

THE BRITISH ON THE COSTA DEL SOL TWENTY YEARS ON: *A story of liquids and sediments*

Abstract

This paper is based on ethnographic research with British migrants in Spain over a 20-year period: a period of mass migration and some return migration. British in Spain, who became a mass media and academic phenomenon during this time, have often been understood as performing liquid or mobile mobilities, and little attention has been given to the long-term impacts of their migration. This paper examines environmental and infrastructural changes in Spain, traces in the shape of abandoned properties and closed-down businesses and also the new long-lasting organisations, institutions and relationships that have emerged and taken on a form of permanence over time and daily practice of these migrants as agents. Drawing on practice theory to draw attention to outcomes of migration, this paper argues that even the most fluid of migrant communities and lifestyles leave sediments and traces that shape the future for prospective migrants and those who are settled.

Keywords

Liquid • sediments • British • migration • communities

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Introduction: a story of liquids and sedimentation

This article is based on ethnographic research with British migrants in Spain that has spanned more than 20 years. This has been a critical 20-year period, during which 'residential tourism' in Spain took a hold, blossomed and eventually faltered as a result of the global financial crisis of 2008. It has been a period of mass in-migration and some return. The British in Spain (as one amongst many migrant North-European groups) became a mass media and an academic phenomenon during that time. This migration has often been understood, drawing from Bauman's work especially (Bauman 2000, 2007), as a liquid or mobile phenomenon (Benson and O'Reilly 2009; Huber and O'Reilly 2004; Korpela 2009; O'Reilly 2009b). Here, drawing on a version of practice theory that views migration as an ongoing process both shaped by and shaping of wider social structures (see O'Reilly 2012a), I ask to what extent this migration has been a transient phase and to what extent it has left traces or sediments that, as emergent social structures (Elder-Vass 2010), will shape future lives and relationships.

British migrants in Spain are arguably not well integrated, despite their expressed wishes to the contrary. As discussed elsewhere (cf. O'Reilly 2007 and 2012a; Huber and O'Reilly 2004), they cope with their own low expectations and low opportunities for meaningful social, political or economic integration by creating ethnic organisations and fluid connections. However, the very communities

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and networks they create to help them cope in turn constrain any future integration by consolidating marginality. One might expect the migration itself to be transient, fleeting, mobile and shifting merely because of this marginality and lack of integration. But 20 years of research has revealed some outcomes that are rather surprising: this migration leaves sediments (a new concept I am proposing here to challenge the contemporary focus on mobility, fluidity and liquidity in much migration research) in the shape of embedded daily routines and practices, and emergent social structures (Elder-Vass 2010; O'Reilly 2012a) in the shape of community organisations and institutions that engender belonging and familiarity amid strangeness, as well as environmental, infrastructural and cultural traces. Importantly, these traces and sediments will shape the future in unpredictable ways.

The notion of sediments is drawing on ideas from practice theory to highlight the recursive nature of social life, in which actions lead to new emergent structures (Elder-Vass 2010) that can take many forms, some material, some embodied, and some social (O'Reilly 2012a)¹. Sediments are the opposite of liquid form; they are (embodied) cultural practices, social structures, networks, habits, behaviours, material changes, and social institutions, that not only illustrate settlement but also shape future habits and actions. Drawing from the version of practice theory outlined in O'Reilly (2012a), the notion of sediments is thus used here to refer to the *outcomes* of the interaction of structure and agency in the practice of daily life. Such

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outcomes are also sometimes termed 'traces', as in, for example, postcolonial traces (e.g. Benson 2013; Quijano 2000; Mignolo 2007). Here, again, the idea is to draw attention to relationships and actions that are shaped through long-standing historical and geopolitical forces.

