurred, where we have invested life experiences, or especially where significant life events (such as puberty, marriage, death) have happened. It is interesting that Louise's daughter got married in Penang although she lives in the United Kingdom, marking a significant life event for Louise and Richard. Similarly, Christopher and Laura, who had moved to Penang for what was supposed to be a short stay, ended up settling there, having two children there, and now their children, who live back in the United Kingdom, talk of Penang as the home they return to for their holidays because it is where they grew up. These events and memories and their associated feelings and emotions tie us to places, lending a sense of belonging there.

For others, as the following case illustrates, life events intervene to disrupt this process of homing. Victoria, who was now living back in the United States, had contacted Michaela to describe her disappointment that her life in Panama had not worked out. She had worked as an attorney, her husband as an investor, and Boquete seemed to offer them the real estate opportunities they were looking for as well as climate, landscape, and expatriate community. They had found a house, but then her husband died suddenly as they were about to move in; she explained poignantly, '[L]ife just carried me in a different direction than I had intended.' She moved to Boquete nonetheless; however, as we recalled earlier, a series of misfortunes had happened in the intervening three and half years—a break-in, a theft, a flood—the lack of recourse about many of these issues wearing her down and leading to a sense of mistrust.

> I was on the fence for a long time about whether to stay or go … What kept me there was the beauty, the climate and the Gringo population, and a few good Panamanian friends … It was just not the way I wanted to live … Unfortunately, I invested money in Panama. I have to keep coming back to Panama until I sell my property and get my money out.

As events conspired to prevent her from home-making in Panama in the way she had imagined when she and her husband had first planned the move, Victoria relocated her homing practices to the United States. As she described her relief and comfort in the functioning of the American legal system, the ease of everyday living, versus her frustrations and anger with how things had turned out in Panama, she made clear the impact of these events beyond her control on her sense of being at home.

Home thus lends a sense of ontological security, whereas changes that disrupt home—moving home, the death of a family member, a family break-up—lead to ontological insecurity and thus to practices that aim to retrieve a sense of belonging. For all migrants then, and even for relatively privileged ones like ours, there is a struggle for normality and practices to recreate ontological security.

Cosmopolitan Belonging

In both locations, lifestyle migrants used 'stories of cosmopolitan belonging' (Jones, Jackson and Rhys-Taylor 2014), to claim the ability to live in markedly different surroundings and to be at home within the destination. This might be through celebration or through 'creeping familiarity' (Jackson 2014) with their 'exotic' surroundings. In this way, they demonstrate how they are changing and how they are settling into this unfamiliar environment. As Kate told Karen, 'having tasted this life, people feel different and can never be "just" British again'.

This is particularly clear in the case of the emotional and autobiographical attachment of those in Malaysia to Asia, as exotic, exciting, as travelled to, and therefore always 'other'. Among Karen's participants in Malaysia, this was evident in their overt celebration of the multiculturalism, food, and festivals in Penang. In response to the request for photos, Sandra, for example, sent a photo of a Chinese festival she had attended and another of a famous Penang dish (Char Kway Teow) with the caption: 'Always interested to try the local foods.' Sandra thus expresses herself as embracing openness and adventure, and simultaneously marks out food as a space of cosmopolitan belonging (Rhys-Taylor 2014, 2017). Indeed, it was common for those in Penang to use multiculturalism,

food, and travel to express their sense of a cosmopolitan self, extolling the virtues of Malaysia's multicultural society, embracing the opportunity to travel in Asia using budget airlines, and congratulating themselves on knowing where to locate the best street foods. In Boquete, similar tropes were at play, with many North Americans demonstrating their local expertise through their in-depth knowledge of coffee production, the natural environment, or the indigenous communities of Panama. In this way, they emplace themselves in Boquete, transforming (some) local knowledge into their own autobiographical claims to belonging.

As narratives of self, these stories and practices of cosmopolitan belonging rely both on production and exoticisation of an 'other' by lifestyle migrants. This is made particularly clear by the extent to which, in the local events that Michaela attended in Boquete, these incomers always seem to be on the outside looking in, as the following excerpt from Michaela's fieldnotes about the Founders' Day celebrations—marking 99 years since the establishment of the town—illustrates:

> On the large stage set up in front of the Mayor's office, demonstrations and performances took place throughout the day. By 2 pm, a significant crowd had gathered; there were many Ngäbe women in the crowd—distinguishable in their long, brightly coloured, shapeless dresses—and many members of the Hispanic population. On the terrace of Amigos—a bar popular with the North American population—the white clientele, seated comfortably in their plastic patio chairs, surveilled the events.

However, it is also clear that accounts of these less-than-smooth encounters with difference also functioned as 'stories of cosmopolitan belonging' (Jones, Jackson and Rhys-Taylor 2014), highlighting the rub and discomfort that these wrought. The frustration of not being able to communicate—as Sandra, a resident of Penang emphasised, 'when I visit the local markets or food stalls I wish I could converse with the people beyond saying thank you and asking for my food—I feel like there is so much I would love to know about them but can't ask!'—of having the intimacy of an insider, captures a common theme to the migrant experience in privileged populations and beyond. These lifestyle migrants learn to live with the strangeness around them by embracing it, photographing

it, sharing it. And yet, in the telling of these encounters, the foreign and the exotic remain prominent in ways that reveal their privilege. Their everyday practices are not only about the project of familiarisation but also demonstrate continuity, particularly of relationships to friends and families, and reproduce—through home-making—claims to national belonging. For example, Thanksgiving remained a notable celebration for the North Americans in Boquete, the local grocery stores now stocking turkey at this time of the year. The photograph supplied by one of Karen's participants, of a Christmas tree and the words, 'we have lots of festivals and even Christmas is a big deal', shows a symbol of Christian faith at odds with the majority Muslim population. Speaking to the migrants' efforts to bring back the familiarity they have lost through moving, of feeling 'together in difference' (Higgins 2017), these examples reveal the tensions between familiarity and difference that are at the heart of many of these migrants' homing practices. Further articulations of these can be found on migrant blogs and Facebook pages as they account for their efforts to try to grow produce native to their countries of origin in these environments, as they reproduce their favourite dishes from back home, struggling to find the basic ingredients on the shelves of the supermarkets. These actions trouble and complicate further their claims to cosmopolitan belonging.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have looked at how belonging manifests in the daily lives of those we worked with in Malaysia and Panama. Through a focus on home-making—intended to capture the processes through which belonging is achieved and claimed at different scales—we highlight that even for these privileged populations, significant work goes into (re) settling. We have described how they make familiar their new surroundings, the relationships and events that support feeling at home, and the continuities and breaks from past lives that such settlement involves. In particular, we have considered three different practices of home-making through which these lifestyle migrants develop their sense of belonging: (a) through material practices of home-making in

domestic space, (b) social practices, particularly the community-making enabled by expatriate associations, and (c) emotional and autobiographical emplacement, highlighting the significance of life events and their claims to cosmopolitan belonging. In these ways, we make clear that belonging is a thoroughly social process. Even for these relatively privileged migrants, developing a sense that they are at home is important; and yet, their homing practices are overlaid with and reproduce privilege in ways that require attention. What becomes clear is the extent to which belonging is a process within which structural advantage intervenes, and is (to an extent) reproduced.

At the heart of lifestyle migration—and as we have seen in Chaps. 3 and 5—is the idea of a move that enables a way of living differently, of self-realisation, and of fulfilment. However, this discursive construction is framed through the lens of values imported, place appropriated on the terms of these migrants. In their accounts, Boquete and Penang offer an alternative way of living—whether therapeutic, exotic, or exciting—that is different from what they know and where they came from. While for the large part these migrants celebrate this difference, it is also clear that the work that goes into familiarising difference—of developing the capacity to live with difference—is not frictionless; instead, it reveals the structures of privilege, the residues and sediments of the historical production of global inequality, and how these are domesticated and reproduced through practices of homing. Similarly, their ability to move on, as we saw in the case of Victoria, previously resident in Boquete, or in the case of those in Penang who stressed that should Sharia law take further hold in Malaysia, they would leave, points further to relatively loose constraints on their lives.

While we have demonstrated the ways in which these migrants variously make home within privilege and the colonial traces within this, we also want to close by making clear that these migrants are not unknowing actors in the reproduction of privilege. Just as the examples above demonstrate how some become accustomed to being at home in privilege, it is also the case that for others this daily reminder of their privilege—at least at a local level, playing out their daily encounters—elicits some discomfort and action. Rebecca, for example, sent Karen this photograph of a bunch of lilies (Fig. 7.6) to illustrate the discomfort she felt at spending

Fig. 7.6 Rebecca's lilies

the same amount for the flowers as she paid her Indonesian cleaner for a day's work. Shocked at herself, wanting to be a good migrant (see Higgins 2017), and having to cut back on her expenses anyway, she stopped buying expensive flowers and continued to hire the helper. But this made her aware of her privilege and her need to be careful with her money at one and the same time. Lifestyle migrants' claims to belonging thus need to be located within the wider contexts of their lives and actions; for example, the volunteering and philanthropy (see Chap. 6) of these migrant populations is often framed as an acknowledgement and reaction to their structural advantage.

To conclude, while relative privilege explains migration—the opportunities available to these migrants, the conditions that permit their

migration—we have also outlined through the discussion of home-making and belonging how privilege feels for these lifestyle migrants, providing insights into how it is perpetuated and reproduced, albeit under very different structural conditions than the earlier colonial encounters.

