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Structuration, Practice Theory, Ethnography and Migration

Bringing it all together

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- analyse migration as part of broader global change
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Abstract

There is a massive amount of empirical material on (and burgeoning theoretical and conceptual approaches to) migration, but there remains a lack of a theoretical framework that can easily be applied empirically to understanding it as an ongoing process. However, various authors are beginning to suggest a structuration theory of practice might provide a fruitful way forward, especially when the theory is used critically with attempts to address the body of criticism directed towards it. This paper draws from several threads in practice theory to establish a set of useful concepts that can be applied empirically when employing practice theory as a framework for migration. I talk of 'practice theory' in recognition of Bourdieu's work and acknowledgement of the difficulties in the way 'structuration' has been understood. A key difficulty with Giddens' structuration theory is its over-emphasis on agency and its inability to define concepts through which to empirically identify and describe structures as external, causal, and real. This paper proposes the concept of emergence as a way out of this impasse, enabling the identification of structures and actions and their interaction over time, in the context of an empirical case. The second half of the paper illustrates how practice theory can be employed to understand the structuration processes involved in a given migration trend: British migration to Spain's coasts since the 1970s.

Non-technical summary

Migration has been subjected to vast and diverse sets of analysis, but it is often overlooked as an ongoing process that unfolds over time and through people's actions, within the context of different constraints and opportunities. As such, it would be beneficial to frame migration studies within a sociological theory of practice. This paper proposes a set of concepts that enable us to approach migration in this way, drawing from Giddens' structuration theory and from Bourdieu's theory of practice, as well as the work of other authors who have more recently elaborated structuration and practice theory. Emergence is a key concept in this endeavour as it offers a way of conceptualising structures that are made by humans, and yet become external, causal, and real. The paper then illustrates how practice theory can be employed to understand the emergence of structures in a given migration trend: British migration to Spain's coasts since the 1970s.

Keywords: practice theory, structuration, emergence, Bourdieu, Giddens, Spain, British, migration

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1 Introduction

Human migration is a vast and complex phenomenon that has been addressed in increasingly diverse ways over recent decades. Governments and policy makers have tended to approach it as a problem, as something to manage and control, while academics have come to the topic from the whole range of social science disciplines. As a result there is now a massive amount of empirical material and burgeoning theoretical and conceptual approaches, each in their own way making a contribution to understanding a given aspect or process. There remains a lack, however, of any kind of theoretical framework for migration. Douglas Massey and his colleagues (1998) have proposed a synthesis of theoretical approaches as an integrated approach to the study of international migration as a whole, while acknowledging that certain theories function more effectively in certain systems. However, as Ewa Morawksa notes (2001), a synthesis continues to exclude aspects, such as culture and politics, previously overlooked by existing theories. Stephen Castles (2010: 1570), alternatively, denies a general theory of migration is possible or desirable, and suggests a social transformations approach might better deal with the 'failure to understand the historical character, false assumptions of one-way causality, and an inability to understand the overall dynamics of migratory processes and their embeddedness in processes of societal change' that have dogged migration studies to date. This approach overtly locates migration in the wider context of ongoing global social change. Other scholars are drawing attention to the fact that migration has tended to be isolated not just from wider social science concerns but also from the wider body of social theory, and are proposing various ways to address this (Bakewell 2010; de Haas 2010; van Hear 2010). Migration is a process, not an event. Migrants (and hosts) are located in networks, relationships and communities; they are not isolated individuals making rational choices.

One clear attempt to provide a social science framework for migration is the work of Ewa Morawska (2009), who makes a strong case for analysing migration in the context of Giddens' structuration theory. Morawska uses structuration theory to 'encourage immigration researchers to undertake investigations of the transformative effects of immigration activities on the society they are embedded in' (Morawska 2009: 6). As Morawska recognises, what is required is a macro-level theoretical framework that can offer insights into the fundamental social processes involved in migration as an ongoing, evolving process. Diverse substantive (migration) theories can then be drawn on to illuminate certain aspects within the wider framework of understanding. It is my contention that a structuration theory of practice provides a fruitful way forward, especially when the theory is used critically with attempts to address the body of criticism directed towards it (and see Bakewell 2010).

2 Practice theory

I have drawn from several threads in practice theory to establish a set of useful concepts that can be applied empirically when employing practice theory as a framework for migration. This framework especially builds on Anthony Giddens' structuration theory (e.g. 1976, 1979, and 1984) and Pierre Bourdieu's theory of practice (e.g. 1977, 1984, 1985, 1990, and Bourdieu and Passeron 1977), and on the stronger version of structuration theory that has been proposed by Rob Stones (2005) in response to criticisms of Giddens. These traditions are supplemented with insights from the work of Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger

(1991; Wenger 1998), where they describe communities of practice and situated learning, and the elaboration of the concept of agency as proposed by Mustafa Emirbayer and Ann Mische (1998). The framework I propose is not an integrated migration theory, nor does it replace substantive migration theories, but it is a meta-theoretical approach that understands the broad social processes that are continually involved in the constitution of social life. It therefore underpins substantive theories and empirical research, providing a *fundamental* perspective. Crucially, practice theory favours neither subjectivism nor objectivism, but instead works to understand the interrelationship at the meso level of structures and actions.

