Journal of Rural Studies 78 (2020) 438–446

Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Journal of Rural Studies

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/jrurstud

Geographies of wellbeing and place attachment: Revisiting urban–rural migrants

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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:
Urban–rural migrants
Well-being
Place attachment
Life course
Lifestyle
Post-migration lives

ABSTRACT

There is a notable lack of attention to the post-migration everyday lives of rural idyll seekers. Do they find the good life in the countryside? The overall purpose of the article is to contribute to filling this research gap. It reports a follow-up study in which urban–rural migrants within Norway who were first interviewed in 1998 were interviewed again in the period 2015–2016. It is argued that migration should be perceived as an ongoing process without an end point, as it is related to negotiations on life course events and lifestyle aspirations, among other things. The main aim is to elaborate on how urban–rural migrants' well-being and place attachment are connected to whether they stay in or leave the countryside. Through presentations of couples' histories, the article focuses on *what* people are attached to and the associated consequences for their well-being. The stories illustrate the significance of social relations, materialities, the past and memories, and emotions and affects. The author concludes that scholarship of rural studies and studies of internal migration would benefit from wellbeing and place attachment research in order for careful consideration to be given to the role of an emplaced wellbeing and its linkages with place attachment for migration when thinking about how 'the rural' and 'the good life' intersect.

1. Introduction

In the wake of the cultural turn, a plethora of works underscored the significance of representations of the rural as idyllic for urban–rural migration (Amcoff et al., 1995; Berg and Forsberg, 2003; Cloke et al., 1998; Halfacree, 1994; Halfacree and Boyle, 1998; Jones, 1995; Pratt, 1996; Valentine, 1997; van Damm et al., 2002). However, there has been a notable lack of attention to the post-migration everyday lives of the rural idyll seekers (Benson and O'Reilly, 2009a; Halfacree and Rivera, 2012), especially many years after their move. Did they stay or did they leave? Did they find the good life in the countryside? This article contributes to filling this research gap.

In the late 1990s, I conducted a project in which I aimed first to analyse why families had chosen to move from urban areas of Norway to two rural places in the Trøndelag region in Central Norway and, second, since I had decided not to include return migrants or persons who were born and bred in the countryside, how they experienced their *new* rural lives. Thus, I did not focus on the relocation stage of migration alone, in contrast to many urban–rural migration studies (Halfacree and Rivera, 2012), but the majority of my research subjects had lived a relatively short time in the countryside when the interviews were held in 1998. In a follow-up project (2015–19), I was interested in finding out where the same households live 17–18 years later and why they have stayed or not stayed. In both projects, I conducted life history interviews focused on *migration histories* with the adults in the households (see Section 2). The majority of the interviewees had an education level and occupational experience that would enable them to secure jobs in either rural or urban areas (e.g. teacher, carpenter, hairdresser, nurse, and engineer), and in 1998 they stressed that they had not chosen a particular place; rather they had chosen to live in the countryside. Usually, both partners in a household had applied for jobs in many rural places and the place where they ended up was where both secured a job in which they could make use of their education. There were multiple reasons implicated in each couple's move, but all interviewees described their migration as anchored in a version of the rural as idyllic, and at least of rurality as conducive to a good life (Berg, 2002). These 'pro-rural migrants' (Halfacree and Rivera, 2012) presented their moves as a result of a desire to change their lifestyle. Benson and O'Reilly (2009b), p. 2) define lifestyle migration as 'the spatial mobility of relatively affluent individuals of all ages … moving to places that are meaningful because, for various reasons, they offer a potential for a better quality of life'. Rather than 'relatively affluent' in a Norwegian perspective, my interview

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https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrurstud.2020.06.041
Received 19 September 2019; Received in revised form 13 December 2019; Accepted 30 June 2020
Available online 21 July 2020

subjects in 1998 had relatively big study loans and the cheap and spacious housing in rural areas was often a consideration in their reasons for moving. In sum, they had moved to a place they thought would offer a better quality of life, not least a safer place than the city for their children to grow up (Valentine, 1997) because it was located in the countryside and thus would offer a rural lifestyle.

In 1998, a few of the interviewees reported a mismatch between their anticipatory idyllic image of the rural and their subsequent experiences, but the majority were satisfied with their new rural life, not necessarily because the countryside lived up to their expectations and their life had become exactly as they imagined it would be, but rather because it was just better than in the urban places they had left. As Benson and O'Reilly (2009a) hold, the search for a better life is necessarily a comparative project and by presenting one's migration within a comparable frame – which in the interviews in 1998 was 'the urban' and 'the rural' –, people provide an easily understandable (post hoc) justification and rationalization for it. Also in research, migration is traditionally presented as narrowly instrumental, as being about 'getting things', finding a job, having proximity to relatives, experiencing the rural idyll, and so forth (Barcus and Halfacree, 2018) and a 'sedentarist' understanding of migration dominates (Halfacree, 2012; Halfacree and Rivera, 2012). Instead, it seems more fruitful to see migration as an ongoing *process* without an end point, as it is related to negotiations on, among other things, life course events (e.g. family formation, 'empty nest' syndrome, retirement, and health), and lifestyle aspirations (e.g. rural and urban living) (Barcus and Halfacree, 2018; Smith et al., 2015). Consequently, I argue that migration is a process that, probably more than any other process, highlights people's relationships with places and their geographies of wellbeing.

Ultimately, the most immediate surroundings have the greatest bearing on our well-being and it is a challenge to rethink the issue of wellbeing by contextualizing it into both personal and population-based experiences of place (Kearns and Andrews, 2010). This article is a contribution in this respect, as it seeks to understand how thinking about wellbeing in rural places is connected to migration. It is also a response to Scott et al.'s invitation to think about how 'the rural' and 'the Good Life' intersect (Scott et al., 2018), since rural studies to date have engaged relatively little with ideas of the good life. My second set of interviews reveal that everyday post-migration life is lived in and through a place, and that whether people are attached to 'their' place is of central importance for whether they want to stay or leave. Thus, together with wellbeing, place attachment is a central concept in my analysis.