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8

The Pursuit of Well-Being and a Healthy Way of Life

In this chapter, we examine the interaction of lifestyle migration, health, and well-being as tropes that attract people to certain destinations and as imaginaries that shape their lives post migration. We see, again, the post-colonial traces evident in their pursuit of the good (healthy) life, but also the ways in which such traces are merely indicative of outcomes, as migrants need also to constantly negotiate ongoing conjuncturally specific situations (Stones 2005) and communities. Lifestyle migration to these destinations—from imaginings to the evaluation of lived experience—is framed around health imaginaries. These include the opportunity to live and to lead healthier lives, for example, having access to fresh food, clean water, and a healthy environment. These migrants also imagine that they will have a better quality of life within the destination, and the more leisurely lives that they lead provide opportunities for them to bring such imaginings into fruition. It is important to remember, however, that such opportunities are available to them precisely because of their relative privilege. It is also evident that, what Miles (2015) labels 'health care imaginaries'—which place particular emphasis on personal attention from medical and care professionals—feature in their considerations about migration. Such imaginaries are visible in their understandings and/or

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knowledge of healthcare provision and the cost of domestic labour—for example, in cases where there is need for daily care within the home—within the destinations.

As time goes on, however, and as migrants settle and age in place, considerations over the relationship between health, well-being, and quality of life are constantly renegotiated. Researchers of retirement migration to Spain have been at the forefront of identifying the changing needs in respect to health and social care of ageing retirement migrants. In particular, they highlight how the context of a health and social care system that relies heavily on family support for the elderly means that solutions to the continuing care needs of these migrants are sought from within the migrant community (see, for example, Betty and Cahill 1999; Oliver 2008; Hall and Hardill 2014). Indeed, our research in Malaysia and Panama reveals the emergence of similar practices, with migrants setting up specific services that might otherwise not be readily available to them within the destination, in anticipation of their future needs. For example, in Boquete, members of the migrant community have set up their own blood bank and hospice provision, while migrants in Penang have established local community support groups. For others, there might be an expectation of return coinciding with the onset of health and elderly care need, although this will depend on access to and cost provision within their country of origin.

Considerations of how healthy living features within imaginings and experiences of a better way of life can also therefore be considered a site of how legacies of colonialism, in the context of neoliberalism and the rise of free markets in both migration and health and social care, shape the futures for these migrants. In the chapter, we thus discuss the way certain places have tropes, and can be imagined as curative, before considering how imaginings of future lives, and ideas about ageing intersect with the quest for a better way of life. We then turn to a consideration of how the desire for a healthier way of life plays out among our participants in Malaysia and Panama.

Imagining a Healthy Way of Life (Curative and Therapeutic Landscapes)

The role of the imagination and social imaginaries in attracting people to places has been well-documented in the tourism literature and is gaining wider currency in making sense of other mobilities and migrations. As Appadurai (1996: 6), an early proponent in recognising the significance of imagination for migration, recognised, imagination can be a 'well-spring' for migration. In tourism, this approach draws attention to the ways in which people are drawn to specific places partly by the natural and social attractions of places but also by cultural imaginings, shared sets of expectations, and other discourses or imaginaries that shape destinations and promise certain types of experience in the 'other' place (Bell et al. 2011; see Benson 2012; Osbaldiston 2012). The role of the journey, of travel, and often some sense of hardship are central themes in this literature that implies new experiences or self-realisation are hard-won. Such imaginaries and imaginings are carried through, via the habitus and conjuncturally specific internal structures, into travellers' expectations, and on into their practices—their actions, behaviours, and experiences (see Chap. 1).

In migration, the significance of such imaginaries often lies in their power for creating imaginings of the future lives made possible by migration (Adams 2004; Thomson 1999; Vigh 2009). In the case of lifestyle migration, in particular, it is also clear that how destinations are imagined also features within the decision to migrate, the perceived qualities of particular landscapes driving understandings of the lives that might be led there (see, for example, Benson 2010, 2011, 2012; Osbaldiston 2012). For example, rural landscapes might signal a slower, more relaxed pace of life and closer community relations; these imaginings feed into migration narratives—and, in particular, the belief that a better way of life is achievable through migration—so that the rural environment, socially constructed in these terms, further supports the desire for a better way of life framed around escaping the rat race, living more simply, and being part of the community. Particularly pertinent to our ambition in this chapter of drawing out how health and well-being interplay with the

pursuit of a better way of life, is the consideration of 'therapeutic landscapes' and what we might call health imaginaries. Indeed, as Hoey (2009, 2014) unpacks, set within a wider context of self-improvement and personal fulfilment at the core of lifestyle migration, some sites are constructed as spaces of refuge, healing, and recovery. However, we are not arguing the case for viewing lifestyle migration as health migration (see Breivik 2011), but contend that health and well-being are constituent features of the imaginings of quality of life.

Imagining a Healthier Life in Penang and Boquete

Just as Karen found with the British in Spain, those in Malaysia mainly celebrated the quality of the lives and the improved sense of well-being they had gained by migrating (O'Reilly and Benson 2015). In Malaysia, the warmer climate and availability of fresh food, the multiculturalism, and the strong 'expatriate' communities are all considered to contribute to a better quality of life and of ageing. Malaysia is viewed by lifestyle migrants as a place with a strong caring culture, a few steps behind Western countries and some Asian ones, such as Singapore and Hong Kong, but catching up fast. Even this simple summary of their reasons for enjoying Malaysia reveals their privileged status but also the ways they framed Malaysia as healthier for diverse reasons. For some the attraction was simply that, as one woman put it, 'It's a nice place to live comfortably on less money.' But for many, the emphasis was placed on Malaysia as being healthy because of the food, the landscape, and the climate. Several people spoke of experiencing less stress, and of being more in control of their lives. They would spend their spare time, gained from being retired or from choosing less stressful occupations, in leisurely and healthy pursuits such as travelling, eating out, walking, and swimming. Here, being more leisurely itself is seen as being healthier or contributing to well-being.

Although Karen interviewed lifestyle migrants in both Kuala Lumpur and Penang, much of the fieldwork was based in Penang. Penang is renowned as a tourist destination famous for its food. Malaysia's Tourism Department has branded it as Malaysia's food capital; a feature in *The*

Guardian (2012) said George Town in Penang has the best street food in Asia, and tourists and migrants on numerous blogs and travel sites share their lists of places to eat, dishes to try, and street-food stalls to visit. The migrants Karen spoke to were very conscious of this fame and attraction of Penang, and turned themselves into tourism agents as they advised her where and what to eat. In one discussion with a group of women, Karen asked if they would think about taking some photos for her of what Penang means to them. There followed an interesting discussion about the sorts of things they would take photos of: the Hawker market, the jungle, the bicycle (a piece of street art by Ernesto Zacharevic), a mosque, a temple, and different events like Chinese New Year. What was most interesting to note is that these were often the same things that are in tourist brochures. The relationship between this celebration of life in Penang and health is not immediately apparent, but here we are viewing health in terms of well-being rather than a limited view related to the body and to physical health (see Figs. 8.1 and 8.2).

Fig. 8.1 Penang beach front and luxury apartments

Fig. 8.2 A hawker stall at the end of a street renowned for its colonial architecture

Penang is also celebrated for its natural beauty and idyllic beaches. Although it is usually recommended not to swim in the sea (the sea water is badly polluted), many large conurbations have their own swimming pool, where wealthier lifestyle migrants can spend their spare time. Indeed, several of the conversations Karen shared with migrants were while sitting by the pool on a warm and humid afternoon. And even though the extreme humidity can be difficult for some to cope with, nevertheless, most people told her they preferred to live somewhere where it was warm all year round, mainly because this meant they could be more active. Nicola, who we met in Chap. 6, told Karen, 'I like to live an outdoor life largely, although I haven't got my health at the moment … if

you can go out in the sun you get more vitamin D, it is just healthier, and don't forget the exotic fruits you can get, papaya. It is just a much healthier life.'

Mary, the deputy editor of a magazine for expatriates, sums this up very well, '[T]he lifestyle here in Malaysia is rather idyllic. Thanks to the low cost of living, I am able to enjoy a lifestyle I couldn't in the UK—I have a (small) apartment of my own and I can go out to eat fairly regularly. A great advantage is also the weather—I love sunshine and being out and about in the warm weather, and it means that plans are not disrupted by the weather as they are so often in the UK, when rainy days can ruin parties, etc. An advantage of living alone means I find I have plenty of time to pursue my own interests—I love to swim, to do yoga, catch up with friends, travel, explore the city and the area, dine out, reading, and writing. My job also enables me to meet many people and do a wide variety of interesting things, far more so than I could in the UK!'

For those in Boquete, many of the same themes emerged in relation to moving to a healthier way of life. As we described in Chap. 5, the high cost of living in the United States was a serious consideration in framing the decision to migrate for those in Panama, and Boquete in particular offered a cheaper alternative future. But it was clear that the life that some of these migrants imagined living there was not solely motivated by this low cost but also about leading a healthier life. The same factors that brought tourism to the area fed into imaginings of the life in Boquete. The lush rainforest with its rich flora and fauna was evident within this, as they drew attention to the locations of their homes, which often looked out on this 'raw' rainforest. This is an area known for its birdlife in particular—one of the draws of the area is the famed Quetzal trail, a hiking route that wends through the rainforest for six miles, with spectacular scenery and the possibility of spotting the Resplendent Quetzal, a bird listed by conservationist as near threatened—their representations thus signal the simpler life that they thought was available there.

Nicholas had offered to give Michaela a guided tour of the area on her second visit to Boquete; this was partly to show her the new developments that had been started—and then stalled—but also to give her a sense of the devastation that had occurred when the Caldera, the river that runs through the centre of Boquete, had burst its banks earlier in the

year, taking out a road bridge crossing the river at the top of the town. A steep climb out of the town revealed how quickly the urbanisation dissipates; they were soon out of sight of the town, the town obscured from view by banks of lush green vegetation. No other cars, the occasional chicken running across the road, Nicholas explained, 'I come up here for a drive when I need to restore my faith in Boquete. This is what I came to Boquete for.' The Boquete that he came for, 'untouched' still exists, his belief (sic, imagining) still has a foundation.

For others, Boquete and its surroundings offered something more spiritual. Jim and Emily described how this was somehow 'intangible', but that living here had allowed them to explore their spirituality, encouraging personal growth. This had been made possible by leaving behind those things that they had disliked about living in the United States, about making an effort to lead a more healthy and active life, but also about the place itself. Simply put, moving to Boquete had brought with it the possibility of improving their well-being.