One of the problems when practice (or structuration) theory is applied empirically is that there is a tendency to *either* examine a process as it unravels on the ground, which can result in methodological individualism, or to continue to separate out the macro, meso and micro levels, without properly examining their interaction. Practice theories attempt to understand the interaction and interconnection of structure and agency, first by opposing the notion of a strict ontological dualism. Giddens, especially, wants to ensure that we do not resort to an understanding of social facts as inanimate things, as objects over which agents have no control; whereas, for Bourdieu, structures are 'meaningful products of the accumulation of innumerable historical actions' (1990: 41). Margaret Archer (1995), alternatively, insists on the ontological reality of pre-existing structures and criticises Giddens for eliding the two. But, one of the key elements of Rob Stones' stronger version of structuration is an insistence that structure and agency can be viewed as both interacting and (over time) as distinct. Stones (2005) acknowledges that Giddens is unclear about the boundaries between structure and agency but does not conclude that he therefore conflates the two. Agents are usually unaware of the boundary between the circumstances that constrain their action, their knowledge of this (awareness of how much money they have at their disposal, to use his example), and their actions that take that knowledge into account, but that does not mean that a sociological researcher also needs to elide these moments: conditions are pre-dated, outcomes are post-dated (and see Bakewell 2010). Ewa Morawska (2011: 17) says something similar in her working paper. She sees structures and agency as 'processes of continuous becoming', and uses the concept of *emergence* to think through the 'temporal delay (not simultaneity) of the actor-structure constitution' over time.

3 Emergence

The concept of emergence can 'help to resolve the ontological relationship between structure and agency' (Elder-Vass 2007: 25). It entails a theory through which it is possible to empirically identify and describe structures, at time t, as external, causal, and real, while understanding that at time t+1 (or t-1) they are being acted on and altered. Emergence also enables us to think about the way in which, over time, new structures are shaped, with their own causal powers. It therefore informs the notion of the cycle of structuration, that I will illustrate here. Emergence is a theory that *some* structures (including social ones) are not only made up of component parts that together add up to the structure (structure as aggregate), but also contain emergent parts that have an effect as a result of the way the parts are brought together. An entity with emergent properties is thus understood as how various parts are brought together in a unique way, to produce properties and outcomes

that cannot be explained fully by reference to the separate parts.[1] Crucially the structure with emergent properties is real – it emerges out of people's meanings and actions, but having happened, 'the reality of the dynamics of its unfolding is not only specifiable but is now also entirely independent of the views and wishes of the constituent actors' (Stones and Moog 2009). Being real it also has effects (but was nevertheless created and will likely be elaborated). Emergence thus involves conceptually separating structure and agency, and thereby being able, at a given time, to identify social structures independently of actions.[2]

There are some lessons to learn from emergence. Outcomes cannot be reduced to individual actions or component parts, but their interaction needs to be examined over time. It is essential to retain a concept of time (as movement and process), and here the concepts of morphostasis, and morphogenesis, are helpful as they draw our attention to processes that maintain, and processes that change structures, entities, or events; and to the mechanisms through which this occurs. It is not possible to predict outcomes of systems, as their effects 'depend on the beliefs and dispositions of the human agents who are their parts to produce these mechanisms' (Elder-Vass 2010: 200).
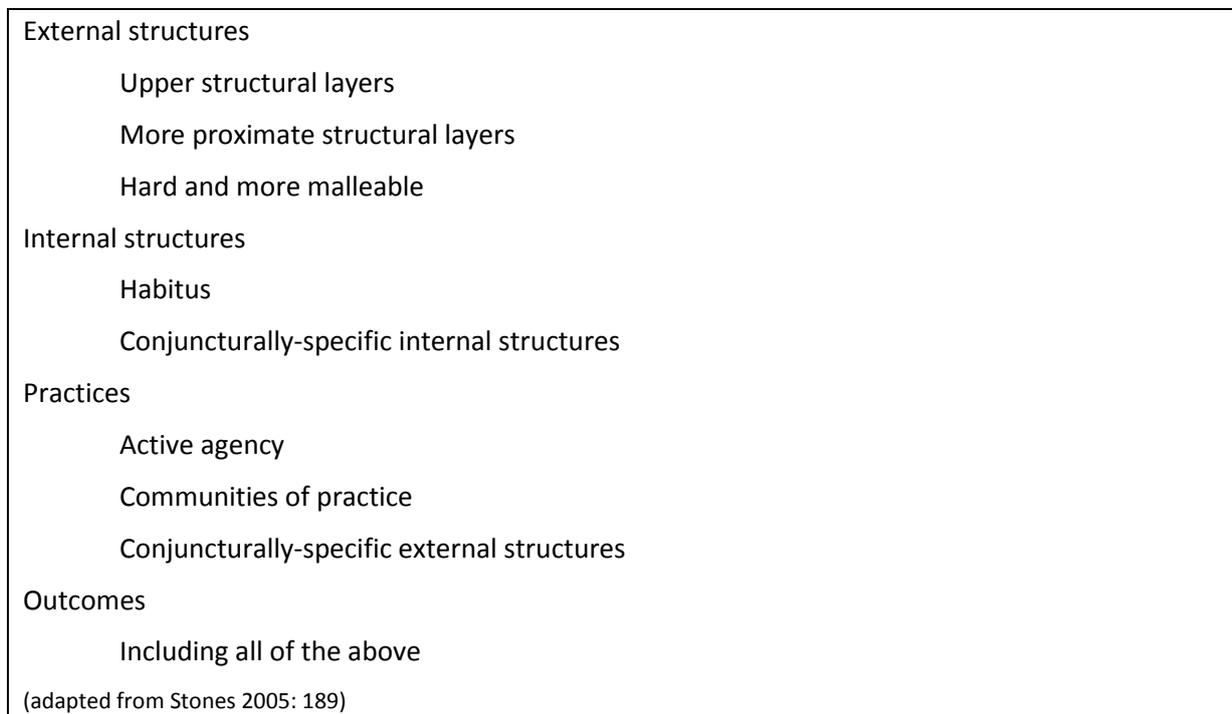
Using emergence, then, it is possible to identify social structures, to describe them, and distinguish them as we explain how a migration happened, without acting as if they were entirely and always distinguishable from agents. This involves focusing on the processes and mechanisms through which entities caused certain changes or events, and how the entities themselves developed and altered over time. This requires recourse to institutions, organisations, or other social facts, as much as to the actions of individuals, because individuals would not act the way they do without the organisations, culture, laws, and other social facts. This is not to reify structures - they are not independent of individuals – but to say structures do have powers in their own right, distinct from the powers of the parts. Nevertheless, these powers remain dependent on, and manipulable by, the properties and presence of the parts.

