



The global migration of everyday life: Investigating the practice memories of Australian migrants

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ABSTRACT

Social practice theories provide a unique platform for understanding how everyday practices become globalised through migration, spreading from one place to another, replacing local, often more sustainable, variations. Set in the context of the spreading of resource-intensive practices such as multiple daily showers, we explore the movement and migration of domestic practices, acknowledging that they are constantly shifting from one relatively stable form to another. Drawing on the phenomenon of human migration where, for various reasons, people move from one country to another, we argue that migrants 'carry' practices which can 'travel' between and across cultures, generations and living arrangements. People who migrate from one place to another are exposed to a greater range of practices than other more sedentary populations. On encountering new practices in the destination country, we propose the practices carried by migrants are subject to various forms of integration, disintegration and transferral across generations. Borrowing the idea of muscle memory from the biophysical sciences, we introduce 'practice memory' to explain how some practices thought to be 'dead' can be resurrected with relative ease. We also suggest that practice memory may explain how some practices can be performed in new contexts despite a person never having performed them before. We conclude by reflecting on how understanding these migratory processes, and the role of practice memory within them, offer new insights into how practices move and migrate from one time-space to another.

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1. Introduction

As people are travelling around the world in higher and more frequent numbers, so too are the everyday practices they perform. This global migration of everyday life raises concerns about how to slow or impede the spread of resource-intensive practices, such as driving petrol-fuelled cars and showering multiple times a day. However, the dynamics of practice diffusion cannot simply be explained by the large-scale movements of individuals, globalised markets, cultures or the spread of technology; nor is it a matter of practices being picked up and transplanted into another country or context. Practices are adapted to suit local conditions (Pantzar and Shove, 2010b) and have trajectories (both past and future), carrying with them the 'seeds of constant change' that lead to variations and innovation (Warde, 2005, p. 140). In this paper we are interested in understanding the complexity of practice movement, and in particular, the travel and diffusion of everyday practices in the context of migration. More specifically, we are interested in understanding how 'the past lives on in the practices of today'

(Shove and Pantzar, 2005b, p. 61) as people, and the *practices* they carry, migrate and move around the globe.

The global phenomenon of human migration is an ideal site to explore the dynamics and processes of practice movement, not only because migrants tend to be exposed to a greater range of practices than other populations, but because migration itself can be understood as a process, or series of processes (Graham and Connell, 2006; Head et al., 2004), through which practices travel and change. In following this line of enquiry, we distinguish our analysis from other migration studies, which have tended to focus on intergenerational relationships and settlement issues (Skrbiš et al., 2007). Further, using social practice theory we provide new understandings of the migrant experience as well as the dynamics involved in processes of migratory movement, of both people and practices.

Like people, practices are not static or fixed, but instead are transforming entities, constantly on the move (Pantzar and Shove, 2010a; Shove and Pantzar, 2007; Warde, 2005). However, beyond this basic insight, limited work has been done to understand the specific processes of practice movement. While some aspects have received attention, including the emergence of new practices (Hawkins, 2006; Pantzar and Shove, 2010b; Shove and Pantzar, 2007; Shove and Southerton, 2000), the colonisation or transplantation of novel practices in new territories, and the long-term

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trajectories of practices (Pantzar and Shove, 2010a, 2010b; Shove, 2003; Shove et al., 2012), the travel of the more mundane or inconspicuous practices of everyday life to different time–spaces (Schatzki, 2009), and what happens to them when they get there, is under-theorised—a gap also identified by Everts et al. (2011).

Drawing on our interpretation of Pantzar and Shove's (2010b) version of social practice theory, we understand the key elements or 'ingredients' (Shove and Pantzar, 2005a) of a practice to be *material infrastructures, common understandings and practical knowledge* (Strengers and Maller, 2011). Material infrastructures are the 'stuff' that makes practices possible; the various appliances, gadgets, infrastructures and technologies required to undertake a practice. Common understandings are the meanings and rationales that inform how, when, where and why practices should be performed, and practical knowledge refers the skills and practical know-how (both tacit and explicit) required to perform them. Pantzar and Shove's (2010b) account of practices was developed to understand processes of innovation and adaptation, which makes it well-suited to our focus on practice movement. Further, we draw on Schatzki's interpretation of time–space as 'a net of interwoven jointly instituted futures–presence–pasts and place-path arrays', which are 'a property of the practice and not of individual lives' (Schatzki, 2009, p. 40).