One North American business owner described how life here was 'magical', inadvertently echoing the way that others referred to the mythic qualities of the landscape: the rock art of unknown origin (at least in their descriptions), the steam rising up through cracks in the landscape—testament to the volcanic landscape within which Boquete is located—the hot springs emblematic of the curative properties of this environment, and its innate spiritual quality that had 'called' Lindy to offer massage for rehabilitation and relaxation and others to run spiritual and meditation practices that included yoga and Qi Gong among others. Beyond the question of what the environment offers, it was clear for certain members of the North American community, alternative therapies formed a part of the narrative about healthier living.

This was particularly evident at the TMM; the schedule of talks often included invited speakers talking about such therapies—for example, an Amazonian shaman. At the time of the research, a regular stall at the accompanying market sold snake oil, the alleged curative properties of which several North Americans were raving about. Colloidal silver, a dietary supplement judged by the US Food and Drug Administration as neither safe nor effective, was also in circulation through the community.

What we tentatively point to here is that while medical treatment is one attraction of Panama to these populations—and as we discuss in further detail below—an individualised approach to health and well-being and to self-improvement was also in evidence.

Imagining a healthier lifestyle is also in evidence in the way that many of these migrants 'push off' against representations of expatriate living. In Boquete, the image of expatriates as sitting around and drinking all day seemed to have resonance within these presentations. In our respective research with Britons resident in France (Benson 2009, 2011) and Spain (O'Reilly 2000, 2003), a similar trope emerged, with our interlocutors defining themselves in opposition to these prominent, long-standing and widely circulating representations of expatriate life, encapsulated in the quotation from Hemingway's (1926) *The Sun also rises* that we presented in Chap. 1. For some North Americans in Boquete, this representation was used to signal their more active lifestyles. Sally described how she was concerned about and disapproving of the drinking culture as she described why she had set up her keep-fit business. Ted explained, 'I'm not the type to sit in my rocking chair and drink; when I see something that needs doing I think to myself, I can do that!' Indeed, as with several of the other people participating in the research, Michaela came across Ted in different settings and contexts over the period of the research—with a blowtorch on the roof of the community theatre, sitting at a table in the festival hall at a dance, in the expatriate bar—making his involvement in a range of different philanthropic schemes and projects locally visible. Being active in retirement, as Nicholas stressed, was a way of ensuring a long and healthy life. Similarly, in Penang, much of the discussion around quality of life also expressed an antipathy towards the perceived way of life of 'expats' who are assumed to have no interest in the culture, the food, and the way of life of Penangites. The celebration of the local food, discussed earlier, was therefore also an expression of the ability to live the good and healthy life in the right way.

Imagining Healthy Ageing

Although not exclusively associated with ageing, the connections between lifestyle migration and ageing are undeniable. Lifestyle migrants are, on average, older than the resident populations of the societies they leave as well as those they move to, and lifestyle migration populations in a range of destinations include a significant proportion of retired, early retired, and semi-retired, as well as those reaching a later stage in their lives. Notions of successful, positive retirement and independent ageing are therefore often central themes, with the (potential) severing of the connection between place of work and residence signalling a turning point towards a period of greater control over where, how, and with whom to live (O'Reilly and Benson 2015). As Blaakilde (2013: 176) has noted of Danish seniors in Spain, 'migration can be a consequence of retired migrants' intentions to be in charge of their own weakening health situations'. We can add here that this is a very neoliberal rendering of how to manage one's life and migration.

Earlier work on retirement migration is particularly valuable in making sense of this relationship between a better way of life, retirement, and health; with its focus on active and positive ageing (see, for example, King et al. 2000; Oliver 2008), it highlights the significance of migration in the transition from work to retirement and the reassertion of identities and agency through retirement lifestyles. However, the destinations selected for retirement are also notable; health imaginaries, for example, of the (Northern) Mediterranean coastline where much of this earlier work was conducted, are prominent within accounts of the decision to migrate. The sunshine, the dry climate, and healthy eating are all mobilised in support of migration (O'Reilly and Benson 2015; King et al. 2000). While these imaginings carry with them romantic—and perhaps problematic—assumptions, we present them here as a way of demonstrating that for lifestyle migrants, the search for a better life is in part a search for a broadly understood healthier way of living.

What is clear, as we have demonstrated in the chapter about how Panama and Malaysia are marketed, is the extent to which these understandings of the pursuit of a healthier way of life feature within the pro-

motion and publicity surroundings these destinations. The trope of therapeutic and curative landscapes, which draws attention to the significance of place to well-being, is a significant feature within this place marketing. As Hoey (2009, 2014) has highlighted in his work on lifestyle migrants to the Grand Traverse region of Michigan, a long history of promoting destinations as spaces of refuge, retreat, and recuperation often precedes these migrations; the imaginaries promoted are appropriated by lifestyle marketers and by the migrants themselves. Health imaginaries are about more than what a healthcare system might offer, but focus more on a holistic understanding of a healthy life and how to achieve this.

In the case of the migrants who took part in our research in Malaysia and Panama, it was very clear that this was oriented around living more healthily in the future. This imagining was multifaceted, including being able to be more leisurely—with more time for leisure and resources that could go towards this further significant within this including having time to spend with friends and living in a place that was more exciting—and where they might be able to have new (exciting) experiences, stretch themselves and learn. As they explained, by living in a multicultural social setting, they were able to expand their knowledge and understanding; they described being more active; they also drew attention to environmental factors, having access to good healthcare, good food, and fresh produce. These were all elements that they understood as supporting their claims that through migration they could lead healthier lives. However, as we discuss in the following section, it was also the case that their imaginings of Boquete and Penang as places contributed to these sense that the better way of life that they sought through migration was also a healthier way of life.

The relationship between migration and an active retirement highlighted in the retirement migration literature (see, for example, King et al. 2000; Oliver 2008) played out in the imaginings of some of these migrants. It was particularly prominent in the narratives of those with high levels of cultural and economic capital. For example, Winston had worked as a clinical consultant back in the United States; he and his wife Tricia had built a comfortable house up in the hills above Boquete that included a veranda that looked out over a forested valley, a high specification kitchen, and a cinema room. They described how the move to

Panama was part of a big adventure that had brought them face-to-face with difference, where they could learn a new language and culture that would stop them from becoming stagnant. In this way, they signalled what they did not want their retirement to be. While they did not frequent the local restaurants, the local produce was something they sourced for their own home cooking. The kitchen, it seemed, was not just for show: on a visit to their home, Michaela was treated to fresh home-made ravioli, a green salad with watercress—which was difficult to come by in Boquete—home-made bread and red wine, and sent home with slices of home-made lemon cake. Tricia explained that they preferred to eat organic produce, and buying this locally had become much easier with the increased population of North Americans; she described where to go to get different produce, particularly the spinach and watercress which were not so readily available.

In Penang, Karen met several older people who had either retired to Malaysia having lived elsewhere (perhaps as 'corporate expatriates' in other Asian countries) or who had stayed on when their working lives had come to an end. These people always spoke as much about not wanting to go back to the United Kingdom (or somewhere else in Europe) as about wanting to stay in Malaysia. Reminiscent of many conversations she has had in the past with British living in the Costa del Sol (O'Reilly 2000), one couple she joined for dinner in a local restaurant spoke evocatively (and negatively) about how they would be living if they were 'back home'. They conjured up an image of miserable grey skies, cold damp houses, abandonment, a failing National Health Service (NHS), extortionate prices and taxes, and a disillusioned youth. They described the lives of loved ones and friends in tones that expressed sympathy, frustration, and puzzlement, and they celebrated their healthier, more relaxed, more abundant lives in Malaysia. But, although this appears to illustrate their wealth and privilege compared with the local population, this was not about excess, access to luxury material goods, or hedonism so much as life in Penang signified those things we have often talked about in the lifestyle migration literature—the good-quality life. Our aim here is to demonstrate the extent to which this is also seen as a physically and mentally healthy life, and as something the migrants themselves have the responsibility as neoliberal subjects, to pursue for themselves.

Healthy Provisions, Healthy Practices (Being Supported to Live Healthily)

In this section, we elaborate further the formal and informal structures and services that exist to support the 'healthy' living of these lifestyle migrants. We highlight how the migrants understand the healthcare provision in Panama and Malaysia, and the conditions and contexts within which their understandings are developed. We examine the significance of domestic help—and the costs of this—to the lives they lead, and highlight the emergence of community support groups that step in when there is no other provision available. These are informed by the migrants' communities of practice and the shared understandings of the good life, and of one's responsibility to achieve it for oneself.

Understanding Healthcare Provision

It is perhaps unsurprising given the focus that the Panamanian and Malaysian governments place on the high standard and low cost of healthcare (see Chap. 4) that healthcare features prominently in the accounts of these lifestyle migrants. As we outlined previously, the structures that support and encourage the investments and migration of these migrants include a high standard of healthcare, which is overtly marketed to attract these foreign investors. As we describe below in the ways in which our interlocutors used and thought about healthcare, what is revealed especially is that this is more meaningful in the context of what they are used to in relation to healthcare provision, either in their country of origin or the other places they have lived and worked. For example, in considering Britons living in Malaysia, the contrast might be to what was available to them in the United Kingdom—the NHS, which is free at the point of delivery—whereas for the North Americans living in Panama, their point of reference is the private provision back in the United States. Attitudes and behaviours in relation to healthcare therefore need to be understood within these particular contexts and circumstances.