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[1] For methodological individualists, when a structure has powers that appear to be more than the sum of the parts this is because we simply do not yet know how the parts work together; eventually it is assumed we will be able to reduce the structure to its parts and their interrelation (Sawyer 2001). For structuralists (drawing on dualism or the morphogenetic approach), there is something about the structure that remains irreducible to the parts (and their relations).

[2] The language of emergence is problematic. Generally speaking it is not meant to refer to those structures that have *emerged*, but to those that have powers. However, while some authors talk of emergent powers, others refer to emergent structures (or entities). Of course, all structures have emerged at some time but it is possible to think about how new structures have emerged which have powers over and above those of their individual actors. What we are trying to do is examine the processes through which structures, with emergent properties, are maintained and altered.

4 The cycle of structuration

Figure 8.1: The cycle of structuration

External structures

       Upper structural layers

       More proximate structural layers

       Hard and more malleable

Internal structures

       Habitus

       Conjuncturally-specific internal structures

Practices

       Active agency

       Communities of practice

       Conjuncturally-specific external structures

Outcomes

       Including all of the above

(adapted from Stones 2005: 189)

Key concepts (or tools) involved in understanding the cycle of structuration are: external structures, which can be more or less malleable, and more or less proximate; internal structures, including habitus and conjuncturally-specific internal structures (Stones 2005); practices, which include active agency, communities of practice and what I shall call conjuncturally-specific external structures; and outcomes, which can include any or all of the above. Other concepts that a theory of practice relies on are the *agent in focus* (the agent or group of agents with whom we are currently interested in a given piece of empirical research), and the *agent in context* (those agents within the communities of practice, the daily practice of the relevant others), both from Stones (2005).

4.1 External structures

External structures include both constraints to and opportunities for action, and can be separated conceptually into upper structural layers and more proximate structural layers (see Morawska 2009). Upper structural layers (as we have seen above) are structures as fairly traditionally conceived by sociologists, that appear to the agent as objective and detached (Stones 2005). They are the wider context, the (often unacknowledged) conditions of action, and they have causal influence. They may or may not be recognised by the agent in focus and therefore should be researched from a distance (not only via the agent's phenomenological perspective), using a macro perspective. Upper structural layers include large (even global) historical and spatial forces (Stones 2005), wider conditions of action, broad patterns, global social change, or other social transformations (Castles 2010). In more concrete terms this may involve such things as health-care institutions, employment structures, the housing market, war, or famine. To understand them we might use theories

or perspectives such as globalisation, neoliberalism, colonialism, or feminism. But we must be precise what structures and processes are being referred to when such broad conceptualisations are used (Elder-Vass 2010).

More proximate structural layers include more small-scale and context-specific constraints and opportunities, and changes and developments. They include structures that are more pertinent to the given topic or field, such as laws, rules, policies, organisational arrangements, physical and material things like trains, houses, and building arrangements. In Ewa Morawska's (1996) work on Polish immigrants in America, for example, they include a coal strike, a flood, recession, and who Polish immigrants could rely on as customers at a more local level. The point of conceptually distinguishing these from the above upper structural layers is in order to draw attention to the fact that a structuration theory of practice demands constant attention to the interaction of structures and actions as ongoing processes. They can be usefully examined from the perspective of the agent and from the perspective of the researcher, because some will be unacknowledged or unrecognised by the agent.

External structures can be more or less hard or malleable, and this will depend on how the agent perceives them and the power she has to resist or act. The extent of power and resistance always remains a question for every empirical study. Structural gaps occur where structures (institutions, organisations, ideologies) overlap, contradict each other, or have weaknesses. This leaves them with an inconsistent ability to constrain or provide opportunities for given agents, and partly explains their mutability (Morawska 2009). Mutability also comes from the fact that at all times structures are enacted by agents.[3] The outcome of the emergent powers of external structures is not predictable.

4.2 Internal structures

Internal structures include both habitus and conjuncturally-specific internal structures. Habitus is used here in pretty much the same way that Bourdieu (1990) uses the term in his own theory of practice (and refers to what Stones, 2005, calls dispositions), to mean structures embedded in corporeal schemas and memory traces. Habitus is the multitude of ways of being and thinking, of seeing and doing, that we each, in groups and as individuals, acquire through socialisation, through generations of past practices, and through our own repeated practices. Habitus is best conceived as both a structure (formed) and an action (being formed), and it includes the skills, cultural schemas, world views, knowledge, capitals, and personal resources (including those that are embodied) of a given agent or group of agents. Habitus is/are fairly fixed but transposable, or somewhat mutable (Bourdieu 1977, 1984, 1990).

Conjuncturally-specific internal structures (from Stones 2005) could be conceived as situated learning (Lave and Wenger, 1991), or what is involved and internalised in the process of knowing or learning how to go on in given circumstances. They are the relevant internal structures (ways of thinking and doing) at a given time, specific reactions to and knowledge of features, conditions, structures, opportunities and constraints; the habitus drawn on and manipulated in the specific context of action (Stones 2005). They involve

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[3] It is worth noting that a given structure (or entity with emergent powers) is not necessarily enacted or performed by the agent in focus in a given research project.

proximate knowledge of the given context, how to deal with that policeman, this regulation, that heath official. In everyday engagement, actors adjust their habits and goals as they assess practical situations, and thereby (re)create structures. 'New situations, in particular, enable actors to reinterpret schemas and redesign resources' (Morawska 2009: 4). This concept thus provides a much more dynamic approach to practice theory than that proposed by Bourdieu's concept of habitus alone.