In sum, the main aim of this article is to elaborate on how urban-rural migrants' wellbeing and place attachment is connected to whether they stay in or leave the countryside. The article is structured as follows. First, I describe the methodological approach (Section 2), then I develop a theoretical frame in which wellbeing and place attachment are key concepts and the importance of sensitivity both to the complex taking place of wellbeing (Smith and Reid, 2018) and the dynamic and processual aspects of place attachment (Manzo and Devine-Wright, 2014) is underscored (Section 3). Having established this context, I analyse the post-migration lives of four couples. Two couples have left the countryside and two have stayed. One of the two couples who lived in the same rural place in 2016 as in 1998 had lived in another place for three years (Section 4). Finally, I discuss what we can learn from the four couples' stories and present my conclusions (Section 5).

2. Life course perspective and life history interviewing

Hopkins and Pain (2007, p. 290) argue that 'rather than following fixed and predictable life stages, we live dynamic and varied life courses'. In line with this understanding, Tyrell and Kraftl (2015) claim that a life course perspective provides a useful framework for understanding migration as long as scholars acknowledge the time-specific nature of the life course, rather than view it as an essentialised series of life-stages that are often biased towards modern, majority-world assumptions. They suggest a broader conceptualization of the life course that incorporates theoretical developments around mobilities, emotion, and understandings of what it means to be a family. Similarly, Barcus and Halfacree (2018) suggest an extended life course perspective that foregrounds the relationality of lives lived across space and thus stresses how individual lives are continuously and inextricably entangled with those of others. 'Intergenerationality' refers to relations and interactions between generations (Hopkins and Pain, 2007) and is especially important when studying family migration. This article is anchored in such an understanding of life course.

Life history interview as a method of data generation follows naturally from the extended life course approach because of what this type of interview can reveal about the past and the role of history, memory and tradition in the social construction of place (Jackson and Russell, 2010). Thus, the method allows me to explore migration as a process that includes pre- and post-migration life, and brings to the fore how wellbeing and place attachment are connected, situated and relational, and therefore in constant production and reproduction. As Jackson and Russell (2010) underscore, one of the strengths of the life history approach is its emphasis on socially situated subjects.

In 1998, I visited families with at least one child living at home and who had moved from urban environments to two rural places in Trøndelag. I conducted life history interviews focused on migration with the adults in 11 households, in total 22 persons. Each interviewee described their own migration history from birth until they became part of a couple, and then the couple jointly told their shared migration history. The youngest of the interviewees was aged 27 years and the eldest 58 years, but the majority were in the range 35–45 years. Thus, in the period 2015–2016, they were between 44 years and 75 years, and the majority were in the range 52–62 years. Age and ageing is the focus of a separate article in progress based on this material. In the present article, age is treated as part of the complexities of post-migration everyday practices and experiences, and is approached through the lenses of well-being and place attachment.

I contacted the interviewees from 1998 by phone to ask if they could possibly meet me for a second interview. Three couples were not available for interviews in the follow-up study; Two couples were divorced and one couple could not be located. Thus, prolonged versions of the remaining eight couples' stories were recorded during the second interviews. Only two of those couples still had at least one child living at home. Five couples lived in the same place as in 1998, while three had moved elsewhere. Although the couples' stories constituted a common story since 1998 in the sense that they had shared the same residence, the ways in which the two partners reflected on their post-migration life since then was not necessarily the same. In both rounds of interviews and in connection with other projects, my experience was that the partners negotiated to produce a single account for me. In common with Valentine (1999), I find that one of the most valuable aspects of a joint interview is that participants frequently challenge or modify each other's account. Interaction between couples gives rise to arguments and new topics (Bjørnholt and Farstad, 2014). In short, I argue that interviewing couples together brings disagreements and nuances to the fore, thus contributing to richer and more detailed stories than one-to-one interviews provide. I realize that there is a possibility that couples tell only the story they agree about and conceal some individual views, but the many spontaneous discussions and disagreements during the two sets of interviews indicate that usually this was not the case. The interviews lasted between two and 3 h and took the form of conversations. I find that the empirical insights gained were rich.

The interviews were taped, transcribed, and coded for analysis and I have translated into English the quotations used in this article as close to verbatim as possible. To retain the integrity of my interviewees' lives, I use relatively lengthy interview extracts, and to secure confidentiality, I anonymize both the interviewees and the two rural places they lived in in 1998. Fictitious names are used for the research subjects in this

article.

3. Well-being and place attachment – theoretical perspectives

3.1. Well-being

Wellbeing was an important concept in the interview subjects' reflections on their new rural lives in 1998 and was one of my descriptive codes when analysing the interview transcripts. However, I did not use wellbeing as an analytical tool, because it is only since the turn of the millennium that wellbeing has come to resonate widely across academic spheres in general (Pain and Smith, 2010; Scott, 2012). In the follow-up project, wellbeing became even more central in the interviewees' stories, mainly due to the focus on everyday life over a longer period and on staying or leaving, and partly due to the effects of ageing.

Atkinson (2013) finds that three features characterize approaches to wellbeing: first, a component approach, in which debate centres on the identification and theorization of the independent elements that comprise wellbeing dominates; second, the approaches share an understanding of wellbeing as a quality that is inherent to the individual, and third, they have a tendency to conflate wellbeing with health (see also Mathews 2012, Pain and Smith, 2010;, Thin 2012). This critique is partly related to the history of well-being that appears to be one of obsession with measuring the seemingly immeasurable (MacKian 2009). In addition, place, space and context have remained largely neglected (Smith and Reid, 2018). Rather, wellbeing needs to be understood as hinging upon some measurable notions of 'welfare' together with some self-ascribed understandings of 'contentment' (McKian 2009) and as a set of effects produced in specific times and places and thus, as situated and relational, and in constant production and reproduction (Atkinson, 2013). Thus, we need to observe how life narratives and aspirations emerge from socio-cultural contexts (Thin 2012) and 'travels' across spatial boundaries (Wright 2012).