In Malaysia

Malaysia is among a growing number of countries in the East Asian region that have a state-supported medical tourism industry (Toyota and Xiang 2012). They market this service as a 'cost-effective' alternative to Western medicine with 'state-of-the-art technologies' and 'international standard healthcare', with medical staff trained in Europe, Australia, and the United States (implying that Western medicine is best and can be provided here) (see also Ormond 2013). For longer-term lifestyle migrants, affordable healthcare is marketed as a beneficial feature of retiring abroad in various guides (see Terlecky and Bryce 2007). However, the cost of healthcare is often calculated in relation to private healthcare options in the West rather than state services like the UK NHS: remember the postcolonial traces mean these 'desirable' migrants are assumed to be wealthy. As such, the relative affordability of healthcare is relevant only to those who ordinarily pay for health services, rather than those who rely on state provision, demonstrating that level of affluence is a key determinant in provision. As an aside, there are many Japanese now retiring to Malaysia, especially using the MM2H visa, and there is evidence to suggest they are even persuaded by their families and government to go to Malaysia for a better retirement, not least because of the lower cost of living and of health and social care (Ono 2008, 2014).

Renee and Karl, thinking through where they would retire, having lived in many countries during their lives, thought Penang had good health provision and medical facilities (unlike Thailand[1]), things they 'could rely on', Renee said. They also told Karen they had other retired friends nearby, who they could turn to for help if necessary. So, for them, a secure ageing in Penang meant having people to turn to in times of difficulty and a reliable healthcare system they can afford to pay for. Renee and Karl also told Karen that many 'expatriates' like them had got used to having 'help' all their lives and couldn't face going back to England as they got older where they could not get such help. They are here using the euphemism 'help' to refer to domestic help, a live-in carer or cleaner, for example, or someone they might pay to collect prescriptions for them. Again, this was seen as a healthcare provision available in Penang but not in Western countries. We return to this below.

In Malaysia, there are options for public and private healthcare, with both charging for services. Lifestyle migrants in Penang perceived the lower costs of state healthcare to be one of its main benefits and suggested that it is ‘good enough most of the time’. Most of those Karen spoke to used the public health service because it is cheaper and quicker, but Indonesian health tourism has become such big business in Malaysia that all those wanting to use the service face long queues at certain times of the day and week. As a result, private and increasingly expensive solutions are being established, including exclusive hospitals and clinics. This means there is some excellent provision available to those who can afford it, and, of course, as with the practice of governance, these ad hoc, bottom-up solutions serve to exclude the less-desirable migrants from coming or from settling too long (see Chap. 4).

Although, of course, some have more resources or forms of capital for manipulation than others, lifestyle migrants are not always the affluent migrants that governments have sought to attract (Green 2014, and see Chap. 3). Overall, over 40% of the respondents in the survey Karen conducted in Malaysia (see Chap. 1) had not found access to health services easy. The ability to cover medical costs in Malaysia ultimately depends on income levels, and for retirees these can be relatively low. Many referred to the fall in income they had experienced through moving due to the absence of reciprocal agreements on pension income between the United Kingdom and Malaysia, meaning annual increments to state pensions are lost. The effect is a freezing of the pension amount upon emigration. This coupled with weakening of the British pound against the Malaysia ringgit means that UK state pension income is declining year upon year.

In terms of health insurance, many lifestyle migrants in Malaysia do not bother to get insured at all, since there are so many restrictions and clauses that it can be cheaper to ‘pay as you go’. One MM2H visa agent interviewed revealed that he advises his clients not to get insurance, because:

> If you mention that you have insurance then they will probably just cut off your head and charge you lots of money for it. But if you are saying you are paying on your own, there might be a chance they might give you a discount. Okay? So a lot of locals here don’t have insurance, but they pay

> privately for what they need… For most people it is cheaper to pay privately than it is to take out insurance. I heard some can pay £5000 a year for insurance. So, here it does make sense to not have insurance but just to pay privately. And you don't have to wait, like people, my friends, told me that in the NHS you have to wait like crazy.

With such an ad hoc use of healthcare provisions, cover ends up very patchy; there is little help for mental health issues, and little social support, for example. The consulate employee we spoke to expressed real concerns about the lack of insurance, especially for people who become ill long-term. It is at times like this that migrants suddenly become aware it is not so easy to simply turn to the UK government for help, he warned me:

> I think it (the MM2H visa) is a good thing. The problem is you are supposed to get health insurance unless you are over 60, but a lot of them are not over 60 but still they let them in. So we've got a lot of people that are not insured, and that is a worry. They come to us, and we can't help them, all we can do is go to family in the UK and ask them for help. But that is a potential problem. We've had people that have found they have got cancer, and the drugs cost several thousand Ringgit a month. No insurance. So, people like that will have to go back to the UK. (Colin 60s, expert interviewee)

Fear of outcomes of such risky behaviour is revealed by Karl when he told Karen, 'we have already seen enough people in our two years here with serious health problems, and died, so that reminds you not to (take risks)'. Of course, many Britons living in Malaysia do have health insurance, but even they negotiate the different systems, choosing either private or state provision, travelling back to the United Kingdom, or to Hong Kong or Singapore, for some treatments. Talking of the healthcare in Malaysia, Karl said he thinks it is pretty good: 'I mean, arguably, most of the doctors here are UK, Australian, some US educated, some Singapore. In the very end, if I was to get something very bad I don't know if I would get a second opinion in Hong Kong or Singapore. But, in principle, it's quite okay.' Nevertheless, he also made clear that he would probably go to the United Kingdom if he had long-term healthcare needs.

In Panama

In Panama, as in Malaysia, the emphasis on the training of the medical professionals in the United States and their ability to speak English becomes part of a narrative—provided by the government and reproduced by the migrants—about the high quality of care available. That this is then supplied at a fraction of the price that it would cost in the United States—with many of those taking part in the research stressing that the costs for the year were what they would have paid for a month back in the United States—becomes a further incentive to move to Panama. For North Americans moving to Panama, this focus is linked strongly to the provision of healthcare in the United States, a largely privatised system which requires users to take out insurance to cover their costs. While the assumptions that underpin the marketing of healthcare in Panama suggest the relative affluence of these incomers, it should also be stressed here that in an economy—such as that of the United States—where the expectation is that people pay for their healthcare, rather than being supported by a welfare state, the market in healthcare exacerbates social (and economic) inequalities. Accessing healthcare in Panama therefore needs to be understood within the context of increasing difficulties in access to healthcare in the United States, its impact on those not in employment, and how this intersects with age, gender, class, race, and ethnicity.

While there is insufficient space here to go into the detail of how healthcare functions in the United States, what became clear through talking to these North Americans was that the increasing cost of healthcare as they aged, and as they found themselves—at least in some cases—without employer contributions to their health insurance, was a significant factor in the decision to move to Panama. We reiterate here how Tessa explained her migration; now aged in her late 60s, she highlighted, 'I don't have a pension and in order to afford healthcare, I had to work.' Her employer had been making contributions of $400–500 per month, and she did not have the income to support this once she stopped working. These latter concerns led even those migrants who had had quite well-paid jobs in the United States to consider moving somewhere where living was more affordable. Ed, who had worked as an attorney in the

United States stressed, 'Healthcare is another reason we left. The last bill we got before we left was $1600. I'd just turned 55.' He emphasised that he had never made a claim on his insurance, but with such high costs, 'I couldn't afford to stay without working. Even if I reduced my lifestyle completely, I'd have had to keep working … I never thought that I would have to leave to the US to retire.' In these narrations, moving out of the United States was a way of making sure that they could retire.

Those who had had to use the healthcare system in Panama praised the quality of care they had received, backing up the discourse about healthcare provision with their own experiences. As might be expected, their experiences ranged from routine surgery, treatment for chronic and terminal illness, fertility treatment (in the case of some of the younger North Americans who had made Boquete their home), as well as emergency services. What these examples demonstrate is the way in which these North Americans are aware of the lower cost of healthcare; this intersects with the decision to migrate both in terms of their reasons for leaving the United States, but also in terms of allowing some migrants the retirement that they imagined. Quite simply, they make clear that had they stayed in the United States, they would have had to keep on working, their pensions, when they had them, insufficient to support the increased costs of healthcare on their household budgets.

Ageing Healthily, with Paid 'Help'

For those who were hoping migration (or settlement in the new destination) would lead to a healthier retirement, the availability of relatively low cost of domestic help and care at home was a further attraction for living in Malaysia and Panama. Just as in other areas of research on the global chain of care (e.g. Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2003; Lindio-McGovern 2004), the global asymmetries that support this migration are made visible. In this case, those from the world's higher-value economies are able to migrate in pursuit of affordable care to countries where the quality of care matches their expectations, but where the cost is affordable on their budgets. Such arbitrage makes visible the relative dimensions of these migrants' privilege, signalling as it does a population that in most

cases cannot afford the costs of private home care back in their country of origin and seek this, in part, through their migration.

This pursuit of care should also be understood within the context of active ageing that we signalled above. Indeed, this is encapsulated in the case of a woman aged in her 60s, suffering with multiple sclerosis, moving to Panama City. Migration was her response to the prospect, as she aged and became more disabled—she was already wheelchair-bound—of moving in with her children or going into a residential care home in the United States. On her budget, and living in a small apartment in Panama City, she could afford 24-hour care at home, maintaining her independence.

It is very common in Malaysia to have hired help, or 'maids' as they are commonly called in the English-speaking community. These are of different nationalities, but Filipinas and Indonesians dominate to the extent that the Indonesian and Philippine governments have been working with the Malaysian government more recently to ensure rights for these foreign workers. As Constable (2007) has demonstrated so persuasively in her work on Hong Kong, the habit can become normalised for Westerners who spend time in countries that use foreign domestic workers in these ways. Indeed, it can even be difficult to resist. In an eloquent example of how changing circumstances need to be understood in context—the habitus, the conjuncturally specific internal structures (learning how to go on in new situations), and communities of practice interacting to produce unintended outcomes—many of those Karen spoke with told her they have 'help' in the home. They admitted this with some embarrassment, aware that the situation was the result of long-term global inequalities (and antipathy for this inscribed into the habitus), but they also saw it as an individual choice, and as an individual coping strategy (informed by neoliberal ideology) that meant they would not be so reliant on other people, on family, friends, or the state, as would be the case had they stayed in (or returned to) their home countries. One thing that became especially interesting was the way in which, as evidence of the conjuncturally specific (Stones 2005), they would sometimes use the word 'maid' and then try to correct themselves, using other language such as 'help', as if changing the language excused the exploitative practice. But to bring wider structures back into our analysis, let's not forget, they can only

afford such a luxury because they have an income that far exceeds what they expect to pay.