4.3 Practices

Practices are the daily actions of agents in communities of practice. Active agency in a theory of practice takes the shape of individual, reflexive reactions to specific circumstances, albeit that these reactions are always to some extent circumscribed by previous events and experiences. Agency consists of three elements: the habitus, practical considerations given the wider and immediate context, and projection (see Emirbayer and Mische 1998, who use the terms iterational, practical, and projective). The projective element recognises that humans have the ability to create and to pursue goals. Their desires and dreams are culturally embedded, but they are not predetermined. Drawing on their knowledge and experiences, actors imagine alternatives to current situations, visualise proposed solutions (and how they might be achieved), test out their ideas (perhaps, for migrants, by moving temporarily or going somewhere on holiday), and modify them constantly as contexts unfold. However,

> 'structuration theory's emphasis on *praxis* involves a 'decentering' of the subject in favour of a concern for the nature and consequences of the activities in which social actors engage during their participation in day-to-day life' (Cohen 1989: 11)

Practice (*praxis*) is the acting out of social life. It takes place within communities, and it involves aspects we might recognise as structures – codes, rules, regulations, procedures – but also implicit understandings, rules of thumb, established sensitivities, shared world views, and underlying assumptions (Wenger 1998: 47). In other words, practice is about knowing (and working out) how to go on in given circumstances suspended within networks of other people and groups each with their own internal and external structures. A community of practice may be a family, a school, one's peer group, the workplace, or any group within which members interact. They are best understood by taking part. Members have, and acquire, different roles, backgrounds, identities, histories, goals, statuses, and differing amounts of power. Communities of practice thus provide the context within which an agent is constrained and enabled by what I shall call *conjuncturally-specific external structures*. Conjuncturally-specific external structures are a way of bringing what sociologists have referred to as roles back into the frame, while recognising that they entail some element of action; that while they are structural and constraining (slots for people to slot into), roles also involve them doing things in order to reproduce (or transform) them. Conjuncturally-specific external structures, like conjuncturally-specific internal structures above, are therefore useful ways of conceptualising the intermediate level between structures and actions, within communities of practice.

4.4 Outcomes

The outcome of practice (or of active agency, Stones 2005) is the reproduction and transformation of social life into newly (re)shaped external and internal structures, dreams and desires. Any of the above, at any time, can be viewed as outcomes (and thus as structures). This is because a structuration theory of practice is always temporal.

5 British migration to Spain

In order to illustrate how the framework of practice theory can be employed in understanding the ongoing processes involved in migration, for the rest of this paper I will turn my attention to the migration of North Europeans to Spain, specifically British migrants who have moved in large numbers in recent decades. British migration to Spain's coastal areas is a vast phenomenon, with British who live in Spain for at least some of the year making up Spain's largest minority group. As a trend it has been growing (with some ebbs and flows) since the mid 1970s. This is an instance of what is becoming known as lifestyle migration – migration motivated more by quality of life than employment or escape from poverty or hardship (Benson and O'Reilly 2009). There has been a plethora of studies on British migration to Spain, already enough to give a quite complex picture of the process (e.g. Casado Díaz 2006, 2009; Huber and O'Reilly 2004; King et al. 2000; Mantecón 2008; Oliver and O'Reilly 2010; O'Reilly 2000, 2007; Rodes 2009; Rodríguez et al. 2005).

5.1 External structures

There has been a whole host of social transformations, some of which are very general, even global (upper structural layers), and some of which are more specific to western societies, to Europe and to Britain in relation to Spain specifically (the more proximate social surroundings) all of which help us to understand the wider forces, constraints and opportunities, facing a migrant as external structures.

For at least the past two decades, theorists have been describing the fluidity of contemporary western lifestyles in which we are freed from lifelong commitments and expected to carve out our own future trajectories (e.g. Bauman 2005). They have drawn attention to large-scale structural change, in which the disembedding of social relations from local contexts, and the reorganisation of time and space across non-local sites, have wrought changes in personal/community orientations towards individual self-reflexive projects (Giddens 1990). They describe the increased awareness of the world as a single place, marked by complex interconnections and the increased porosity of national borders (Robertson 1992; Inda and Rosaldo 2001). For Ulrich Beck (2006), the human condition is now cosmopolitan; human life is marked by a sense of boundarylessness as 'cultural ties, loyalties and identities have expanded beyond national borders and systems of control'. Castells (2011) says we have entered a new epoch, in which the rise and spread of new communications technologies have transformed all previously existing networks and relationships, leading to new and complex affiliations and interconnections between societies, peoples, ideas and things. The network society is indeed a new social structure, with emergent properties. Meanwhile, we have witnessed increased global inequalities, rising flexibility of labour, and a rise in both high-skilled and low-skilled jobs (Castells 2011). Increases in road, rail and air travel (and new technologies for travel) mean the world is

more easily accessible. Flexible and virtual forms of mobility have been on the increase (Urry 2007). These broad structural changes help explain why anyone might find it easier to resist the norms and constraints of modern society and move away from their nation, their state, their family and friends, their home town, when they clearly do not have to – the world is changing in terms of what is possible and what is not. They do not specifically address *this* migration trend in *this* part of the world but they are emergent structures that work through changing opportunities (and constraints), changing expectations, new conjuncturally-specific internal and external structures, and eventually changing habitus.