Like Pain and Smith (2010), I find that the value of the concept 'wellbeing' is in being integrative and joined up, and thus an appealing umbrella label for a condition that captures the many dimensions that are important for a good life. Wellbeing is relatively understudied in rural studies and migration studies, especially in analyses of post-migration everyday lives. As Atkinson et al. (2016), p. 3) argue, 'Wellbeing, however defined, can have no form, expression or enhancement without consideration of place.' Likewise, Wright (2010, p. 379) underscores that 'Locality is important in shaping migrant experiences differently'. I therefore frame my analysis within the literature on well-being, drawing particularly on contributions in which the role of emplaced, enlivened geographical wellbeing is considered (Andrews et al., 2014; Atkinson and Scott, 2015; Edwards et al., 2016; Kearns and Andrews, 2010; Smith and Reid, 2018, Wright 2010, 2012).

3.2. Place attachment

In trying to understand why urban–rural migrants choose to stay or leave their rural place of residence, some conceptualizations of people-place relationships may immediately come to one's mind, namely 'sense of place', 'place identity', 'place attachment', and 'place belongingness'. I see these concepts as related and to some degree overlapping, but also as increasingly specific in the order mentioned (Berg, 2016). The terms 'attachment' and 'belonging' are often used interchangeably. However, I regard attachment as a somewhat broader concept that covers many different aspects of attachment, whereas belonging is an affective and strongly embodied experience. Thus, in this paper, 'place attachment' is used to include 'belonging' and it overlaps partly with 'place identity', especially when the focus is on people's identity *with* place, rather than the identity *of* places (Relph, 1976), although these are not easily distinguishable (Dale and Berg, 2013). Thus, place attachment, like wellbeing, is an umbrella term and a fruitful analytical tool, as it provides a window onto the relationship between place and wellbeing, and thus on what constitutes a good post-migration life.

It may be argued that in recent decades research has been focused on globalization and mobility (Antonsich, 2010; Antonsich and Holland, 2014; Devine-Wright, 2015; Tomaney, 2013; Wright, 2015), and too little concerned about place and place attachment, since 'for most people the experiences of everyday life are still firmly rooted in place and these are crucially important for informing us of who we are' (Perkins and Thorns, 2012, p. 2). When reviewing recent geographical research and geographically-inspired work in sociology, psychology, anthropology, and linguistics, Tomaney (2015) found that concern with the nature, contradictions, problems, and possibilities of local belonging could be discerned, and that in sum, research on local belonging has shown that it continues to matter to most people, that it can have individual and collective dimensions, and that the notion of binary oppositions of cosmopolitan outlook versus local attachment is unhelpful, since the scales at which we belong may be multiple and changing.

Smith (2018) argues that work by geographers has been largely ignored in place attachment research, since psychology, which has dominated the field, has been too concerned with measuring individuals' degrees of attached feelings and finding correlations or predictive variables. However, as Manzo and Devine-Wright (2014) state, current place attachment research is characterized by plurality and new ways of studying place attachment, and qualitative methods are forging ahead (Hernandez et al., 2014). Smith (2018) maintains that there is a need to put place back into place attachment research in order to understand how people interact with places, and to *what* people are attached. In this article, I seek to contribute to putting place, if not back, then at least more explicitly into place attachment research.

3.3. Wellbeing, place attachment and internal migration

Wright (2010) argues that a focus on the construction of human wellbeing can potentially provide a more holistic approach to debates on international migration, and I argue that the same goes for internal migration. There are, of course, significant differences between international and internal migrants' understandings of what it is to live well in a new place in many respects, notably issues related to ethnicity and language barriers, but the holistic wellbeing approach launched by Wright is applicable also in a study asking whether urban-rural migrants in Norway find the good life in the countryside. She describes a holistic human wellbeing approach as one that is focusing on: how migrants' needs and goals are formed and transformed as part of the international migration process; the obstacles to 'living well' that migrants identify; and suggesting that these barriers are linked as a mismatch between aspirations and achievements.

Human wellbeing is constructed across relational, material and perceptual domains and it is important to study the interactions of these (Wright, 2012). This applies also to place attachment. An interrogation of the literature on place attachment shows that four main dimensions can be distinguished: social relations, materialities, the past and memories, and emotions and affects (Berg, 2016). In short, the aspects of wellbeing and place attachment overlap and I see place attachment as an important sub-dimension of urban-rural migrants' wellbeing. The four dimensions of place attachment are important for where people choose to live their lives, and I argue that life history interviews in which people tell their migration history and talk about the places they have lived and the one(s) in which they live today can provide much information about *what* people are attached to. This method attends to the dynamic and processual aspects of place attachment. In the next section, I present four couple's post-migration stories to illustrate how people interact with places, *what* they are attached to, and the consequences for their well-being.

4. The post-migration lives of four couples

Although the four dimensions of place attachment – social relations,

materialities, the past and memories, and emotions and affects - are interwoven, I show the importance of each of them in turn by presenting a story in which the dimension was central in the decision about whether to remain in or leave their place of residence. Each of them has several sub-dimensions or aspects and not all of them can be discussed here, but in each of the four stories I illustrate the importance of *one* of the four dimensions and highlight a few of the most outstanding aspects of it.

4.1. Catherine and Peter's story – the significance of social relations

The term 'community' has long been synonymous with rural life (Woods, 2011), at least as a central aspect of discourses on country living. Rural community has been, and continues to be, imbued with positive sets of meaning, providing attachment to place and social cohesion (Doheny and Milbourne, 2017). In 1998, when my interview subjects tried to explain why they had moved to a rural setting they confirmed that notions of the rural as idyllic include an understanding of rural society as a close knit, harmonious community in which everyone knows everyone and looks after each other. The more recent interviews revealed how they experienced rural community over a longer period. As Liepins (2000) argues, 'community' is both a discursive and material phenomenon of social connections and diversity, and a given community should be studied as meanings, practices and spaces that will influence and affect different people. This is a fruitful framework with which to interpret one couple's story about how they experienced rural community.