Illustrating the passion for life, and the privileges which permit and shape her clear sense of well-being, Jane told Karen,

> I like the weather, it is persistent all of the year round but it is nice to be warm. We do have an easy life, we have a live-in maid. What a pleasure. She is Filipina. So, there is a quality of life here, people are freer to be nice people. I was surprised when I first came here how people would offer to pick me up to go to a meeting or to do something. In London people don't do that, in London nobody has time. Here people are financially freer and they have more time. Here you can go out and pick up the whole tab for a meal, you can have big parties, socially it can be much more fun. People who become expats are by definition slightly more interesting. They are willing to do something different.

A particular area of concern for retired lifestyle migrants in Malaysia related to long-term healthcare provision. Migrants who have moved further afield as they age are more likely to have their families dispersed around the globe and are more likely to have severed ties to their home countries long ago (as a result of long-term migration trajectories). They are therefore forced to think more strategically about how to cope with the irresistible forces of ageing. While their peers within Europe, the United States, Canada, and Australia often migrated from and to countries with a welfare system that partially or wholly supported healthcare, there is very little, if any, state support for healthcare in the Global South and East. For some migrants, this is a norm—in other words, prior to migration, they had to pay for healthcare (e.g. US citizens)—while for others, this is a significant change (O'Reilly and Benson 2015).

There were different solutions cited for the planning of long-term care according to particular social and economic circumstances, but most felt there were few state-subsidised options for the ageing foreign population. Lifestyle migrants cited a number of different options for dealing with later-life vulnerability, including privately sourced home care, relying on family, friends, and neighbours, and the option of return to their home state. Few saw a private residential retirement home as a viable option financially. Rebecca, who we met in Chap. 5 and is in her 60s, particu-

larly chose to live in Penang because she could afford to pay for someone to live in and take care for her as she gets older. She is American but has British nationality too, so she could go to the United Kingdom, but says the care there as you get older is awful. Here we see a little of the same discourse Karen witnessed in Spain among British there, where living in Spain is justified in contrast to living in Britain where things are so much worse. We will revisit this theme below.

For the majority of North Americans living in Boquete, care was not necessary at this point in time; it was more of a future concern. However, it was common for them to employ domestic help and labourers to work on their land (Benson 2014). Most often, these were members of the indigenous population from the Ngäbe Bugle *comarca*; while they had previously worked as seasonal labour on the coffee plantations, the shift in local coffee production had resulted in less work within this industry. In addition, as the most disadvantaged population in Panama—across a range of scales—their labour, either in working for the North American or the Hispanic Panamanian populations of Boquete, was low-paid and precarious. The cost of employing someone as a housekeeper or a groundsman was therefore very low and affordable for many within the North American community. Their experiences of employing people to work in their homes or on their land fed into their understandings of what it might cost for them to employ people as carers as they grew older.

It was also clear that for a small number of people, the move to Panama was also a way of supporting their caring responsibilities. For one couple, migration had meant organising a place to live, healthcare, and support for an elderly brother who suffered from a debilitating chronic condition and developmental disabilities. They had housed him in a small independent residential unit that had been specially designed to support his disabilities, where his care needs could be supported by domestic care personnel, while the couple were free to visit him on a daily basis, keep him company, and make sure he had food in the cupboards and the medical supplies required. At the same time, the availability of affordable care meant that they could continue to support him, while also leading the retirement that they had imagined for themselves.

What this points to is the complex landscape within which people navigate and manage their health and care needs; yet what becomes clear

is precisely the way in which these strategies are informed by the persistence of global inequalities, and how these have become part of global health and care infrastructures, in ways that mean that the relatively privileged can source their needs in lower-cost economies. But, what is also revealed in the neoliberal context is the ad hoc nature of this, and the way some people can thus fall through the structural gaps (Morawska 2009), and also that even those relatively privileged can become the less desirable among migrants and the excluded.

Supporting Our Community

Support for a healthy life was not only provided by the state infrastructures and global inequalities that meant that care was affordable; it was also found in the emergent structures (Elder-Vass 2011), the new forms of association that served to innovate responses to health and well-being needs, that these migrant populations developed among themselves. As Haas (2012), Leivestad (2017), and Oliver (2017) all demonstrate in the case of British residents in Spain, health and age-related problems often become the grounds around which volunteering and charitable activity mobilise. Gavanas (2017) refers to this as a moral economy of care, in which informal care is organised on behalf of one's national group and is shaped by collective moral norms. As we show below, securing a healthy life is not always consolidated through formal activities, but also through informal networks through which information circulates, and that emerge to fill gaps where there is no other provision in place. Again, this intimates a practice, conjuncturally shaped approach in which the poorer among these migrants fall through the gaps formed by the intersection of postcolonialism and neoliberalism.

Many older lifestyle migrants continue actively to shape their lives post migration. In the face of sometimes contradictory experiences, they work hard in their communities to live their lives the way they expected them to be, by pulling together, providing for their own community's needs and desires, and living out the cultural norms they expected to find (O'Reilly and Benson 2015).

In Malaysia, Karen was often told stories of small acts of kindness, or of networked or community groups, or of members of the more formal

and informal communities discussed in Chap. 6, coming together to offer support or aid to someone in need. This was perhaps a result of the insecurity migrants felt about their own position; as a younger migrant, Jane, said '[A] disadvantage about my lifestyle is that I am conscious, at times, of being alone and not having family support when things go wrong—this can be as small as my fridge leaking everywhere and not having anyone to ask for help!' There was less of the formal support in Penang that Karen has previously seen in Spain, and that Michaela talks of below in relation to Panama. Instead, support takes the shape of informal helping each other out, the organised sharing of tasks, and small shared acts of kindness. It therefore, nevertheless, shapes the communities of practice within which migrants live.

One woman, for example, had lived in Penang almost 30 years and ran a tour boat company with her husband. He died, leaving her to run the company, looking after the boat, and taking the helm on the tours, as well organising the bookings and everything else. She depended on the income. When she became ill, her friends rallied round and set up a rota for looking after her and even taking the boat out on tours! However, some of these friends wondered how long they could keep that up when Karen met them, and were very concerned what would happen to her if she didn't get better soon.

Further to this, lifestyle migrants in Penang are often very knowledgeable about what is available locally, and share information amongst themselves, often using their clubs, associations, and online forums. This sharing and community belies the sense of individualism, yet here it is about communities of choice rather than communities of responsibility (e.g. family), flexible relationships rather than fixed ties. But what they achieve together is maintaining the quality of life they seek.

Despite the prevailing discourse of active ageing that accompanied the migration narratives of Boquete's retired migrant population, it was clear that, in the words of one of Michaela's interlocutors, 'people are coming here to die'. By this, he signalled that for some of those who had recently settled, Boquete was a final destination; they would be leaving 'feet first'. Indeed, Mary described how she would happily live out her days in Boquete; although she conceded that her daughter might insist that she return to the United States if she became ill and in need of support.

This is significant as it identifies the presence among this population of what Karen evocatively describes elsewhere as 'the myth of (no) return' (O'Reilly 2000: 96), highlighting the repeated emphasis among Britons resident in Spain that they had no desire to return to Britain. Just as the Anglican vicar on the Costa del Sol keeps a register of the death wishes of the British resident population, the strength of this feeling—the lack of desire for return—may also be read through the work that North Americans had put into developing health and end of life provision in Boquete where there was no other provision available. This included setting up hospice care—as Ted explained, this was necessary; the 'expatriate population' were getting older, 'and there's nowhere for them to die'—and a blood donation register. Such initiatives built on the expertise, skills, and knowledge of members of the incoming community, particularly those who had worked in healthcare as nursing professionals and doctors before their migration.

To organise and maintain such provision required the continued support by members of the North American community, relying as it did on volunteer labour. In this respect, it was part of the landscape of philanthropic and charitable activity in the area, oriented in this case towards the lifestyle migrant community, rather than towards the Panamanian community, as in the case of some of their other activities (Benson 2013). It was also clear that an informal network could be mobilised to provide respite to those looking after sick partners and other relatives. This might include those who had worked as trained healthcare professionals and so could step in and administer medication when required. The network also operated to provide emotional support to carers during these difficult times.

What these examples demonstrate is that these migrant populations step in to provide support where this is otherwise lacking, where the state does not or cannot provide, and where other networks that people might turn to in times of need—for example, family—are not so readily on hand. Of course, this did not preclude the possibility of finding such support among their Panamanian neighbours; Tessa, who had built up strong relationships with neighbours and who was involved in the local Catholic Church, explained how she had found herself within a 'support system of Panamanians'. It was clear that this 'support system' met her stated ambitions for life in Boquete of becoming part of the community, making up also for the absence of family living nearby—indeed, her children back in the United States rarely had the time off work to travel to see her and her

husband; the strength of this network had been put to the test when she had had to have back surgery in Panama.

In Malaysia, there was a sense of resignation that, in the end, when things get really difficult, people might simply go home. It wasn't always clear where home was, for people who had moved a lot, had mixed marriages, or family living all over the world—one outcome of a lot of mobility is sometimes that your children are even more mobile than you. But this is not something people easily talked about. A wealthy couple were silent for a few long seconds when Karen asked what they would do if they got old or infirm and could not look after themselves. One of her most poignant quotes is therefore the sound of silence.

Conclusion

Lifestyle migration to these destinations, from the imaginings of a better life, to the negotiated lived experience in context, is framed around the opportunity to lead healthier lives and to achieve well-being. These migrants have been attracted to destinations that have been marketed to them, and that are inscribed in their cultures and habitus, as exotic, distant, with healthy climates, a lower cost of living, a certain sense of safety and security, perhaps a familiar language, and a natural environment conducive to improved quality of life. These destinations also hold intangible promises for spirituality, self-realisation, alternative therapies, and alternative ageing. They are seen as good places to grow older, with (generally) good provision for health and social care.