One of these social transformations we might label 'tourism', a concept that embraces a gamut of material, economic and cultural changes. Tourism has played an important role in the migration of British to Spain. Indeed the majority of respondents in diverse studies first visited the area as tourists, before becoming migrants (see King et al. 2000; O'Reilly 2000; Rodríguez et al. 2005). During the twentieth century, tourism evolved from a fairly elite and often educational pastime, to a more middle-class pursuit of exotic otherness, then to a mass phenomenon based on seasonal escape in search of sun, sea, sand and hedonism (Urry 1990). The development and marketing of all-inclusive package tours was especially critical in the growth of mass tourism in European coastal areas, leading to the creation of entire cities or towns 'built solely for consumption' (Shaw and Williams 2002). The Costa del Sol is often referred to as the archetypal mass tourism destination, with other regions in the Mediterranean following a similar model. New resorts such as Torremolinos and Fuengirola emerged during the 1960s and attracted British tourists in large numbers, many of whom returned year after year. But how does tourism affect the shape this particular migration takes? What are its emergent properties? What are the processes through which is has contributed to migration and the shape it takes?

Tourism brings people to an area, but it also constructs an area materially, providing an infrastructure and amenities from which both local residents and prospective migrants can benefit. Almost imperceptibly places become 'reconstructed from a tourist point of view' (Lanfant 1995: 5), with many, wide implications. Tourism and its development into a mass form coincided with other economic and political developments within Europe discussed further below, and so the subsequent *migration*, especially of British and Germans, to these towns did not occur overnight but in stages with, first, a few individuals buying retirement or holiday homes, or a small tourist business, in the 1970s, increasing numbers visiting these homes more frequently through the 1970s and 1980s, and more people retiring to the area, buying properties and businesses to serve the tourist and settled migrant communities from the late 1980s onwards (Hall and Williams 2002). During the 1990s, when mass tourism to Spain faced something of a decline, the Spanish authorities actively sought to remedy its seasonal and polarised nature by encouraging investment in property, in the form of what has become known as 'residential tourism' (O'Reilly 2009). But this did not occur to them out of the blue. Individuals had already started to buy holiday and retirement homes, and property developers had caught on to this new potential market (Mantecón 2008; Rodes 2009). However, tourism also framed what sort of life migrants to the area would seek. Mass tourism was not about other cultures but about sun, sea, sand and hedonism; it often implied leisure and escape and being able to travel abroad while remaining safely ensconced in one's own cultural milieu. As we see later, internal and external structures thus emerge out of the consolidation over time of actions.

The longer-term history of British migration to Spain's coastal areas, as an ongoing process, also creates new structural layers that in turn frame the contemporary trend. There were other migrants, mostly backpackers and intellectuals, to Spain's coasts long before mass tourism (O'Reilly 2000). Practice theory enables us to see that the actions of early individual migrants and travellers lead to unintended consequences in the form of connections, links, ties, shared cultures, and more concrete, material change. However, a further effect these earlier migrations had was to plant the seed of an idea in the minds of local residents that British migrants to Spain are wealthy, elite, and very different to the members of the rural communities they lived among (see Waldren 2009). This becomes relevant later, within the communities of practice of migrants and the conjuncturally-specific external structures constraining their behaviour. British migrants are aware that they are viewed as wealthy and elite and therefore do not require the advice and support that other migrants might warrant. Between the 1950s and 1970s, Spain gradually changed from being a country marked by emigration, to one characterised by immigration. More recently (see Aledo 2005), it has become a country impacted by migrations from across the globe but especially from Africa, Latin America and Eastern Europe. These are broad historical facts, not constraints or opportunities framing British migrants' decision to move, but they become relevant in Spanish reactions to British migrants; perceiving them as different to other migrants. These upper structural layers are enacted at a more proximate level, affecting how much attention Spanish authorities feel they need to pay (and how much help they think these supposedly wealthy migrants need) in comparison with other immigrants.

A further broad sweep, historical change which might help us understand this migration is colonialism, which has led to the structural ordering of the world in which many Westerners now move as 'expatriates' (Fechter 2007) and others move as immigrant labour. This helps us a bit more with this given trend. It explains why some people already had the experience of moving (later we shall see it also has some cultural effects). Many British abroad have worked abroad for much of their lives, and then did not wish to settle back in Britain on retirement (Sriskandarajah and Drew 2006). However, a perhaps more relevant antecedent, that could help explain this migration is retirement to the seaside, which became something of a movement in the UK in the 1960s (see Karn 1977). Increased car use, rail and other transport improvements, have all brought opportunities for trips to the seaside, which in turn brought experiences and desire. Increased affluence brought opportunities to turn those trips into retirement. Some government policies were introduced to encourage this development, such as 'Greater London Council's scheme to provide bungalows by the sea for their retired tenants', but this had limited effect compared to owner-occupiers buying property in cheaper areas (Karn 1977: 2). It is perhaps this development more than migration of other groups to Spain that put retirement elsewhere onto the cultural agenda of British people.