Ethnographic returning: a longitudinal study of the British in Spain

The paper is based on ethnographic research in Spain that has taken place over the past 22 years in an engaged longitudinal approach that informs a reflexive analysis of the practice, or unfolding, of social life (O'Reilly 2012b). In 1993, I moved to Spain's Costa del Sol with my family, for 15 months, to undertake a fairly traditional ethnographic community study with British migrants living in the Costa del Sol. I joined societies and clubs, frequented bars and restaurants, placed my children in Spanish school, joined outings, took part in activities, made friends, and shared experiences. In short, I lived as a British migrant amongst other migrants, with one key difference: as an ethnographer, I engaged in a breadth of activities, observed in detail, wrote copious notes, and ensured the experience I obtained was rich, diverse and fully absorbing. I shared in hundreds of conversations and undertook numerous in-depth interviews, gaining intimate insights about the lives of at least 259 people (O'Reilly 2000a). Eventually, I bought a second home in Spain, and between 1999 and 2007, I was a regular return visitor, sometimes for up to six months at a time. It was impossible not to continue to learn about 'my field' and 'my community' at those times. I undertook a more formal return study,² with two 6-month stretches of in-depth fieldwork in 2003 and 2004. In April and November 2015, and in May 2016, I returned to Spain for a two-decade update, combining participant observation, analysis of web forums, online periodicals and blogs, many conversations with old and new friends, and 20 recorded in-depth interviews³. As I have argued elsewhere (O'Reilly 2012b), this sort of *ethnographic returning*, when undertaken with a constructive and positive approach to reflexivity, can yield longitudinal data with a specific focus on temporality, processes, and social change (see also Bourdieu 2003; Kenna 1992).

Twenty years of Residential Tourism – rise and fall

This 20-year research period has coincided with a fascinating phase in the history of the Costa del Sol (and other coastal areas in Spain). I summarise it here in terms of the rise and fall of residential tourism, with particular reference to the British case (and drawing on research undertaken by Huete, Mantecón & Estévez 2013). The term 'residential tourism' is most commonly used by Spanish academics, as referring to second-home tourism involving the articulation of migration and tourism – two mobilities normally separately conceived (Huete, Mantecón & Mazón 2008; O'Reilly 2003)⁴. The phrase was first used in an academic context by Francisco Jurdao (1979) 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.⁵ Jurdao was concerned about the loss of agricultural land and the undermining of village life that was 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 much work that has since been published in Spanish (e.g. Aledo 2005; Mantecón 2008; Mazón 2006), associated with a top-down analysis that focuses more on wider socio-structural shifts than on daily practices of agents.

Partly as a result of the marketing of all-inclusive package tours, mass tourism became an important phenomenon in Europe in the 1960s and the Spanish coastal zones (especially the Costa del Sol and Costa Blanca) were favourite destinations (Shaw & Williams 2002). As a result of increased leisure time, accessibility of routes, rapid growth and reduced cost of airline travel, alongside the political aspects of globalisation that led to the opening up of new destinations, the Mediterranean became the destination for over half the world's travellers (Shaw & Williams 2002). During the 1990s package tourism in Spain (and in general) saw something of a decline: holidays were becoming more individualised and frequent, and alternative destinations had become established. For the Spanish tourist board, inland or rural tourism, with more emphasis on nature and culture, together with residential tourism were encouraged as a solution to the short-termism and seasonal nature of coastal tourism. Residential tourism had the added advantage of promising inward investment and was later given a boost by the free movement of people ascribed in the 1992 Maastricht Treaty (O'Reilly 2007). Thus, these longer-term (residential) tourists were expected to settle more, spend more time and money inland, and all year round, and invest in property as well as appreciate the culture of Spain. Nevertheless, they were still viewed, by the Spanish government, tourist board, and Spanish people in general, as tourists rather than immigrants.⁶

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). Now, since 'the crisis', residential tourism has taken something of a tumble. The effects of the 2008 global financial crisis have been devastating and long-lasting. In Spain, we can refer to 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 that depend on tourism; as well as devastating social and economic problems:

When we talk about the Spanish economic crisis, we are dealing with a drastic change. Employment had grown between 1995 and 2007 at an average annual rate of 4.1%. However, 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, Mantecón & Estévez 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 home⁷ (see Huete,

Mantecón & Estévez 2013). I will explore all these aspects in more detail below.

The British in Spain: a visible, media, academic, and liquid phenomenon

British migration to Spain does of course have a longer history, linked to more Bohemian or professional travel (Benson and O'Reilly 2009; O'Reilly 2000a), but the mass phenomenon of the past few decades became profound. Beginning with mass tourism in the 1960s, followed by second-home ownership and the more permanent settlement of a few retired people during the 1970s, it eventually led, during the 1980s and 1990s, to a full-scale migration of people of all ages. It gradually spread inland and to rural as well as coastal areas, inspired by residential-tourism development and marketing discussed earlier, and arguably reached its peak in the first decade of the new century. By 2005, it was estimated that approximately 750,000 British people lived in Spain, rising to a million if those who live there for only part of the year were included (Srisakandrajah & Drew 2006). This large immigrant minority was concentrated in tourist areas, especially the Costa del Sol and the Costa Blanca, and in specific towns and villages (Oliver & O'Reilly 2010).⁸