But, this is not simply how these migrants imagine their lives; it also shapes how they live them. They actively pursue well-being in their behaviours and attitudes—well-being as an aspiration informs their actions post migration. Furthermore, this pursuit of health and well-being is very active and individualised, especially when it comes to the ageing process and concerns around this. This is because inscribed in their habitus is the taken-for-granted underlying Westernised cultural constructions of individual responsibility for one's future life, which, in turn, privileges a sense of active and positive ageing (see O'Reilly and Benson 2015). Independent successful ageing, and we could add living well in general, has become a cultural norm in neoliberal societies (Oliver 2007).

Lifestyle migrants thus both seek and create the good life, as we have both argued elsewhere (Benson 2011; O'Reilly 2009), but they do this under certain conditions. One of these conditions is the physical body. The physical experience of ageing, particularly the gradual or sudden deterioration of the body, may call into question and fundamentally change the terms of the better way of life that migrants seek (O'Reilly and Benson 2015). This may mean that migrants must reconsider whether the destination can still support their quest for a better way of life, as they may find themselves in a situation where they 'have no precedent to follow' (Oliver 2007: 3).

What is clear is that analyses of the role of imaginaries fall short in their neglect of the consideration of how some places and landscapes can be constructed as desirable, and can be appropriated by relatively privileged migrant populations on their own terms. Applying postcolonial theory to the way places are constructed as therapeutic, Buzinde and Yarnal (2012) highlight the inequalities that support such constructions. Simply put, these places are attracting foreigners for treatments that locals cannot afford, leading to economic, moral, and cultural tensions. Similarly, some companies (often enabled by financial power of core nations) make huge profits, but the infrastructure, skills, and technologies benefit local people only marginally (if at all) in terms of jobs, capacity-building, and new services. This can be true even where agencies are not making provision directly (e.g. in the use of foreign 'helpers'), which is the result of global structuring and inequalities; as a result, the construction of some landscapes as curative and therapeutic, whether for medical tourism or lifestyle migration, has been shaped and continues to be shaped by the colonial past and the neoliberal present. Inequalities are inadvertently reproduced over time.

The structures that support and encourage the investments and migration of these migrants include a high standard of healthcare. Indeed, healthcare is overtly marketed to attract these foreign investors. This means there is some excellent provision available to those who can afford it. But these provisions are generally left to the private market and are directed to where the best profits can be made. The result being, as with the practice of governance, discussed in Chap. 4, that ad hoc, bottom-up solutions serve to exclude the 'less-desirable' migrants from coming or

from settling too long. Neoliberalism excludes even where postcolonialism creates privilege.

Owing to their individualised, risk-taking, habitus and the pursuit of what is imagined to be the healthy good life, migrants in their communities of practice are to an extent able to ameliorate these effects, to fill the gaps in provision with self-help, and more formal organisation of community services. Still, those with higher forms of capital and levels of resources are more likely to succeed. Furthermore, while such informal solutions can be found, the lack of adequate provision and its effects are masked, and neoliberalism can continue unabated. The pursuit of well-being and good health as an aspect of lifestyle migration thus is shaped by and (re)produces structures of inequality, even within their own populations.

Notes

1. See http://www.medicaltourism.com.my/en/malaysia-your-healthcare.aspx (Malaysia) and http://www.thailandmedtourism.com/Home/28 (Thailand).

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9

Telling Practice Stories of Lifestyle Migration at the Intersections of Postcoloniality and Neoliberalism

Through the pages of this book, we have built up an understanding of lifestyle migration to Malaysia and Panama as stories of practice. We have described lifestyle migration as a process through the lens of practice theory, highlighting the structural constraints and opportunities, limits and resources that shape the lives of lifestyle migrants.

Building these practice stories required drawing together long-term, reflexive desk-based enquiries with on-the-ground empirical research, weaving these together to communicate the complex landscapes of lifestyle migration. Within this, neoliberal practices and colonial continuities are foregrounded more than simply providing the background within which migrant practices take place. They resonate and are reproduced through contemporary approaches to economic development in Malaysia and Panama and within governance practices. They shape the structures of inequality and power that facilitate geoarbitrage through lifestyle migration and they are internalised into the habituated ways of thinking and acting of these lifestyle migrants—*individualised neoliberal subjects who in taking responsibility for their own lives and futures choose to relocate in search of a better quality of life*—as well as into the communities within which their lives are lived.

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Our framing of the lifestyle migrant then accounts, on the one hand, for how they are imagined by nation-states, lifestyle intermediaries, and brokers—their idealisation as migrants-cum-investors structuring governance practices and plans for economic development. We make clear how the constraints faced and opportunities permitted to such migrants have been shaped by historical events and processes such as colonialism and empire, but also by wider global trends such as neoliberalism and the spread of free-market logic into every area of social and economic life, and by local practices such as (changing) visa regimes and the marketing of places as sites for investment and for certain types of behaviour and experiences.

On the other hand, we signal the processes by which they negotiate, embody, and enact these subjectivities, highlighting that in the practice of everyday life, habitus is malleable. Rather than see these lifestyle migrants as merely constrained or driven by opportunities, as our definition above makes clear, we understand them as (to an extent) free agents, able to choose where to live and how to live. Nevertheless, these choices are shaped by structures they have internalised into their habitus, into taken-for-granted ways of thinking, and ways of behaving of which they are only sometimes aware. As they live out their lives, they are faced with other, changing, conditions and other people and communities, each shaped, in turn, by internalised structures. Their daily lives, then, are practised, in as much they are constantly negotiated and remade as they continue to internalise new ways of behaving and thus shape the habitus (a little) in conjuncturally specific internal structures (Stones 2005; O'Reilly 2012). Their practices and actions are not only structured by, but structuring of, social structures.

This occurs mainly because their lives take place in the context of myriad communities of practice—sets of people they share time with and who shape their understandings, hopes and dreams, and who offer constraints and opportunities, through norms, rules, and expectations. The social life of these lifestyle migrants then, as with any of us, is an ongoing practice of negotiating, internalising, and acting on imaginations, expectations, and assumptions in the context of opportunities and constraints. In turn, they contribute to the shaping of new structures, new ways of forming a community, new ways of living with different people, new ways of living their lives. They also inspire reactions in others that lead to

the development of new structural arrangements and institutions around healthcare, visas, and so on. Nevertheless, we see that while lifestyle migration can change individual lives to a great extent, and can lead to emergent structural arrangements, the unequal structuring of the world that gave them the opportunity to live these lives in the first place is, to a large extent, reproduced. These privileged or elite migrants, despite not always being absolutely wealthy in the context of their home communities, remain privileged in their new lives. Their migration practice thus has wider implications.

In this way, we have made visible how neoliberalism and postcolonialism articulate in the production of lifestyle migration as a social process. This turn intends to expose fully the interplay of structure and agency within lifestyle migration.

Conceptualising Lifestyle Migration as a Privileged Form of Migration

Our starting point, in Chap. 1, was to tease out how the relationship between privilege and migration has been understood, the key themes and strengths of this work and the lacuna still to be addressed. We were keen to position these unequivocally privileged subjects—particularly in the extent to which they are free to cross international borders—as migrants.

In turning to the field of lifestyle migration research, we highlighted how this conceptualisation signals migration as an individualised phenomenon, responsive to structural conditions that privilege the neoliberal subject who, through their migration, seek to maximise their quality of life. This turn towards lifestyle migration was a deliberate attempt to move away from loaded and descriptive terms such as expatriates or skilled migrants towards a framing that locates migration within broader sociological questions considering the relationship between structure and agency. Our conceptualisation also draws attention to the structural and material conditions that made migration thinkable and possible, as well as describing how migration acts within ongoing processes of subjectivity-making (Benson 2015, 2016; Benson and O'Reilly 2015; Hoey 2014), as

a practice (O'Reilly 2012). We reiterate again the following quotation from our earlier work on this topic:

> Lifestyle migration is a novel extension of a phenomenon with a history, made possible as a result of global developments of the past 50 or 60 years. It relates specifically to the relative economic privilege of individuals in the developed world, the reflexivity evident in post-/late modernity, the construction of particular places as offering alternative lifestyles, and a more general ease (or freedom) of movement. (Benson and O'Reilly 2009: 620)

But lifestyle migrants are still migrants and, as Hayes (2018) also illustrates in his ethnography in Cuenca, their migration feeds into myriad processes through which local populations may be displaced and disempowered, and brings about fundamental changes to social structures and hierarchies. It is important to study these populations, as migrants, precisely because of their privileged standing in global power relations.

We also draw inspiration from innovative work that has questioned the binary relationship between tourism and migration, that usefully challenges earlier migration studies' emphasis on problematic, boundary-crossing, unidirectional moves. However, we also contend that the resultant 'mobilities' literature has left too little space for control, governance, history, and materiality. For us, tourism and migration should be examined together precisely because this approach intimates the articulation over time between tourism and migration. Tourism, like colonialism and empire, is implicated in the historical structuring of the world, just as is that 'growing trans-boundary connectivity' known as globalisation (Betts 2011: 7). Research on tourism also leads us to the consideration of social imaginaries—the individual capacity to imagine, the socially shaped lifestyles that are imagined, and the possibilities for enacting on those imaginings—and how this concept might be usefully put to work in understanding (lifestyle) migration (see also Benson 2012; O'Reilly 2014). Imaginaries are both something people do—people imagine, and work to shape, a better way of life—and something that exists externally to a given agent at a given time, as place are marketed and 'imagineered' to attract 'desirable' visitors and settlers.