A further, emergent, structural entity is Europeanisation. In recent decades, European and Spanish legislation have coincided to make it easier for Britons (and other Europeans) to purchase property, to reside, to work, and to move freely within Spain (O'Reilly 2000: 33). These policies thus provide opportunities and constraints (proximate structures) for this migration. The Maastricht Treaty especially was celebrated as providing a legal and policy framework enabling the free movement of individuals as well as goods and capital. This was later internalised by North European migrants into an expectation that 'free' actually meant

free from all constraints. Louise Ackers and Peter Dwyer (2004) demonstrate with rich insights how the policies in practice are interpreted and acted on by agents migrating within Europe. Their research into older people's use of health and social care systems in Europe reveals that middle-class migrants are especially resourceful in moving freely and flexibly between states, using complicated and conflicting policies to their advantage. However, my own work demonstrates how policies relating to free movement are interpreted by the Spanish authorities in different ways in different areas in Spain, leading to a confusing array of constantly changing rules and conditions enabling and constraining migration and residence (O'Reilly 2007). The consequent condition of ambiguity for British migrants enables the Spanish authorities to retain control over European immigration, which seems more problematic as the years go by and especially as increasing numbers of younger, working class, and unemployed British migrants join the earlier, predominantly middle class, retirement migrants. Indeed, ambiguous rules and regulations lead to social exclusion for some British migrants. The extent to which policies are enforced or ignored vary within communities of practice, in response to in situ conditions, and to how these are perceived and understood by the host community. The various interpretations of policy, in turn, construct new conjuncturally-specific external conditions within which British agents make decisions, such as whether to register as a permanent resident, to take out a bank account in Spain, or even to settle permanently or on a semi-permanent, flexible basis (O'Reilly 2007).

Other external structures enabling (and sometimes constraining) British migration to Spain during the 1980s and 1990s could be summed up as relative wealth and increased opportunities for leisure. These include, in the UK, strong economic recovery during the 1980s and a boom in the private property market, an increase in expendable wealth across the social classes, combined with the lengthening of paid holidays. There has also been an increase in longevity in most Western societies, and an increase in incidence of early retirement. In Spain, relevant proximate structures include political changes after the death of Franco, the relatively low costs of daily living and of private property (Casado Díaz 2009; King et al. 2000; O'Reilly 2000; Gustafson 2009). Sterling/peseta/euro exchange rates have at different times been an opportunity and a constraint. In the late 1990s, the pound sterling was weak against the peseta and there looked to be a return migration in process, but during the early twenty-first century sterling strengthened against the euro. By 2011, the global recession has had its own impacts, the building boom in Spain has ground to a halt, and many British are struggling because their pensions or their invested capital are worth less in relation to the Euro. One would need to never leave the field in order to keep up to date with developments. Migration to Spain is a practice, inscribed by sets of external and internalised, ever-changing structures.

6 The practice of migration

Broad political, economic, social and cultural structures thus frame this migration process, leading us to begin to understand why people might move as individuals. But it remains necessary to be more explicit how these structures, conditions of action at time t, relate precisely to this trend. Remember, we are not trying to understand individual, rationally made choices in the context of wider cultural change. Instead we are trying to understand how migration unfolds through practice, its various causes and their long-term effects. Several empirical studies have concluded that British migrants to Spain are more likely to be

older, middle class, fairly well educated, and to have lived abroad before (Casado Díaz 2006). King et al. (2000) suggest that higher levels of education might lead to more of an instrumental approach to one's life trajectory and more of a feeling of being able to take some control. This is possibly true, but there are also many younger, poorer, less well educated, people who have never before lived outside of their own country who move to Spain. How do we explain this? And how do we explain that not all older, middle-class people move? As Bourdieu (1990) notes, even as opportunities change, still old habits die hard. The practical experiences and norms acquired during the early years remain formative. The habitus changes only slowly, so that while some may imagine a new future in a changed setting, individuals, within communities of practice, might continue to perceive family, stability, home, and stasis as the most important values (see Oliver and O'Reilly 2010). Others remain tied to their locality through work, their partner's work, local political or institutional engagements, close local networks, or even their own personal needs. The emergent properties of the broad structural changes outlined above are not predictable.

Neither is it sufficient to rely on agents' own explanations. When we ask people, especially in surveys, why they move, they tend to answer in terms of push and pull factors. They cannot explain how it is that the structures above got turned into desires; how they resisted some norms towards staying and acted on others, towards mobility. If the theories and structural forces above explained everything, then everyone would move. British in Spain overwhelmingly, in all studies, cite climate, pace of life, lower living costs, improved quality of social life, Spanish culture, the fact that English is widely spoken, and nearness to home as pull factors. They mention antipathy to the UK involving high crime rates, poor social values, poor climate, and high prices, as push factors. And they refer to a receptive British community, previous family links to Spain, work or business links, and having previously bought property, as network factors (Casado Díaz 2006). This is because when we ask people why they did something they rationalise in a way they think is expected of them, adopting a 'quasi-theoretical posture' as they reflect on their actions. The problem is that they 'leave unsaid all that goes without saying'. (Bourdieu 1990: 91). What is required is stories that explain how migrants made the decision to move, in practice, drawing on and forming which habits, norms and conjuncturally-specific internal structures; stories that reveal what power and knowledge they had, and what networks they were part of that created constraints and opportunities, and the extent to which they have internalised and transformed which norms. This involves paying attention to both wider structures and the thoughts and feelings of agents, within the context of action. It involves immersion in the context, the building of trust and rapport with agents, both phenomenological and hermeneutic interpretations, and recognition of the complexity of the social world.

As the structures described above were enacted and embodied, it became taken for granted that one can choose to move abroad for quality of life reasons, rather than simply for work or escape from poverty or persecution; mobility became a norm rather than an aberration. Europeanisation was internalised into an identity, an expectation of a right to freedom of movement, and conjuncturally-specific internal structures developed to enable people to move within Europe as an individual member of a European state. The notion that a job is no longer for life, that one must be flexible, adaptable, and amenable to change, became internalised into the Western habitus, along with the habit of staying in touch with family and friends via modern telecommunications. Those who were corporate expatriates had moved home a lot throughout their adult lives and had become used to the idea of

migration abroad. Moving is now part and parcel of their disposition. In some people, then, we witness a desire to move, a feeling that moves can be made at any time during a life but especially at times when freed from other constraints such as work or family ties (for example in retirement), an assumption that a move need not be permanent, a comfortable knowledge that if the move fails the welfare state in the UK will provide at least some sort of a safety net, the knowledge that it should be quite easy with modern communications technologies and reasonably priced travel to go back home and to receive visitors in Spain regularly. Combined with this are the experiences of having spent time in Spain, and the desire to move somewhere like that, that offers a slow pace of life, and good quality of life. However, this is not explicit in the interviews and conversations we had with our respondents. It is made apparent through analysis of how they tell their stories, through participant observation (and casual conversations), and through an analysis of broader structural and cultural changes and their emergent properties.