Despite the difficulties in assessing actual numbers (given the fluidity of the migration in many cases and the common tendency not to register), this has been a quantitatively important migration with notable, geographically localised effects. It has also been a visible phenomenon: during the latter part of the twentieth century and into the 2000s in the Costa del Sol, the Costa Blanca, and certain inland areas, walking down the street, one could see British bars advertising British meals, hear people of all nationalities chatting together, see English plated cars, international schools, English-language press, and even be able to watch English-language television.⁹ Pick up an English-language newspaper during this period and one could consult pages and pages of adverts by self-employed entrepreneurs and long lists of clubs and organisations. There were English-language radio stations, theatre groups, English car rentals, property maintenance, and other businesses. The British in Spain also became a media phenomenon in the United Kingdom in the 1990s, with several soap operas, dramas and documentaries featuring them, often as criminals 'on the run' or in otherwise denigratory ways (see O'Reilly 2001). They became an academic phenomenon a little later, with numerous articles, theses and books written about North Europeans living full-time or seasonally in Spain (e.g. O'Reilly 2000a; Rodes 2009; Schriewer & Jimenez 2009).

This has also been a fairly fluid or liquid phenomenon (Benson & O'Reilly 2009; Huber & O'Reilly 2004; Korpela 2009; O'Reilly 2009b). Despite the fact that these migrants often identify in opposition to tourists and display a certain commitment to Spain with the phrase 'we are not tourists, we live here' (Waldren 1996), nevertheless, the temporary and fleeting nature of tourism marks their lives (O'Reilly 2003, 2009b). The migrants themselves are fluid in their migrations: some are seasonal visitors and others are peripatetic migrants, whilst others are more settled or permanent. Amongst the more permanent migrants, many arrive in Spain with the attitude they will 'give it a go for a while, see how it goes' or start their lives as seasonal visitors and then settle down (O'Reilly 2000a). In recent years, we have witnessed many of them moving on to new pastures, in Bulgaria, France or Portugal, for example, whilst there has always been a steady return migration. Amongst those who remain, many do not register with the local authority, avoid paying taxes or social security and, therefore, remain marginal.

...in regard to the case of German and British lifestyle migrants in southern Spain, a great number of these citizens are not included in official statistics because they are reluctant to regularize their status as residents. They fear that they might no longer be eligible for social services in their home country, and that a change in their tax residence might have a negative impact on their finances. (Huete, Mantecón 2012: 163)

In my earlier ethnographic studies, many new migrants were then arriving in Spain as tourists before deciding to settle for a while, always keeping open their options for return. British migrants made friends easily and quickly in their search for a sense of belonging, but women especially missed their friends and family from home and made great efforts to stay in touch (O'Reilly 2000b). In many cases, the new friends in Spain were not maintained whilst back in the United Kingdom or once a migrant had returned permanently, meaning these were short-term or transient relationships established for a specific purpose. When people returned to the United Kingdom, they would often disappear without telling anyone locally. It was always easy to establish a group, club or association (O'Reilly 2000a) but just as easy to close it down. Every time I returned to Spain during the years of 1999 and 2007, some societies, bars and businesses had closed and other new ones opened. These British migrants in Spain often expressed a wish to never return home but they knew there was a good chance they would, as revealed in the dreams, aspirations and choices of their children as they left school and entered higher education, usually either back in the United Kingdom or somewhere else in the world (see O'Reilly 2012c). Not only did these migrants describe their lives in terms of escape, or getting out, they lived and performed escape on a daily basis. They tended to focus on leisure rather than work, to work informally or casually, and to deny routine pressures and strains. They spent a lot of time with holiday-makers and thus avoided serious conversations and were reluctant to have their lives structured or controlled, often avoiding registering with the town hall or paying taxes (O'Reilly 2009b). They also spent considerable energy on transnational communications, keeping in touch with home and bringing friends, goods, ideas, and capital across the borders and back.