In our final consideration of the relationship between migration and privilege, we turned towards the consideration of how research with privileged migrants, through its inductive and ethnographic approach, provided useful insights into practices and processes of globalisation on the ground, or from the bottom up. This rich body of literature has important things to say about racialised and gendered experiences and practices, and some have focused on wider historical structures, such as colonialism and coloniality. We especially take from this literature the notion of postcolonialism as a framework for understanding lifestyle migration, the (dis)continuities with the (colonial) past (Fechter and Walsh 2010; Farrer 2010). However, as we stress, postcolonialism is not the only relevant wider social structure; we understand the lifestyle migrant as both an agent of but also continually produced through broad structural and material conditions including neoliberalism, globalisation, increased mobility, and relative economic affluence (Benson and O'Reilly 2009).

From Distant to Proximate Social Structures in Lifestyle Migration

Colonial Pasts and Neoliberal Presents: The Wider Context

Our practice stories of these lifestyle migrants living in Malaysia and Panama (Penang and Boquete especially) began, in Chap. 2, by situating this migration in the wider context of the two countries' geopolitical histories. We especially explored the colonial pasts and the neoliberal presents of these destinations and, in turn, the nature of the historical relationship between the migrants' countries of origin and the locations where they have settled. This provides a sense of the wider and more distant social structures shaping this migration, a valuable component of practice stories. These historical structures shape the opportunities these migrants have, and shape their ability to imagine a move to such a destination, but they are not structures over which they have any direct

control. They are thus made by human agents, but not by *these* agents in our present focus (Stones 2005; O'Reilly 2012). We might think of them, in terms of time, as pre-existing these agents. Nevertheless, we have seen that postcolonialism, through such things as whiteness, is also an embodied part of the habitus of contemporary privileged subjects.

Malaysia and Panama, both strategically located at the intersections of important trade routes, share long histories of external interference, diverse forms of settlement and migration, and direct and indirect colonisation and exploitation by Western nations. Both overtly seek development via (often Western) foreign investment. Both experience relative but fragile economic success. Both countries have a rich ethnic diversity, and ongoing inequalities along ethnic lines. Malaysia has experienced periods of uprising and unrest coupled with constant attempts on behalf of governments to ameliorate deep-seated and historically formed inequalities. While Panama's official narrative is one of racial egalitarianism, inequalities have been further entrenched through its recent economic growth, with a disproportionate impact on its indigenous communities.

In both countries, there is evidence of neoliberal economic policy at work. Both are ambitious, with Panama aiming to be at the crossroads of the world, while Malaysia has turned (to an extent) from natural resources to technology, health services, and tourism to aid growth. Both cases highlight how colonialism and imperialism have long-term consequences that shape future actions and interactions, leading to what some term colonialities of power (Quijano 2000, 2007; Mignolo 2003, 2007). These geopolitical histories thus inform deep-seated attitudes, and shape contemporary (and future) economies and inequalities in ways that are not easy to resist (Elder-Vass 2011).

Promoting and Imagineering Lifestyle Migration: The More Proximate Context

To continue our practice stories of lifestyle migration in Malaysia and Panama, we moved focus from those wider, distant structures of historical relationships, economic frameworks, nationwide political shifts, and

the shaping of contemporary inequalities down to a more proximate level (Morawska 2009; O'Reilly 2012), to provide insights into some of the structures that promote, inform, and shape this social phenomenon on the ground. In Chap. 3, we explored the phenomenon of residential tourism and, through this, the ways that infrastructures are developed by countries to support a property market that specifically targets investment by foreign nationals in second-home ownership or more permanent relocation. In other words, we examined how these lifestyle migrants are overtly enticed to destinations through what we might consider as individualised forms of FDI, by encouraging them to buy property (ostensibly for second homes or for tourism) on land rezoned for development. Residential tourism should be understood as part of a neoliberal state-led strategy for economic development that links housing development to FDI.

Even though the limitations of this model of development have been highlighted by academic commentators and the mass media alike (especially in Spain, where the phenomenon originated and has had diverse unintended environmental and social consequences), it is still lauded as a successful model and is being rolled out in many nation-states, including Malaysia, and especially in Panama. Furthermore, residential tourism has effected other changes such as the development of healthcare, retirement, and leisure industries, also all shaped by neoliberal agendas in which private industry is facilitated to address needs in the pursuit of profit. It is important to understand that residential tourism is thus one of the opportunities shaping lifestyle migration, in which the world's middle classes are courted, their needs and desires for a better way of life met, through industries that are initially set up to pursue international and individual investment capital, and are often neoliberal in governance terms. Here, it is the practices of agents, lifestyle migrants, health tourists, retirees, and others taking the opportunities offered by residential tourism that have led to the development of new structures that will shape the lives of those to come. In Chap. 3, then, we begin to see the recursive nature of the practice of social life.

Courting individual investors takes more than merely offering opportunities to purchase property, especially if the destination wishes to attract more than buy-to-leave investors. It was necessary to move our analysis

beyond economic explanations into considerations of imagineering and place-making. The privileged subject who wishes to move elsewhere, even for a second home, needs to be able to imagine a better life elsewhere. In the context of residential tourism, this is achieved through imagineering.

This takes place in marketing and branding, and involves a range of intermediaries including government agencies, property developers, and tourism agents; it is a top-down phenomenon. Here, Panama is presented as safe, secure, cheap, and convenient, while Boquete is feted for its rich environment, beautiful natural surroundings, and healthy lifestyle. Penang, similarly is portrayed as the gateway to peninsular Malaysia; a centre for arts, culture, and education; and for health and medical benefits. But private migrant bloggers, international lifestyle media, expatriate websites and news media, as well as individuals, all play their part in the imagineering of these destinations. Our participants, for example, further highlighted Penang's multiculturalism, food, festivals, natural environment, and colonial past as features that attracted them. Imagining and imagineering are thus *emergent practices* (Elder-Vass 2011) that change shape over time and that shape the expectations and activities of those to come, by those who came (O'Reilly 2012). Presenting themselves as local experts, lifestyle migrants co-opt, adapt, and amend these imagineerings to present Boquete and Penang on their terms and through the lens of their experience.

Managing Migration Through Visas and Regulations: Proximate Contexts, Agency, and Practice

If Western individuals, who are located in privileged positions in the context of the global structuring of nations and populations, are courted by other nations as part of their strategies for economic development, and if this is achieved through marketing and through social imaginaries, how then is their migration managed at the local level in terms of visa regimes and passport controls? The next chapter of our practice stories involved analysis of the national and local governance of lifestyle migration. We were especially interested in policies as enacted by government agents and

the responses to these by lifestyle migrants themselves. We therefore portray migration governance itself as a practice, that is, a social process that emerges over time as the outcome of the interaction of structure and agency through the practice of daily life (see Chap. 1 and O'Reilly 2012).

Alternative to other migrants, who might be viewed in terms of potential deficit, these 'desirable' migrants are imagined by receiving states as contributing to the local economy through property investment, consumer power, or individual-level capital investment. It is not surprising, therefore, that visas and permits are in place to enable and facilitate their migration: in Malaysia, the MM2H visa, with its many privileges, was a definite draw for many of those we spoke to, while in Panama the *pensionado* visa was specifically designed by the Panamanian government to attract investment from foreign retirees through property ownership. Both visas come with a series of incentives and benefits.

But in practice, visa regimes and governance are very fluid, bottom up, and ad hoc (see Betts 2011). In Malaysia, the eligibility and requirements around visas and permits, that seem straightforward at first glance, are constantly amended and updated in diverse ways, with numerous, ever-changing financial and eligibility requirements that can even vary across different local administrations. Behind migration governance, there are often implicit, unspoken, and unacknowledged goals and perceptions, that is, governance is embedded. In the case of these elite migrants, we believe that governance is being practised by the relevant states to maintain the immigration of wealthy migrants and their investments in property given the significance of this to economic growth—the temporary stay permissible until wealth and contribution are ascertained—to the exclusion of 'less desirable' migrants.

Nevertheless, the lifestyle migrants themselves appear in these stories as active agents managing their lives and the rules and regulations through practices such as visa runs (see Chap. 4) and sharing the required financial deposit between themselves. This knowledge of how to 'manipulate' the system speaks not only to their resourcefulness (and levels of capital), but also, as O'Reilly (2009) has argued elsewhere, to the ways in which neoliberal societies place the onus on individuals to take responsibility for their own futures.

Embodying, Enacting, and Practising Lifestyle Migration

Weaving Migration Stories

Our practice stories of lifestyle migration next involved, in Chap. 5, a more overt focus on the ways in which the various structural frames outlined above are embodied and enacted by migrants as agents, and the ways in which even the initial decision to migrate is a process, shaped by habitus, by conjuncturally specific internal structures, by communities of practice, and by diverse contingencies as they are confronted by people in their daily lives. To do this, we consciously and overtly weaved their stories together with our own interpretations of these into vignettes and mini-biographies, aware that in the telling we are also engaging in an act of representation.

First, we saw that this is a more mixed population than might be assumed at first sight. Our research includes young and old, men and women, couples, single people, and families. Some are retired, many are working—as lawyers, tax advisers, journalists, teachers, environmental workers—many others are self-employed or running their own small businesses. There were also 'trailing spouses', who have found themselves in the destination because their partners (usually husbands) have employment as 'expatriates'. Importantly, not all our research participants were wealthy or even financially secure, and not all were secure in terms of their rights to residence.

For many of those taking part in our research, the ability to move was part of a longer personal and family history of migration, and thus inscribed in their habitus. These were resourceful people, with extensive histories of travelling abroad for leisure and work. For others, this was a new adventure, and for some their migration stories reveal hardships and adjustments. These woven stories tell tales of the constant negotiations and compromises involved in migration trajectories. Many described their move as an active choice, in search of certain things, often shaped by social imaginaries. In Panama, this move was often framed rather generically as a change in lifestyle. In Malaysia, the search for the exotic

was ameliorated or conditioned by also a search for somewhere safe and secure. Despite their own emphasis on what and how they chose, most of these stories also reveal diverse contingencies, and a complexity of choices made incrementally. There are stories of job opportunities, of lost opportunities, of constant renegotiations of where and how to live. They may be stories of moving, of moving on, or even of not going home. These are stories that reveal how these lifestyle migrants, while privileged within wider social structures, manipulate those more proximate structures to their advantage.