When I interviewed Catherine and Peter in 1998, they were both aged 32 years. They had bought their smallholding three years earlier and were restoring the main building. They had one son, who was 3 years of age, and Catherine was pregnant with her second child, a girl. Both Catherine and Peter grew up in Trondheim. She was a hair dresser and he was a carpenter. The main reason they moved to a place in the countryside was their dream of a smallholding and a wish to live in a small rural community. Especially, they wanted a safe rural place in which to raise their children. In the interview in 2015, they told me that they had restored the entire smallholding, created an attractive garden, established friendships with neighbours and colleagues, and that 'everything was fine. We were really happy until our son started to be bullied'. They explain that the reason why he was bullied was that he had become a very good football player and better than the coach's son who was a member of the same football team and in the same class at school. Meetings were arranged between the two sets of parents and the teacher, but nothing changed. Catherine and Peter then asked for a meeting also with the rector, but Catherine said, 'there was no use in that, since the rector and the coach are relatives and the coach and the teacher are old school mates … and after a while we realized that their story about the situation had become the 'truth' locally. You are simply powerless as in-migrants'. They moved back to Trondheim with heavy hearts in 2009, after 'so much work invested in that smallholding. We loved our home … I cried a river when we left' (Catherine). Catherine and Peter said that they were satisfied with their life in the city in 'a relatively big house with a very small garden' and were happy for the sake of their son, who soon became 'his old self, active and happy with many friends both in class and in the football team'. However, they admitted that they dreamt of a new smallholding and a rural lifestyle in the near future.

In rural studies, a frequently made distinction is between locals and urban incomers (Cloke et al., 1997; Halfacree, 1995; Smith and Krannich, 2000). Gieling et al. (2017) discuss the extent to which different types of village attachment coincide with the frequently made distinction between locals and newcomers. Based on a survey with rural residents in the Netherlands, they suggest the following typology of village attachment: Traditionally Attached, Socially Attached, Rural Idyll Seekers, Slightly Attached, Rest Seekers, Footloose, and Reluctantly Attached. They found that almost half of the rural inhabitants fitted into the categories of Rural Idyll Seekers (25%) or Rest Seekers (24%). Around 25% of the villagers were Socially Attached (9%) or Traditionally Attached (14%), while the remaining inhabitants fell into the classes of 'Slightly Attached (17%), Footloose (9%) or Reluctantly Attached (2%). Gieling et al. (2017) concluded that all types of village attachment were found among newcomers and they argue that this shows that conventional categorizations of 'locals' and 'newcomers' are no longer sufficient to describe contemporary rural population dynamics, as the origin and length of residence are not conclusive when predicting levels of village attachment. I will return to the significance of length of residence when discussing the importance of the past and memories for place attachment (in Section 4.3). If Catherine and Peter had participated in Gieling et al.'s survey in 1998 they would have fallen into the category Rural Idyll Seekers, a category that in Gieling et al.'s study mainly comprised in-migrants, but also many locals. They would not have fallen into the category Rest Seekers, a category with villagers for whom the majority of their contacts live elsewhere. Rather, they were also Socially Attached villagers, as they had developed a tight local social network of both incomers and locals that was very important to them and they stressed that they felt welcome and included in the local community.

The persons who made Catherine and Peter decide to move were villagers in the categories Traditionally Attached and Socially Attached. Gieling et al. (2017) explain that both categories are characterized by the fact that the majority of the inhabitants are village-born residents for whom the majority of their contacts are people who live in the same village. What Catherine and Peter's story illustrates and what in-depth interviews, rather than surveys, are able to reveal is that the same type of attachment (here, social attachment) can have different meanings among incomers and locals when a conflict situation arises. In an everyday context without any serious conflicts that reduce people's sense of well-being, the distinction between incomers and locals may be invisible and not felt by any group. Catherine and Peter had adhered to a 'move in and join in' philosophy (Cloke et al., 1998) and they had experienced gaining acceptance as locals, but that achievement finally turned out to be relatively 'superficial'. Catherine and Peter experienced that their status as incomers was in some way activated in the conflict situation. The rector, who was Traditionally Attached, and the coach and the teacher, who were Socially Attached, mobilized their partly overlapping networks of mainly locals in drawing a picture of Catherine and Peter as 'the strange, difficult city people'. The family was 'othered' and deemed not to belong, and consequently felt increasingly 'out of place' (Cresswell, 1996) and unhappy. Their story shows, as underscored above (3.1), that well-being should be perceived as a set of effects produced in times and places (Atkinson, 2013).

What options did Catherine and Peter have? Since they considered the situation as locked and felt that their son's well-being, and even his mental health, was at stake, they decided to move. Peter said:

We could not expect the coach and his 'fan club' to move. Even persons in our own local network joined in, since it is strategic to be friends with your children's important adults … I guess we came to a point where we felt that both our son and we had only a few friends left.

The significance of friendship for the emotional well-being of people is widely recognized. Friendships provide a sense of security and belonging and they facilitate social integration (Kearns and Andrews, 2010). Catherine and Peter stated:

The most decisive point to us was what kind of experiences we could make our son carry in his 'luggage'. How would he think of his childhood later in life and how would his life be coloured by his traumatic experiences if we stayed?

For their son, the community had become a 'tyrannical space of bullying' (Andrews and Chen, 2006), not a safe rural place to grow up. One may question the significance of 'rural' in this narrative. Could one experience the same in a neighbourhood in a city? I asked Catherine and Peter the same question and Peter answered, Yes and no … parts of it. Bullying and parents quarrelling, yes, but this conspiring against us, no. The importance of rural for us was that there are so few people living in

this place and many of them are related in so many and so 'existential' ways, they can't gamble with their own position in the local community.