Returning to Spain in 2015, after 'the crisis', I expected to see the effects of a massive return migration. There had been very little obvious social, economic or political integration; community-formation appeared to be fluid; and many British people were living on the margins of societies with insecure employment or income, poor financial security, low Spanish-language abilities and little political or civic engagement (O'Reilly 2007). This seemed a fairly transient, liquid and transnational form of life. However, as I will now go on to describe, what I found instead was a mixed story of return and desertion, on the one hand, and also notable sediments, on the other hand. Sediments can take material, embodied and social forms, and all shape future actions. Environmental and infrastructural changes have affected large swathes of land leading to a combination of desertion and development, other changes have shaped local communities and environments with abandoned properties and the departure of large numbers of migrants, but there is also evidence of long-term settlement, new institutions, long-established networks and associations. These newly established routines, habits, and institutions are the result of daily ongoing attempts to create a sense of belonging that combines both ethnic intimacy with living in the here and now, in the new destination (Fortier 2006). They are witnessed as a result of close examination of practices of agents rather than emphasising the overall, apparently liquid, form of the phenomenon.

Environmental and Infrastructural damage and traces

There is no doubt that the rise and (current) downturn of residential tourism has had profound visible effects on both the natural and the built environment. Residential tourism has seen massive swathes of the landscape urbanised and vast areas of agriculture abandoned in the process (Mantecón 2008); the financial crisis has simply meant many of these residential developments are now neglected, incomplete, or uninhabited (at least for part of the year). Polaris World¹⁰ is one example of the rapid development and sudden abandonment that characterises this phenomenon. Famous for residential tourism development in Spain, Polaris World received extensive and expensive promotion on Spanish television and on the Internet. This company had plans to develop seven golf courses with residential complexes in the Murcia region, but they got as far as buying the land, building some complexes, half building others, not even starting on yet others, and not managing to sell all the homes on many of them. After the crisis, the financial probity of the company was called into question, leading to a story of massive debts, bailouts by banks, the selling of property to Spanish banks, and massively discounted property for sale (Brignall 2012). As a result, there are now people living in isolated gated communities miles from fully inhabited towns and villages, whose homes are not worth anything close to what they paid for them. There are deserted half-built complexes, blots on the landscape occupying land that will not return to agriculture for many decades, if ever.

This is just one example of the environmental and infrastructural change wrought by residential tourism (and here, of course, we are not only talking about British migration). However, as well as abandonment and isolation, residential tourism development has also led to small towns thriving mainly on tourism and residential tourism development (towns such as Los Boliches, in the province of Malaga, and Torrevieja in Alicante), to lively and bustling places where people of diverse nationalities have settled and shaped local institutions (such as Mijas in the Costa del Sol), to new railway lines, new bus routes, international schools and to permanently altered landscapes. Some argue residential tourism has thus revitalised communities and areas that would otherwise be forgotten or left behind as Spanish people so often relocated to the cities for work. Whatever our perspective or experience, there is no doubt that residential tourism has left infrastructural sediments.

Local effects

Many of the changes wrought by residential tourism development and the long-term migration (and return) of British¹¹ to Spain are difficult to measure statistically but are visible or felt, just as this phenomenon at its pinnacle was an experience as much as a fact. Without being able to give reliable statistics (Benson & O'Reilly 2016) nor indeed to show a film, as I would prefer, here I will use retrospective field notes to verbally 'walk' the reader around the streets to examine the local effects in one geographical area that has been profoundly marked by residential tourism: the towns of Fuengirola and Los Boliches in Malaga Province.

It is a lovely spring day in April 2015. The sun is shining and the sea is bright blue. My partner and I start at the paseo, the waterfront, in Fuengirola. Here there are many gleaming new apartment blocks, and just a few run-down ones; pavements have been widened to include a new cycle track; bars and

restaurants are buzzing with happy customers. It seems this place is booming, rather than suffering the effects of a financial crisis. Amongst all this noise one can hear many Spanish voices, and a few other nationalities. As we walk past a bar with bright yellow awnings, we slow down a bit on hearing English voices. We haven't heard English spoken here as much as we would have done a few years ago; instead, predominant amongst the foreigners here is some version of Scandinavian. It seems many British have gone home, or perhaps fewer are coming out as tourists (one difficulty of measuring British migration to Spain has always been the challenge of disentangling the tourists and the migrants).