Practice is weaving the habitus with the new conditions, within communities of practice (and the habitus and expectations of those around us) in an ongoing sense of how to go on. Many people described to me how they went to Spain and were inspired:

'we had been here several times on holiday and then we decided to buy a holiday home',

'we drove around that mountain and there it was, the view, the house',

'we had made friends here',

'we saw a TV programme and we thought: why can't we do it?'

and then events conspired to free them of constraints they felt held them back:

'my husband was made redundant',

'my mother died',

'we got divorced'.

One couple I interviewed exemplified this very well. They were able to tell me that they had lived abroad most of their lives, knew they did not want to retire in the UK, tried Thailand for a while, then settled on Spain because it is 'not too far from home and still beautiful and relatively cheap'. The story they told was much more complicated, with tales of driving through France and Spain, staying with a sister in Nerja, returning to visit young grandchildren in the UK, and eventually, back in Spain, they found a house in a village with which they fell in love.

The fact that many people had previous ties to Spain through tourism was revealed in many interviews and conversations. The freedom from ties and obligations as suggested by Bauman (2000) and others as being characteristic of contemporary lifestyles was also somewhat revealed in the stories. Migrants often described their new way of life in terms of new beginnings and how they had been able to shake off old ties, revealing that they are subconsciously enacting a broad cultural shift. But freedom from constraints and obligations is still tempered by internal constraints in the shape of the habitus and the norms of those around us, or by practical constraints. Some older people had caring responsibilities constraining their opportunities to migrate (King et al 2000: 12), others felt they needed to sever ties with home after 'coming out' (announcing to family and friends that they are homosexual) or divorce, and saw migration to Spain as an opportunity to start a new life

with new friends. Others wanted to be free, to start again, to be who they wanted, but also to retain close ties to home. The following quote from a woman cited in King et al. (2000: 99) reveals the ways in which a choice is not made alone or without a whole host of opportunities and constraints, habits and norms: 'Initially we were thinking of America and we went out there for a few months and looked around. Then my husband changed his mind…we opted for a holiday home in Spain, so people could come and visit us'. The woman clearly sees her 'choice' as being heavily circumscribed by her husband, who 'changed his mind'. They have also decided to choose a place that will enable them to continue their ties with home. Several migrations slowly developed from regular holiday, to second home, to more frequent and longer visits, to eventual settlement, and a few completely sever ties with home.

It is also clear that the migration itself is an entity with emergent properties, creating opportunities for new migrants through networks, friendships, business opportunities, and so on (Hall and Williams 2002). Witnessing the need for diverse services by previously settled British, others started to migrate in order to establish estate agencies, car rental agencies, bars, restaurants, laundries, property rental agencies and other services. Later still, in the early twenty-first century, there is now a whole host of businesses and services provided by and for the English-speaking community, from alternative therapies to building a patio, from pool cleaning to pet hairdressing. Spanish lawyers and doctors are learning English in order to boost their clientele, estate agencies in the UK are marketing second homes in Spain. These are the new external structures (outcomes) framing subsequent migrations and, in turn, their nature and outcomes.

To conclude this section, people have moved to Spain as a result of a wide range of broad structural and cultural shifts that have led to a desire to migrate, some freedom from constraints (or a feeling that one can be free), economic, technological and infrastructural developments. But these alone cannot explain individual agency. The decision to move is made when these external structures are to some extent internalised and when personal constraints and opportunities coincide with desire and with networks that mean one feels it as a possibility. We may never be able to understand reasons for moving sufficiently to be able to predict it, but it is possible to identify some of the contributing factors, the mechanisms that produced them, and thereby the shape of the outcomes.

7 Settling in Spain

I would like now to think a little about how British migrants settle in Spain. This is complex and there is a lot of work in this area, so I will only focus on some aspects. We know that they do not integrate well. Many do not settle permanently or full time: I have distinguished between full and returning residents and seasonal and peripatetic visitors, and there is lots of movement from one category to another (O'Reilly 2000: 52). Many are not working or only work a little to supplement their income. Others work in small businesses working for and with other British, and many work on their own account, or self-employed. There are numerous British clubs and societies, many of them with exclusively British or European memberships (*ibid*: 77). Many British migrants do not register as resident in Spain, for a variety of reasons. Most only have 'some knowledge' of the Spanish language (King et al. 2000: 129, and Rodríquez, Fernández-Mayoralas et al 2005), but few see this as a problem.

We need to think about what power people have to integrate, if that is their desire, in the context of external constraints. The Spanish tend to assume that British living in Spain are generally older, retired, wealthy second-home owners, or tourists, with no desire (or need) to integrate. Indeed, in both popular and official terminology in Spain north-European migrants are labelled *extranjeros* (or foreigners) while non-European are perceived as *immigrantes* (or immigrants), and little time and energy are expended thinking about policies to enable the former to settle (Aledo (2005). Foreigners are viewed together with tourists and provided with shared services. There could be more research into how the locals perceive the incomers, and the interaction of the two groups. These facts form part of the habitus of the receiving society and will thus form part of the conjuncturally-specific external structures of the British migrants. As such, over time, they will become part of the conjuncturally-specific internal structures limiting expectations towards integration. As Bourdieu (1990) notes, we may not even be aware of objective constraints but they nevertheless mould what is achievable or worth aspiring to.