Catherine and Peter experienced that 'locals' have a shared history, which reinforced overlapping social networks and kinship bonds (Woods, 2011). However, the couple stressed that they still had friends in the place and 'still feel attached to the place … let alone how strange that may sound to you'.

In sum, Catherine and Peter's story is about how important social relations are for well-being and place attachment for both children and adults. However, as their story also illustrates, materialities constitute another important dimension and in their case this especially applied to their smallholding. The dimension is further illustrated in the next section, in which another couple's story is presented.

4.2. Anne and Karl's story – the significance of materialities

Non-human entities, living and non-living, have real and significant agency. However, little attention has been paid to how such agency influences people's attachment to places, but as Jones (2008, p. 254) states: 'Human forces do not make places alone, they work on and with, and sometimes against, non-human forces … Keeping this in mind can make a difference to our relationship with places and to how we experience identity and belonging.' Similarly, Panelli (2010) argues that the everyday, the iconic, and the ethical qualities of sociality include a set of more-than-human encounters and that it is important to have better recognition of the interweaving of 'the social' and 'the natural'.

Anne and Karl moved from Trondheim to their sheep farm in 1988, when Karl inherited it from an unmarried, childless uncle. The farm gave them the opportunity to fulfil their wish for 'a life as farmers, a life close to nature, green surroundings, animals, peace, quietness and a less hurried, materialist, resource-intensive lifestyle'. In common with Catherine and Peter, they were rural idyll seekers, but their 'rural idyll lifestyle migration' (Benson and O'Reilly, 2009a; Walford and Stockdale, 2015) was first and foremost motivated by the possibility to become farmers. When I interviewed them in 1998, they had three children aged 5, 12 and 14 years. They were very proud of their farm and liked the rural lifestyle. Anne worked part-time (80%) as a teacher but was heavily involved in the farm work.

When I interviewed Anne and Karl again in the spring of 2016 they were both aged 62 years and were still running the farm. Anne had just retired from her employment as a teacher and both were farmers. On an everyday basis, both living and non-living entities were important to the couple, while with regard to non-living entities, the farm buildings, machines and tools necessary for the farm work were important. For example, they explained that a new machine they had bought a couple of years earlier had made their work less demanding and added to their well-being. Anne said it was 'an investment in future health'. However, Anne and Karl presented the living entities as 'absolutely necessary for us in order to live a good life'. The entities were the animals and plants. The former were their sheep, but also their pets (two cats and a dog) as well as birds, hares, and elk that visited their farm. Their garden was very attractive, with many types of plants, flowers, berry bushes, and vegetables. In addition to the domesticated nature, Anne and Karl's property consisted of forest, in which they picked berries and mushrooms: "We know where our food comes from, most of it at least."

When trying to explain their relationship with their animals, Anne said, 'We see our animals as family … each sheep is an individual … we do not murder our human family members, but … [w]e want our animals to have a good life while they are here.' Karl followed up Anne's statements by giving a long 'speech' about animal welfare. Wilkie (2005) argues that it is important to study how people make sense of their interactions with animals in practice and holds that although the relationships between producers and their animals are valued particularly in the commercial sector for their financial returns, it is important to show that there are other sources of values and attitudes: 'it [financial return] co-exists, at times uneasily, with a less obvious, but nonetheless important socio-affective component' (Wilkie, 2005, p. 214). On basis of her study of human–livestock relations in northeast Scotland, Wilkie distinguishes between two types of attachment and two types of detachment. Anne and Karl express what Wilkie (2005) terms 'concerned attachment' towards the animals. This is a humanized and individualized style of human–animal interaction, which is typical in hobby farming but also associated with commercial breeding. The animals are decommodified and recommodified. In the 'attached attachment' style of interaction animals are decommodified but not recommodified and this is most likely to occur in hobby farming. The two attitudes characterized by detachment – 'concerned detachment' and 'detached detachment' – involve seeing the animals as deindividualized and are typical of or associated most with commercial settings. Concerned detachment implies seeing the animal as a sentient commodity, whereas detached detachment sees it purely as a commodity. Anne and Karl's concerned attachment meant that it was difficult for them to send their animals for slaughter, to recommodify them. They said that they were fond of all of their sheep but that there are always some sheep they really fall 'in love with' and that it was especially difficult to send them away to be slaughtered. This finding is also in line with Wilkie's observation that there are always animals that depart or stand out from the routine process of production and will become more than 'just an animal' (Wilkie, 2005).

In Anne and Karl's narrative, their life in accordance with 'nature' made their place special to them and made them feel strongly attached to it. They described a sense of being part of something much bigger than themselves and 'this something' was incorporated into daily life. Anne, Karl, the animals, and plants co-existed and their story shows that we should recognize the agency of all things in terms of their ability to influence us.

Anne and Karl told me that they were:

always at home. No long weekends in Paris or Barcelona for us … We usually have two weeks holiday during the summer in which we often go to Northern Norway. The sheep are then grazing up in the mountains and one of our adult children comes to take care of the rest here. We are very tied to the farm, of course, but we would not exchange our life with anyone's. We love the farm and the farm life. It's a simple and good life. We will grow old here.

Their youngest child, aged 23 years in 2016, had just before the interview told them that he and his girlfriend had discussed taking over the farm. This was very good news for Anne and Karl, since the two eldest children were not willing to take on responsibility for the farm. Anne and Karl's plan was to withdraw gradually and build a new, small house in the farmyard for themselves. Downey et al. (2017), who explore how diverse and complex relationships between place and identity processes are navigated by older farming couples as they consider retirement together, stress family farming's unique relationship with place. It includes the perpetuation of generational ownership as well as the farm as both a family home and a site of production. Anne and Karl explained that they had been concerned that retirement for them would mean not only the loss of a workplace but also the loss of their home. It became evident that they differed slightly in their emphasis, as the farm had been Karl's only workplace since their move from Trondheim and his identity as farmer was important to him, while Anne talked more about the farm as her home. Her workplace had mainly been the local school.