The Ongoing Construction of Lifestyle Migration in Everyday Migrant Lives

We then explored in intimate detail three facets of life in which lifestyle migration is actively created in the context of postcolonialism and neoliberalism: the themes of work and occupation, home-making, and living healthily.

In opposition to many earlier studies of elite, privileged, or skilled migration, we argue that work here is not as central a defining feature of privileged migrants' lives as assumed. Similarly, nor can we assume all privileged migrants are or have been wealthy expatriates, mobile professionals, or part of a business elite. Predictably, there are many Westerners in Malaysia (and some in Panama) living and working in elite enclaves as 'corporate expatriates', and we also met the partners of several of these. However, the conditions under which many of these work are changing: the 'expatriate package' is often no longer so secure or as beneficial as it once was. Indeed, this is in line with changes to work recognisable more generally under neoliberalism, with a rise of flexibility and short-term labour. Some of these migrants' lives are marked instead by insecurity, uncertainty, doubt, and the requirement to be ever-adaptable, absolutely flexible—the perfect neoliberal subject. But our participants also included business owners, entrepreneurs, individual employees in local companies, retired, and semi-retired. The wider conditions within which we frame our understandings of elite migration are thus changing, and we, as scholars, need to change our perspectives too. In part, the challenge lies in

understanding how relative privilege is variously structured, and changes to labour and property relations in consequence of broader global economic shifts within which 'corporate expatriates' but also individual migrant entrepreneurs are caught up. Indeed, our focus then lies in drawing attention to how such migrants carve out new, richer, more diverse lives, albeit sometimes under harsh and ever-changing conditions.

Beyond the realm of paid work and entrepreneurial activity, there is a large amount of volunteering and charity work being engaged in by our lifestyle migrants. We thus highlighted local articulations of the practices of postcolonial living. The focus on diverse forms of work and occupation gave us the opportunity to examine the ways in which quality of life is not only sought but achieved, through the flexibility or entrepreneurialism of migrants' lives and the myriad ways in which they respond through the practice of daily life and in their communities of practice to the many contingencies, twists and turns, with which they are confronted. We also saw that their responses are locally meaningful, responsive to proximate structures and to conjuncturally specific, rapidly changing conditions they meet on the ground.

In Chap. 7 we moved onto the consideration of how these migrants make themselves at home through practices of home-making. By this we mean the elaborate and extensive processes involved in making a life for oneself, of creating and developing comfort and belonging. All migrants, at least to some extent, attempt to settle in their new surroundings while also, often, maintaining relationships elsewhere. We have examined, in depth, the daily ongoing practices and processes of material home-making, social home-making, and emotional and autobiographical home-making for our lifestyle migrants.

With respect to the practice theory that informs all our work in this book, we understand home-making to be a practice that is partly shaped by wider and historical social structures and their current position of relative privilege. First, we witnessed this in the way they view their migration and settlement in terms of choice, albeit that such choice is always constrained by economic and other conditions. We also witnessed it in relation to their material home-making. Several of the lifestyle migrants we worked with, in both Penang and Boquete, had chosen to live in what might best be described as grand or opulent dwellings, in sought-after areas near the coast or in gated communities. Their relative wealth, and

their widely travelled lifestyles, were on display in their homes. Some could afford to hire paid help in the home. In terms of their social home-making, the lives of these migrants often took place in an 'expatriate bubble'; they spent time with people like them, in formal organisations for other Western or elite migrants, or in informal gatherings. Their elite status was also revealed through the activities in which they engaged within these organisations—helping others, eating out, cultural events, and the celebration of their own national holidays, for example.

But, just as these practices appear to simply reproduce long-standing global inequalities, so we must also recognise they are practised by reflexive agents who are often aware of their privilege and who attempt to break its bonds with greater and lesser success. Several of those we spoke to were uncomfortable about their status and privilege and wished to find ways to ameliorate it. But the conditions under which they live do not easily permit living life differently. The migration of those before them has led to the construction of communities of practice that shape the experiences of ever-new migrants. Just as with other migrants, moving can be an unsettling experience, throwing into sharp relief the contrast between the life the migrants imagined in the new destination and the actual, daily lived experience.

The material, social, and autobiographical home-making practices we discuss in Chap. 7 are not only elite practices; they are also efforts to help each other settle, to make oneself feel at home, to achieve a sense of belonging, and sometimes the best way to achieve this is to remember one's first home, to find friends and associates where one can, and to fill one's life with occupations that lend a feeling of worth. Even those we spoke to who were less wealthy, who did not live in the exclusive enclaves or the sought-after areas, found comfort and home with 'people like them'.

In the final empirical chapter, we examined the significance of ideas of living healthily and improved well-being both to the framing of a better way of life and to the migrants' practices within the destination. It is clear that health and well-being are tropes that attract people to certain destinations and act as imaginaries that shape their lives post migration. Lifestyle migration to these destinations—from imaginings to the evaluation of lived experience—is framed around the opportunity to live and to lead healthier lives, whether the healthy environment, the therapeutic

or spiritual landscape, or even just a more-considered pace of life. These migrants also imagine that they will have a better quality of life within the destination, and the more leisurely lives that they lead provide opportunities for them to bring such imaginings into fruition.

It is also evident that part of the consideration about where to migrate to is framed around their understandings and/or knowledge of healthcare provision and the cost of domestic labour—for example, in cases where there is need for daily care within the home—within the destinations, and the capitals and resources that they can draw on to make the best of what is available. However, it also reveals the stratification within the lifestyle migrant communities; while both Malaysia and Panama offer high-quality healthcare at a competitive price, we also became aware that the costs of this might not be affordable for all such migrants, a reminder that this is by no means a homogenous population. In these cases, we see other lifestyle migrants stepping in to provide, migrants repatriating or moving to locations they can afford or where they have family support. Nevertheless, the freedom to choose to live in a place where this is imagined to be possible is telling of the privilege of these lifestyle migrants. While for many of these migrants such treatment and care is affordable, recognising that these costs might place healthcare out of the reach of members of the local population is a stark reminder once again of the privileged position they occupy within wider social structures, and the reproduction of inequalities established in colonial pasts. Postcolonial legacies are evident in their pursuit of the good (healthy) life, but such traces are merely indicative of outcomes, as migrants need also to constantly negotiate ongoing conjuncturally specific situations and communities, within the frame of neoliberalism.

Closing Thoughts

It is difficult to ignore the global inequalities of power that facilitate and shape lifestyle migration to the Global South and East. International lifestyle migration flows follow well-established routes, reflecting long-standing relationships between countries. These destinations were previously colonies and/or had been occupied by Western powers in their recent histories, with the result that existent hierarchies on the ground are

racialised as well as classed. Lifestyle migrants, who are often white, middle class, and in receipt of larger incomes than many within the local population, enter at the top of these hierarchies, and are in an undeniable position of power within the destination (Benson 2013). As Croucher (2009) reminds us, this frames the reality of everyday life for lifestyle migrants living within such destinations in ways that reveal the ongoing legacies of relationships of colonisation. However, while powerful, this understanding is only partial and somewhat static. Instead, in this book we have focused on the ongoing interaction of such structural frames, as external and internalised, as distant and more proximate, within the lives of individuals and their communities.

The lifestyle migrant is a prime neoliberal *subject*; individuals by decree (Bauman 2007), they are predisposed to make what are often narrated as individualised choices about how and where to lives their lives. Historically shaped opportunities and conditions enable these choices. While on the surface a focus on the individual might incline the reader towards understanding lifestyle migration as an act of unfettered agency on the part of the individual, our aim in this book has been to demonstrate a deeper reading of the act of migration that demonstrates the structural conditions that drive a compulsion to find individualised solutions to achieve a better way of life. Crucially, this is facilitated today by a world economy oriented towards neoliberalism, where nation-states have, in part or in full, to embrace free markets and deregulation (see also Ong 2006): nation-states can then also be understood as neoliberal *subjects*. Migrants-cum-investors—as lifestyle migrants are imagined by states and intermediaries—are wooed as part of the global circulation and accumulation of capital; their investments in property and emerging markets signal their value as desirable within the contemporary political economy of migration, where other migrant populations are deemed costly.

But the migrants and the state agents are also *actors*, with diverse sets of financial and social capital, with internal structures and habitus, with some freedom to enact the social structures that precede them. Lifestyle migrants thus negotiate their rights to residence, they shape their working and home lives, but all within conditions not of their own choosing. Similarly, state agents, as *actors*, work to enable the migration and settlement of the right kind of migrant, to provide the conditions under which they will be successful or will leave.

The outcome is some reproduction of inequalities, and the continued patterning of the world around long-established hierarchies, but also some reshaping. Development based around FDI has led to the establishing of special economic zones, property developments, environmental change, economic shifts, and even some political change. But, less-wealthy migrants are not enabled to move or to settle, and will fall through the gaps of visa regimes or health provision, no matter what their ethnic background. Similarly, especially in Malaysia, we see that the desired FDI and desirable migrants need not be limited to Western or white subjects. The world is changing even as it stays the same.

While lifestyle migration has been used to connote the migration of the relatively privileged in search of a better way of life, we argue here that our presentation of practice stories challenges the base assumptions of much contemporary migration research. Simply put, migration research needs to consider how it conceives of the global economy in the way that international migration is understood. All too often individuals such as those who have been at the heart of our research are understood as an exception, a case apart in the study of migration. However, what has become clear to us is that this research offers important insights into how migration as practice continually adapts and takes shape in light of economic and social transformation. While migration research remains tied to understandings based on labour relations, as various commentators have highlighted (see, for example, Lapvitsas 2014), in an increasingly financialised global economy, economic relations and inequalities are wrought through channels other than labour. Lifestyle migration, rather than exception to our understandings of migration, might offer instead new insights into a contemporary political economy of migration that is attentive to the global economic and social structures.

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