The British sitting outside this particular bar would seem to be migrants: they clearly know the bar staff, and each other, and their deep tans indicate they have spent a considerable amount of time in the sun. We sit down and chat with some of them. They are all in the later stages of their lives, probably retirement age at least. We chat about the fact that many younger British have returned to the UK after the crisis, because of failed businesses, or they were not making enough money as self-employed workers. They tell us how they still don't speak as much Spanish as they would like but have learned how to get along; they understand the health service and how it works, how to get help when they need it; they have made friends here, have got a Spanish hairdresser who understands how they like to have their hair cut, or a good podiatrist who understands their feet. They have their routines: a walk along the paseo in the morning, a coffee on the way, knitting group on Wednesdays, the Royal British Legion meeting on Thursdays, a trip to the health centre on Fridays for an injection, and menu del dia on the way home. They tell us they can't imagine going back to the UK now; it would be too much of a wrench. These are all practices of belonging that are sedimented in their daily lives.

Continuing our walk, we turn up a side street that leads away from the beach towards the town. We pass an estate agency advertising over 30 bars for sale, all in English, and they seem to be a very reasonable price. A notice in the next window reads: '100s of Low Cost bars, Restaurants and Businesses for Sale'. It is clear that the boom in foreign-owned bars is over, but some are still tempted to come here and give a new lifestyle a go, as they did so often in the 1990s and early 2000s. Walking a little further, into the town of Los Boliches, we pass another estate agency selling apartments. There are hundreds of these for sale too, but the prices are not as low as we had expected them to be. People are very reluctant to drastically reduce prices, no matter how bad the market is. In many cases they have mortgages and loans to pay off from the proceeds of the sale.

Opposite is a very run down building with flaking paint, and a chipped sign written in English, advertising a music night and cheap drinks. It is clearly closed-down, abandoned. In the next street is another closed-down English bar, and in the next street yet another. Many British owned bars and cafés have closed and the owners returned home. Many had risked their life savings on this new venture, had invested far more than the business ended up being worth, failed to keep things going once fewer tourists and seasonal migrants chose to stop coming (or ate and drunk out less often). But a few do remain, and these have a long-standing reputation, a solid customer base, have reached out to

the Spanish and to customers of other nationalities, and/or had a solid financial footing.

This is not entirely a story of abandonment and loss. We notice that there are restaurants and shops advertising in English that are clearly run by Spanish people, or other nationalities. It seems one thing that has changed is that British visitors and migrants no longer need to restrict their custom to British-owned businesses. English has become a second language on the Costa del Sol. Here is a Spanish bar selling a full English breakfast! There is a Spanish newsagent selling British and German newspapers and greetings cards in English. As we wander we get talking to a German man who runs the most successful fish and chip restaurant in the area (as he describes it). He speaks excellent English, and is also fluent in Spanish, and most of his customers are Spanish. Walking a little further on we pass another news agency. Here, all of the newspapers and cards on stands outside are written in English. The greetings cards are clearly humorous ones, designed for older people. ("Who has wrinkles? Not me, just a few ravishing laughter lines"). While we stand reading them three different people arrive, greet the newsagent, have a bit of a chat (in English), collect pre-ordered books or newspapers and leave. They are all older people and they all clearly live (at least some of the year) in Spain. The news agency has been here over 30 years, the owner tells us. Does he speak Spanish? I ask. 'No. No need', he replies. (Field notes, April 2015)

Whilst there is plenty of evidence of a return migration, then, with bars and properties empty or for sale, and fewer tourists and English-speaking visitors of all types, nevertheless, there are some people, some businesses, and some habits and cultural practices that have taken more of a hold, become sedimented, and give evidence of longer-term settlement – practices, communities and institutions of solid rather than liquid form.

Individual routines, practices and sedimentation

I will now examine these impressionistic effects in more detail. The effects of the financial crisis, for North European migrants in Spain, have been especially severe for British migrants, the largest migrant group. Britain is not part of the Euro zone and one outcome of the global economic crisis was a drastic fall in the value of the Pound Sterling against the Euro, especially during 2008–2010. The majority of British pensioners in Spain were living then on a combination of UK-based state or private pensions, and income from savings. Both of these are often saved as Pound Sterling capital or shares and transferred to Euros as required (O'Reilly 2000a). Older British migrants, therefore, found their expendable wealth drastically reduced when the exchange rate became unfavourable. The decreasing value of the Pound Sterling against the Euro also made travel in Europe less attractive for British tourists, and a decrease in visitors to Spain in turn damaged those British businesses and entrepreneurs who relied on tourist custom. Peripatetic migrants came less often, because of the increased cost of visiting Spain, and this also reduced the customer base for other migrants. Over this same period, the price of housing in Spain fell dramatically, whereas the United Kingdom only suffered a slight decline before remaining stable for a few years and then slowly recovering. This means some migrants are effectively stuck in Spain, not able to sell properties for

enough money to be able to afford to buy in the United Kingdom, or having a mortgage that is higher than the value of the property, whilst also not earning enough from investments, pensions or work to sustain a good lifestyle.