In sum, Anne and Karl's story illustrates that belonging is materially performed by messy, complex, human, and more-than-human assemblages of things, people, beings, processes, and affects (Wright, 2015), and that well-being comprises complex intersections of people, places and 'nature-culture' relations (Haybron 2011; Panelli; Tipa, 2009). Anne stressed that she was very attached to her home and talked about 'walls full of memories … traces of our children … so many happy years'. In the next section, I show the significance of the past and memories for well-being and place attachment through a third couple's story.

4.3. Elsa and Tom's story – the significance of the past and memories

According to Jones and Garde-Hansen (2012, p. 4), memories of who we are now, who we were, who we wanted to become, are wrapped up in memories of where we are, where we were, and where we will be (would like to be). This makes the connections between geography and memory inseparable but also dynamic and very slippery.

As I see it, this is an argument for a life course approach in migration research. Whether and how one becomes attached to one's place of residence is dependent on where one has been and where one wants to be, and that in turn is closely related to one's life course. This is well illustrated by Elsa and Tom's story. Elsa was aged 67 years and Tom 75 years when I interviewed them in the autumn of 2015. They had left their rural home in 2012 due to health problems: Tom had become ill with Parkinson's disease and Elsa had 'a bad hip'. As a consequence, they could no longer maintain a big house and garden. They wanted to buy an apartment and chose to move to Trondheim because they came from the city and their two daughters and their families lived there. However, their story is far from a sad story about ageing and health problems. Here, their story is told mainly because it highlights the significance of the past and of memories.

Elsa told me that it was horrible to think about leaving their home 'with all the memories in its walls'. She stressed that it was a long process from realizing that they had to move until they finally looked forward to it:

Today, I know that memories are in our heads and in the photo albums. We enjoy living in the city now. Trondheim is, after all, our birthplace. We manage most things on our own. It doesn't feel good to ask others for help all the time. We keep in touch with people in the village. They visit us and we visit them. We use Facebook and Instagram, and we subscribe to the local newspaper. Actually, we have never cut our bonds with the village. It means a lot to us and, in a way, we live partly there. There are advantages with the countryside and advantages with the city. We probably have the faculties to thrive in both contexts and to focus on the positive aspects of the place we live. Now, we appreciate that Tom does not feel as disabled as before, that we still can live together in our own place. All in good time!

Elsa and Tom's story highlights that for some people long-term engagement with a place is maintained regardless of continuous residence in that place. Barcus and Brunn (2010, p. 281) suggest the term 'place elasticity' for this form of attachment: 'the elasticity of place allows individuals to maximize economic and social opportunities distant from that place to which one is attached while at the same time perpetuating engagement with that place.' They find that place elasticity has three characteristics: strong place bonds, permanence, and portability. According to Barcus and Brunn (2010, p. 285), 'Place bonds can take many forms, including connections to land and landscapes, or family and friend networks that are tied to a particular place'. All of the aforementioned forms were present in Elsa and Tom's case. With regard to permanence, the place must be firmly rooted in the psyche of an individual. It can be imagined, as in a set of memories anchored in a place, which continually draw one's imagination back to a geographical location.' For Elsa and Tom, it was their neighbours and friends in the village, as well as their memories that secured the permanence. Portability reflects a continuing dialogue with a place through time but does not require an individual to return physically to the place; rather, it is the desire to perpetuate an association with a place: 'This could take the form of maintaining friend networks, engaging with local events vicariously through email, internet and local newspapers' (Barcus and Brunn, 2010, p. 285). All of the aforementioned forms were practised by Elsa and Tom. Because of place elasticity, people may develop and sustain attachment to several different places, both past and present places of residence. In other words, they have multiple simultaneous place attachments (Gustafson, 2014).

Elsa and Tom lived in Trondheim until they were aged 25 years and 33 years, respectively, and had good experiences and memories from their birthplace. They did not leave the city because of ill-being, rather because Elsa wanted to move closer to her older sister and her family. Tom secured his much-wanted job as engineer in the municipal administration, house prices were much lower than in Trondheim, and the couple wanted to move closer to nature in order to pursue activities such as 'mountain hiking and skiing without queuing'. Elsa, who was a nurse, felt certain that she would find a job as soon as they became settled and that proved to be the case. She added that it was 'no minus that it was in a small home for elderly in which you would have relatively few dwellers and a calmer work day than in the city'. In other words, family ties, economy, and recreational and lifestyle opportunities were the couple's main motivations for moving. A rural idyll motive was present, but was relatively downplayed. Elsa and Tom presented their first move as successful and they had many memories of a happy family life in a rural setting where they felt included in the community. Elsa said that she was very happy and thankful for the good memories, which she considered had made her strong and tolerant, and Tom added the following:

If there are relatively few people around you, you must accept them and like them as they are. Living in the same little place, teach inhabitants to look for people's best sides. And, if you have moved once before, and it was a good experience, it is easier to move again, and we both love people, we are open minded, talk to people. During our three recent years in Trondheim we have made friends with neighbours in the block of flats and we do things with our daughters' parents-in-law.

Jones states that 'At its most basic, memory is a process of encoding and storing records of experience which can be retrieved, or which re-emerge, in subsequent practice' (2011, p. 876). This is confirmed by Elsa and Tom's story. Elsa's description of memories as something in our heads points to the embodiment of memories. She expressed that an individual's former places of residence remain in their body as memories (Røe and Sæter, 2015; Vestby, 2015). When talking about their photo albums, Elsa affirmed that memory is also emergent, constitutive and multidirectional, as well as autobiographical yet simultaneously negotiable, partial and intersubjective (Roberts, 2012). The photo albums were among Elsa and Tom's dearest belongings and were used in different ways and for different purposes. They looked at them either alone or together. On the latter occasions, discussions sometimes took place when situations were remembered differently. On other occasions, such as in the interview with me, something that Elsa and Tom might have remembered differently was clarified by looking in a photo album. When their daughters visited them, they often picked up the albums and showed their children the photos and told them stories about their childhood home and place of residence. As Roberts (2012, p. 97) expresses, The significance of places, and how photography takes part in family performances of place, illustrates that photographs – a form of prosthetic memory – operate the juncture between personal and collective memory in the way they are remembered, storied and inherited in families. How we view photographs is inextricably linked to our personal memories and our shared narratives.