But let's look at the group habitus of the British – the shared sets of dispositions, the roles, norms and practices of the group as a whole. Remember that in practice, the externally determined thing is in fact objectified both in bodies and in institutions (Bourdieu 1990: 57). Institutions, laws, constraints, norms, and so on are appropriated practically, and realised through the habitus and the action of agents. British migrants thus embrace, internalise and make a practice of the idea of mobility, which has been enabled through the development of new technologies (see Rodes 2009). This is how mobility and new technologies have emergent properties. Tourism also becomes part of the habitus as migrants seek the Spain that has been marketed to them, the quaint backward Spain that promises leisure and escape and a return to a more simple way of life (O'Reilly 2000). They have a love of Spanish culture but their understanding of this is filtered through their experiences as tourists. British migrants express a desire to integrate, but have no real need to because of the many services available in their own communities and in their own language. They expect and enact the freedom inscribed in the right to move freely within Europe. They often resist formal residence, permits, registration and so on (Huber and O'Reilly 2004). Their migration has been enabled by relative wealth and relative escape, and to integrate would damage what they achieve by constantly balancing home and away, here and there, richer and poorer society. Many are retired and not looking for work, others have very little expectation of being able to work within the Spanish economy. Here the habitus is shaped by the limits of the possible in an area of high unemployment. There is some evidence of chauvinism or national superiority, a habitus formed through long histories of empire: 'slowly we are educating the Spanish families into our way of life here' said one man who lived in a very mixed nationality neighbourhood (King et al. 2000: 146; and see Rodríguez, Fernández-Mayoralas et al 1998). But migrants also retain the distance of the stranger, aware (and reminding each other) they are guests in a foreign land (O'Reilly 2000).

In terms of conjuncturally-specific internal structures, their practice of settling in Spain emerges over time in interaction with their experiences and networks and how they perceive the world and the people around them. They become aware that they are perceived as relatively wealthy and not expected to settle or to integrate in Spain. Their experiences of not working, combined with their expectations not to find work within the Spanish economy, the fact that many are not expecting to stay forever or perhaps not all year round, the expectation and later the experience of being marginal, leads them to find

each other socially, to help out in the initial stages of settling, to find out how to get what, to share information and advice. Some services then arise as a response; people taking the opportunity to make a living out of these needs. Also, clubs and associations are created as spaces where people can replace their sense of identity, of self-worth, of status (lost through moving and leaving work) through their position in these institutions (O'Reilly 2000). These in turn mean that people have less need to integrate, so that newcomers learn a different way to go on in their new surroundings, supported heavily by the settled community (a new entity with emergent properties). The interplay of expectations, habitus, and experiences in situ, thus leads to new external structures framing the migration experience for both existing and new migrants. Their ethnic identity emerges over time in a process of what Ewa Morawska (1996, in Stones 2005: 54) calls ethnicisation: 'in an interplay between the cultural and the practical schemas they brought with them and the…circumstances of their new…environment'. These circumstances – including a low chance that they would spend time with Spanish on a daily basis, building their own communities, continuing ties with home, low need to politically mobilise or to claim a distinctive identity, low need or expectation to learn the language – results in them framing their identity as 'British but different', above all not tourists. This is the 'other' that is more meaningful to them in their daily lives. Ethnicisation, then, arises out of conditions in the host environment in interaction with the habitus of the group.

8 Conclusion

In this paper I have reviewed a number of studies covering British 'lifestyle' migration to Spain's coastal areas. Through these existing studies we have identified structures framing this migration at an upper level in the shape of technological change, the increased connectivity of the world, and the development of mass tourism, and other social changes summarised in the concepts of cosmopolitanism, network society, mobility, and colonialism. We have also seen how these wider shifts are embodied and enacted by agents as they make the decision to move and in the ways they choose to live their post-migration lives. We have learned that the practice of migration to Spain has a long history, at least going back to the migration of backpackers and intellectuals to what were then remote areas of Spain. It can also be traced back to a phenomenon we might describe as 'retirement to the seaside'. These earlier migrations can be seen to have had causal impacts, creating new structures in the shape of concrete ties and internalised structures (expectations, goals, dreams) on the part of both migrants and hosts. Among other things, we have also heard how migration and settlement take place through practice, over time, and as agents negotiate a path through conjuncturally-specific external structures (perhaps norms towards staying at home), within their communities of practice (their new ethnic communities, the family and friends at home, Spanish communities), and in the context of more proximate and more distant external constraints (including policies about registration and legalisation that are variously practised by local agents).

This story of British migration to Spain begins to illustrate how studies can be brought together to understand a phenomenon in much of its complexity, drawing on key concepts from structuration and practice theory, and emergence. A practice theory framework can also be used to examine some aspects of a process in depth, as long as we then link our findings to others. Alejandro Mantecón's (2008) discourse analysis of how 'residential tourism' in Spain, and the construction of entire towns for the second homes market, gets

legitimised and accepted as a good, in spite of the obvious damage it is doing, can, for example, contribute to a broader analysis of the outcomes of this migration trend. We could also link and compare this research on British migrants to other European groups (see the edited collection by Rodríguez et al. 2005), or we can cast our net beyond Spain, using concepts such as lifestyle migration (supported with rigorous empirical research). A theory of practice provides the meta-theoretical framework within which disparate studies can be brought together. It does not attempt to do all the work that other theories and concepts contribute, nor does it aim to replace the sorts of work reviewed. However, it does demand composite studies, the recognition that international migration is a complex, ongoing process, and a deep understanding of the ways in which structure and agency interact over time through the ongoing practice of daily life.

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