We might have expected that as a result of the financial crisis, the more wealthy migrants would remain in Spain because they would be less severely affected by falling house prices, the falling value of the pound, and the loss of income from tourists and visitors. Here I am thinking of independently wealthy individuals, owners of large companies or even those working in the Spanish economy more directly. We might also have expected that the very poor would stay because they could not afford to sell their property to fund a return home or would have no job or income to return to. I expected to find many others who leave for the reasons above, and there is indeed evidence of this. Numerically, however, net migration seems to have stayed almost stable (Mantecón, Huete & Estévez 2013).

Working-age migrants have been much more likely to return to the United Kingdom as a result of the global crisis. Many had funded their new lifestyles by working in an assortment of entrepreneurial activities such as building work, pool maintenance, gardening, and hairdressing, and relied on tourists, seasonal visitors and peripatetic visitors as customers. These latter were the first to stop visiting Spain after 2008, or to spend less money when they did go, and so the workers lost their customers. The remaining settled resident community has not provided enough business to sustain all this activity. One couple we spoke to, Greg and Tina, for example, had three children, had settled in Spain for more than 10 years and had established a gardening company. But most of their customers were other English people. When those customers started to return home or to visit their second homes less often, Greg's and Tina's business gradually became unsustainable and the whole family returned to the United Kingdom in 2010.

The older old migrants have also returned, as a result of loss of a partner or debilitating illness. But many cannot afford to leave, cannot sell their homes to fund the move or have nowhere or no-one to go to in the United Kingdom, as I learned from personal communications with Charles Betty (real name), who is studying for his PhD on this topic, and with Ana Skou (real name) of the Foreign Residents Department in Mijas. Nevertheless, some older people have stayed because they are secure and settled, they have established routines and familiar communities of practice (Lave & Wenger 1991) and their daily lives and sense of belonging are firmly rooted in Spain (albeit that they spend considerable time maintaining communications with family and friends 'back home'). A couple I have known for many years, Tony and Irene, bought their bar way back in the 1980s. It was one of the most popular in that part of Fuengirola for a long time, selling a broad range of British meals all day and cheap drinks at night. Wishing to retire early enough to enjoy their lives in Spain, they sold the bar at its peak in the 1990s and are now living comfortable lives on their Spanish and UK pensions combined with interest from the profit they made selling their bar, which is held in a Spanish bank account. They are thus economically located in Spain rather than in the United Kingdom or across the border; their lives and daily practices are sedimented not liquid.

Some working-age migrants, similar to the German man we met above, have been very successful and remained beyond the crisis. In many cases, these were more socially and economically integrated into the Spanish community. Peter, for example, is married to a Spanish woman and the café bar they run together has both Spanish and British (and other nationality) customers, both residents and tourists. John and Kevin, to give other examples, have a very

successful business in the United Kingdom and can afford to continue to visit their second home in Spain regularly. The Biscuit bar and café has been successful for so many years it has a long-established clientele of all nationalities and remains lively enough all year round with regular customers to continue to attract seasonal visitors and tourists. Adrian is a plumber with a good reputation and continues to get enough work to enable him to stay. He speaks fluent Spanish and has acquired a network of Spanish friends happy to recommend him to others. Emily, a young British migrant, went to school in Spain and now speaks fluent Spanish and works in the local supermarket, where her ability to help English-speaking customers is most welcome. So, whilst there is abandonment and desertion, there are also sediments in the form of people who are settled and not likely to return home, in the form of sedimented daily routines, with secure businesses, and sedimented into the fabric of daily life in these areas.

Cultural and institutional sediments

We notice even more profound sedimentation when we look beyond the landscape, beyond the practices and routines of individuals, to cultural and institutional change. Partly as a result of residential tourism and migration, English is widely spoken in some areas, which will impact on the lives of locals and new migrants. It is now possible, for example, to buy a 'full English breakfast' in some Spanish bars, and tea bags and other 'British' goods are readily available in many supermarkets. There have been some mixed marriages and some bilingual children. The new mayor in Benalmadena, in the Costa del Sol, is apparently more accommodating to the British than the previous incumbent, as is the new mayor in Fuengirola. 'They welcome British again now', Charles Betty, who we met above, told us.