In sum, Elsa and Tom's story illustrates that 'Memory is also always bound up with place, space, the body, practice and materiality. It is of geography and geography of it' (Jones and Garde-Hansen, 2012, p. 10). Their story also shows that 'good memories are not heavy'. Although not all memories are good, they are always bound up with emotions. The next story is about the significance of emotions for well-being and place attachment.

4.4. Mona and Henry's story – the significance of emotions and affects

Belonging is a concept that pervades everyday talk and is of fundamental importance to people's lives (Wright, 2015). Research rarely engages with belonging as an emotional affiliation; rather, belonging tends to have an assumed or taken-for-granted emotional nature that is seldom explored (Antonsich, 2010; Wood and Waite, 2011; Wright, 2015). Wood and Waite (2011) ask whether this may be symptomatic of

the nature of belonging – that it is tacitly experienced and we often know more about what it feels like to belong than we are able to articulate. Henry and Mona's story is about the emotional dimensions of belonging – how it feels not to belong and how it feels to belong – but they found this difficult to articulate.

Mona and Henry, who both came from Oslo, met each other in Trondheim where they were studying in the early 1990s. Mona was studying at the Norwegian Technological College (NTH) to become a civil engineer and Henry was studying at Trondheim Teacher School to become a primary school teacher. When I interviewed them in their new rural home in 1998, Mona was aged 27 years and Henry 29 years. They had one child, a son aged 1 year. They explained that they wanted to live in a small place in a mountain area with a long winter season, as they love to ski. They applied for jobs in two places and moved to the one in which both found work. In 2015, Mona (then 44 years) and Henry (46 years) lived in the same place as in 1998 but had lived in Stavanger for three years between those years. The cornerstone firm where Mona had worked in 1998 later closed down and there were no similar jobs available for her in the area. She was offered a position in the oil sector, which meant work on offshore rigs for two weeks, alternating with shore leave for 3–4 weeks. After one year, she was offered a new position in the same firm in Stavanger, and the whole family moved there in 2007. Henry subsequently secured a job as a teacher. When their son reached the age of 13 years in 2010, he wanted very much to return to his birthplace to start secondary school, together with his old school friends. He had been missing them and the countryside. Henry said the following about how Mona and he had experienced living in Stavanger:

There's not much wrong with Stavanger. It's a city … a relatively small one, but absolutely urban and international … we have, after all, lived in both Oslo and Trondheim … and thrived. It didn't occur to us that it could be 'wrong' for us to live in a city, but we disliked the hurried way of life in Stavanger … People are so stressed or want to appear busy and important … In addition to family members and relatives they talk with colleagues and friends only, not neighbours and people on the bus. In short, none of us felt at home in Stavanger. We did not belong … rather, we felt dislocated … In a way, I felt this admission as a defeat. We are obviously not among 'the well educated mobile persons' you often read about … Well educated, yes, but mobile, no. We thought we were movable … told ourselves that it did not hurt to sell our house, that it was just a material thing … that an interesting job was the most important for our well-being. I think we had to go another place to realize that we belong to this place. We have come home. I can say a lot of positive things about this place, but I am not sure I can convince you that it is so terrific. It is a *rural* place, yes, and perhaps living in it for many years has made us rural folks … but, it is not only that. I can't explain why I am so attached to this place … It's something about its atmosphere.

The last word 'atmosphere' seemed to be a timely word for both Henry and Mona, as Mona exclaimed 'Atmosphere is the right word!' Henry elaborated, as follows:

An atmosphere is something that is everywhere, everything, a mood, a package … As regards this place … it's the air, the smells, the colours, the mountains, the animal life, the people, how we think and behave here, the way people make me feel good, the pace of life.

Recently, there has been growing interest in 'affective atmospheres' in both urban and rural studies (Anderson, 2009; Gandy, 2017; Maclaren, 2018). The concept, which is anchored in a non-representational perspective (Anderson and Harrison, 2010; Lorimer, 2005, Thrift, 1999, 2004; 2008), is fruitful when interpreting Mona and Henry's story and especially their return to the rural place in Trøndelag. Anderson (2009) reflects on what an 'atmosphere' is and does, and states that in everyday speech the word is used interchangeably with mood, feeling, ambience, tone, and other ways of naming collective affects, and further that the referent for the term is multiple. More or less the same vocabulary can be recognized in Henry's explanation of what he understood by 'atmosphere'. At the same time, his explanation affirms Anderson's understanding of atmospheres as interlinked with forms of enclosure (referent: 'this place') and particular forms of circulation – enveloping, surrounding and radiating ('it's everywhere').

Halfacree and Rivera (2012) find that pro-rural migrants can develop a strong sense of becoming inhabitants and feel at home. This is exactly what is said in Henry's quotation above: the couple had 'come home'. In trying to explain why pro-rural migrants stay, Halfacree and Rivera (2012) argue that migrants should be seen more as contextual subjects than as calculating subjects, and migration should be conceived of more as event-like and contextually playing itself out through time and space than as a bounded action. In developing more drawn-out, contextually embedded interpretations of non-migration, Halfacree and Rivera (2012) highlight three aspects: 'changing life-course biographies', 'the unanticipated' and 'refocused lives'. When Mona and Henry moved to Stavanger their son was 10 years of age and had not argued for or against the move. When he wanted very much to move back, he was aged 12–13 years and thus in transition from a child to a teenager. The future of Mona and Henry's life course was no longer their choice alone, as it was necessary to take into consideration their son's well-being. As Halfacree and Rivera (2012, p. 105) state: 'as a migrant's life course develops, so too can the meaning and the role played by a migration in it; migration is re-known … It is reborn under a new biographical light, expressing increasingly event-like indeterminancy and promise'. Mona and Henry's story also illustrates the significance of the unanticipated. Living in the rural place had facilitated the flowering of a positive experience, but for them a largely unanticipated one, namely slowing down, which is a commonly found experience among 'stayers' (Halfacree and Rivera, 2012). Consequently, for them, life in Stavanger seemed rushed. With regard to refocused lives, Halfacree and Rivera point to links between the rural environment and non-human nature, and the key constitutive role of the latter. Migrants change so much following their migration that their lives appear reworked, refocused and redirected (Halfacree and Rivera, 2012). An in-migrant may become more attuned to the rhythms of nature and the seasons and thus feel more connected to nature. In the second interview, Mona talked about the seasons being 'more noticeable here in the country side'. When the family returned to their rural place it was late spring, but there was still a lot of snow around. Mona's recollection was as follows:

One of the first mornings after we came back, the sun was shining. I went outside to drink a cup of coffee on the steps and I was surprised of my own reaction … It was so beautiful. Blue sky, white snow, birches with small green 'mouse-ear' buds, lilac crocuses and yellow daffodils along the walls of the house … The air was cold and fresh. I cried, I felt so happy, so rich, so part of the nature. In Stavanger, the seasons are not so distinguishable and living in the city centre, nature was not part of my daily life, as it is here. I did not think so much about it in Stavanger or perhaps I simply was so concerned about adapting that I did not allow myself to miss nature.

Thus, Mona expressed in an everyday language that belonging is relational, performative and more-than-human and it is not predetermined but comes into being through affective encounters, through doing, being, knowing, and becoming in careful, responsive ways (Wright, 2015).

5. Conclusions – geographies of well-being and place attachment

In this article I have drawn on empirical research to underline the importance of well-being and place attachment for urban–rural migrants' post-migration lives and whether they stay or leave the place to which they moved. As mentioned in Section 3.3, I see place attachment as a sub-dimension of well-being that is constructed across four dimensions: social relations, materialities, the past and memories, and emotions and affects (Author 2016). In each of the four stories I have told, one of the four dimensions was decisive for the couple's decision as to whether to stay or leave the rural place to which they had moved. This

approach was chosen in order to elucidate the significance of each of the four dimensions. However, it may have concealed that the dimensions work together in complex ways and are difficult to distinguish from each other, and that the nature of people's relationships with place often are contradictory. Therefore, regardless of the differences in the stories, it is appropriate to consider them together and to look for similarities and ask what we can learn from them.

First, the four stories illustrates that well-being enhances place attachment and vice versa, and that both connect to migration in complex ways. As in the case of Halfacree and Rivera's interviewees (Halfacree and Rivera, 2012), the representations of the rural that underpinned my interviewees' move some time before 1998 had become less and less relevant in their post-migration lives. Their decisions on whether to stay or leave were first and foremost a result of how they perceived their quality of life in a specific place and was thus the result of their daily life experiences with the complex intersections of people, places and nature–culture relations (Panelli and Tipa, 2009). Second, the stories can sensitize us to the idea that place attachment is not static, but open to change. This in turn is connected to the fact that how well one feels in a certain place is related to one's age and life course events. Third, and related to life course, the significance of 'intergenerationality' (Hopkins and Pain, 2007) is evident in the narratives. All of my interviewees had children, who were important to them regardless of their age, but the ways the children were important and influenced their parents' decisions on where to live in different parts of their life changed with their increasing age. Only Elsa and Tom had grandchildren and they influenced Elsa and Tom's choice to move to Trondheim. Fourth, the stories illustrate that the very idea of 'permanent' migration increasingly seems a product of an implicit assumption of normative 'sedentarist' settlement (Halfacree, 2012). Instead, in an age of migration, migration needs to be understood as part of the general mobile rhythms of lives led (Smith et al. 2015) and as people's demands to maintain or improve their quality of life, understood very broadly as referring to an individual's general sense of everyday well-being (Barcus and Halfacree, 2018). Fifth, the four couples appreciated the rural lifestyle that they had moved to attain before 1998. They found the good life in the countryside. This applied even to Catherine and Peter, at least for a while, and they want to buy another smallholding in another rural place when their children leave home. Elsa and Tom would not have left the countryside for any other reason than Tom's illness.

I argue that a theoretical 'weaponry' with sensitivity to the complex taking place of well-being (Andrews et al., 2014; Atkinson and Scott, 2015; Edwards et al., 2016; Kearns and Andrews, 2010; Smith and Reid, 2018, Wright 2010) and to the dynamic aspect of place attachment (Manzo and Devine-Wright, 2014; Smith, 2018) is necessary in order to consider the interweaving of well-being and place attachment, its role in rural everyday living and ultimately its significance for future choice of place of residence. The strength of my analysis lies in being a follow-up study and especially the long time span between the two rounds of interviews (17–18 years), which lends support to a conceptualization of migration as a never-ending process related to life course events and lifestyle aspirations (Smith et al., 2015), and crucially, demonstrates the applicability of an extended life course perspective (Barcus and Halfacree, 2018). Migration is not '*just* a matter of home base relocation but is composed, experienced and then lived in complex and diverse ways' (Smith et al., 2015, p. 10; original emphasis). My argument is that scholarship of rural studies and studies of migration, including internal migration, would benefit from well-being and place attachment research in order for careful consideration to be given to the role of an emplaced well-being and its linkages with place attachment for migration when thinking about how 'the rural' and 'the Good Life' intersect (Scott et al., 2018).

Funding

This research did not receive any specific grant from funding agencies in the public, commercial, or non-profit sectors.

Declaration of competing interest

None.

Acknowledments

I would like to thank my colleague Professor emerita Britt Dale for constructive comments to a draft of this paper, Catriona Turner for language check and two anonymous referees for helpful comments.

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