Charles Betty bought a holiday home in Spain in 1980; in 1985, he retired to live there for most of the year but retained a home near Oxford to return to in the summer months, when it was too hot in Spain. He finally sold that in 1987 and settled in Spain permanently. When we met Charles in a café in April, he was writing his PhD on 'Returning from Spain: The experiences of older British retirees'. We chatted for more than three hours, interspersed with comfortable chats in Spanish with the waiter. Charles Betty was the co-founder of Age Care Association (real name), which gives advice and help to older British migrants in the Province of Malaga, and he has set up a language exchange scheme (*intercambio*) that has spread along the coast. He has not only found a meaningful sense of belonging for himself but is also helping others to settle. There are many other stories of small practices of exchange, communication, sharing, or simply living along with that have sedimented rather than liquid form. Furthermore, it seems that the North European migrants have even started to get involved in local politics:

Over the past few years there has been an increase in the number of towns located in the tourists regions of southern Spain where the main political parties have included European citizens in their organization. ...In San Fulgencio, for instance, they managed to win 7 out of 14 council seats (three went to British nationals) in the local elections held in 2007. With these new political associations, northern European citizens are trying to leave behind their image among the Spanish of mere consumers, heterogeneous and confused, of a tourist space. (Huete & Mantecón 2012: 164)

At an institutional level, there is a National Association of British Schools in Spain, numerous, long-established, English-language newspapers, and television and radio programmes: the *Sur in English* and the *Costa del Sol News*, to give just two examples. The Cudeca (Cuidadanos de Cancer) Foundation, Cancer Care Hospice and volunteer organisation, was started in 1992 by a British woman, Joan Hunt, with the support and encouragement of two Spanish doctors and a lawyer (Cudeca and Joan Hunt are real names). Now in its twentieth year, Cudeca has treated and supported thousands of patients of all nationalities. Finally, the animal charity, PAWS (real name, not an acronym) was established in Spain by British residents and was formally registered as a Spanish charity in 1996. These are just some examples of traces or sediments the British migration has settled into. We could question the (post) colonial traces evident in the sorts of institutions that are established (Fechter and Walsh 2010), but I do not have the space to cover that here.¹² In this article, I am simply drawing attention to outcomes of migration that seemed so transient and that Spanish policy-makers, developers and state agencies did not even view as migration in their conceptualisation of residential tourism. These are apparently small but important traces, sediments and cultural shifts that shape British migration in a solid rather than liquid form. Furthermore, as Ewa Morawska has shown (2009) in her work on American immigration such changes are transformative, forging emergent external structures that will shape the future for new migrants, offering existing networks to join, differing attitudes, and new possibilities for belonging.

It is what people actually do in (cultural) practice that shapes futures. Some British migrants practice escape and live fluid lives. But most also, in their search for homeliness, practice routines that embody their desire for both ethnic belonging and a Spanish style of life. They are in Spain because they love what they see as the Spanish way of life: a slower pace, warm and friendly people, a welcoming approach to children and the elderly, and Mediterranean food and culture (O'Reilly 2000a). Collective affective belonging is thus sought in diverse ways. Where migration has left little space for belonging within the majority community, migrants both seek and perform it elsewhere. As Anne-Marie Fortier (2006) says, it has long been recognised that community organisations have a role to play in constructing imagined community for migrants, but organisations (such as PAWS, Cudeca, and the intercambios discussed above) not only *reflect* but also *create* a space for the performance and creation of ethnic identity. Individuals attend such events and gatherings as a way of creating ethnic intimacy. Ethnic intimacy is the feelings of ethnic belonging that people seek out in places such as migrant associations. Not to be conflated with nationalism or patriotism or even ethnic identity, ethnic intimacy is where one's ethnicity is intimated, where common ground is shared but not in a fixed, predetermined or exclusive way. Community leaders thus actively create and recreate community 'enabling newcomers to remain "ethnic" in the integration process' (Fortier 2006: 66). The migrants themselves seek out this form of community as ethnic intimacy, in order to spend time with people like 'us', to share reminders of an imagined (past) home, as a way of building home here, in the present, and also somewhere from which to step out, seeking familiarity amidst strangeness, in order to deal with the strangeness not to ignore or avoid it. An integration of sorts is thus found amongst the routines, practices, coping mechanisms, sediments, traces and institutions I have described here. But it is a living comfortably alongside, a living within not against, that we see rather than an exclusive nationalism.

Conclusion

This paper has argued that even the most apparently fluid of communities and lifestyles leave sediments and traces that (1) are material, embodied and/or social structures; (2) involve locality as well as transnationalism; and (3) may, as emergent social structures or as patterns, imaginaries and habitus (see O'Reilly 2012a), shape the future for prospective migrants and those who already live there. The past 20–30 years in Spain's coastal zones have been a crucial time-period during which residential tourism took a hold, blossomed, and suffered a radical decline (if not fatality). The period has coincided with a massive immigration of British and other North-Europeans, many of retirement age, and also of working age people, families and children. This paper has looked at the longer-term outcomes for British migration. At one point, during the 1990s, it was estimated that there were more than a million British property owners in Spain and that those who had settled there permanently formed Spain's largest migrant minority. Since the financial crisis, numbers have declined drastically. But this does not mean that the phenomenon was strictly time delimited. British migration to Spain has left traces and sediments. Residential tourism itself has led to environmental damage and destruction and also to the development of new towns, new travel routes, and other infrastructural changes which now shape the lives of those who remain. Locally, we witness a mixture of abandoned properties and businesses and also people who have remained and routines, practices and institutions that have become established. Most British in Spain did not manage to integrate well, and formed liquid or transient communities that were dissolved on returning home. Nevertheless, some older people have settled into routines and practices that firmly embed them into their Spanish way of life and they cannot imagine returning to the United Kingdom. Some younger people have integrated so well that their networks of friends and business associates cross national and ethnic boundaries. Organisations that represent, perpetuate, or are a direct result of the British presence have been formed. There is other evidence of long-term effects: more involvement of North Europeans in local politics, more widespread use of English in coastal areas of Spain, little stories of successful mixing, and small glimpses of cultural shifts in the shape of attitudes, expectations, and relationships.

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Notes

- O'Reilly (2012a) draws from a diverse range of practice theorists, including Giddens (1984), Bourdieu (1990), and Stones (2005), to propose a new meta-theoretical framework for the study
- I would like to acknowledge the help of the Economic and Social Research Council grant R000223944 and the many respondents who gave us their time, without which the research reported here would have been impossible. Names of the participants and businesses have been changed to protect anonymity except where indicated.
- Where funding was available, interview transcripts have been archived with the UK Data Archive. Persistent identifier: 10.5255/UKDA-SN-5271-1
- Note that the term '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, amongst others. See, for example, McWatters (2008).
- See Huete, Mantecón and Mazón (2008) for a lengthy and critical discussion about residential tourism as a concept and a phenomenon.
- Residential tourism does not only apply to *international* second-home owners, but it has attracted many North Europeans (see the editorial), especially British migrants (Huete, Mantecón & Estévez 2013).
- I should note here that, as yet, we can have no idea what the impact of Britain voting to leave the European Union will be for British migration in Spain. However, that will not change the argument of this paper, that migrations leave unexpected traces and sediments.
- For a more in-depth analysis of the numbers and patterns over time, see Huete, Mantecón and Estévez (2013) and Mantecón, Huete and Estévez (2013).
- Note that there were many other North European nationalities settling in Spain around this time, and many of these are now being featured in academic papers and books. See, for example, Rodríguez, Casado Díaz and Huber (2005). These other nationalities were always less visible in the Costa del Sol but, nevertheless, there is an area of Fuengirola locally known as the Finnish zone, a famous Swedish school in Fuengirola, and well-known German newspapers, to cite a few examples.
- Polaris World is a holiday resort company that designs resorts based around a golf course designed by Jack Nicklaus (Brignall 2012)
- Note again that the emphasis in this paper is on British in Spain, but this is not to deny the existence and relevance of other nationalities in the phenomenon of residential tourism.
- It has been argued that British abroad are affected by their colonial past through colonial continuities or traces that affect their behaviour in subtle ways. Even places that were not directly colonised are affected by the 'shared Western tradition of viewing the Other with a sense of superiority [that] seems to transcend the particular national heritages and specific colonial cultures' (Fechter and Walsh 2010: 1200).

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