In focusing attention on the movement and migration of practices we are also interested in the mobility (or lack thereof) of practice elements to understand how they combine and recombine, propelling practices along their trajectories (Pantzar and Shove, 2010b; Shove and Pantzar, 2007). For example, in the practice of showering, the material infrastructures of a distributed water system (dams, channels, pipes, bathrooms, hot water and taps), are not usually packed up and transported from one city to another, whereas 'soft' parts of the practice (Pantzar and Shove, 2010a), such as common understandings about relaxation and hygiene, are (relatively speaking). In contrast, the elements of practices can also move into different contexts to create new practice configurations. For example, outdoor patio heaters (as a material infrastructure), once associated only with the practice of dining on restaurant terraces or sidewalks, have 'travelled' so that they now also co-constitute the practice of entertaining at home in courtyards or outdoor rooms (Hitchings, 2007). Such examples support Pantzar and Shove's claim that 'elements have histories and futures of their own and [...] are routinely transformed by and through specific integrations in practice' (Pantzar and Shove, 2010b, p. 449).

To understand processes of practice movement and migration, we draw on the concept of 'muscle memory' from the biophysical sciences. We explore the idea that practices have memories that leave an 'imprint' on a 'carrier' (Reckwitz, 2002) or performer of a practice (Shove and Pantzar, 2005b), similar to the ways in which the fibres of muscles retain 'memories' from previous activity (Bruusgaard et al., 2010). Using data from Australian migrant households descended from Italy, Vietnam and Sri Lanka, we show how practice memories can prioritise 'old' practices over newer, modern forms, and leave 'residues' when no longer performed that may lead to their later resurrection in new practices. In contrast to other migration studies, which are preoccupied with the movement of people, we deliberately downplay the movement of migrants, instead focusing on the processes by which past configurations of practices are carried into new contexts, integrated (or disintegrated) into new or modified practices, and transferred between generations. We conclude by reflecting on what this distinctive account of migration contributes to our understandings of how practices travel across time and space, and consider the implications for encouraging more sustainable processes of 'movement' in an increasingly globalised world.

2. Using practice memory to explain practice movement and resurrection

The main theoretical contribution of this paper lies in demonstrating how practices can be linked across time and space through past trajectories and historical associations of their elements. It is through these links that we propose, like the biochemistry of 'muscle memory' in athletic strength training (where the fibres of muscles retain traces of previous activity despite it not being performed for some time (Bruusgaard et al., 2010; Staron et al., 1991)), that practices have 'practice memory'. The value of using metaphors from the natural sciences to explain how practices change over time has been demonstrated, and indeed encouraged, by Shove and Pantzar (Pantzar and Shove, 2010a; Shove and Pantzar, 2005a, 2005b, 2007). As we argue below, the concept of practice memory adds new insight into processes of practice movement and migration, and the ways in which the 'link' between past and present practices manifests itself in old and new configurations of practice.

In muscle memory, the growth of muscle fibres during strength training is associated with changes within the cellular structure thought to involve the multiplication of nuclei which remain in the cell (Bruusgaard et al., 2010). Drawing on these ideas, the concept of practice memory is based on the notion that as elements of practices evolve, previous forms are codified in the mental and bodily patterns of the practice. Referred to by Pantzar and Shove (2010a, p. 60) as 'imprints' or 'preserved traces', the codification of an element from an earlier form of the practice creates a link between the practice as it was performed in the past with how it is performed in the present.

However, we make a critical distinction between the cognitive and physiological orientation of muscle memory through our emphasis on socially-shared practices, where 'conventionalized "mental" activities of understanding, knowing how and desiring are necessary elements and qualities of a practice in which the single individual participates, *not qualities of the individual*' (Reckwitz, 2002, p. 250; emphasis added). By focusing on the role of the memory as a quality of the practice-as-entity, instead of the individual performer, we downplay the conscious intentionality of individuals. As Shove and Pantzar (2007, p. 157) write, 'personal histories of practice are never entirely personal.' Similarly, as practices are by nature social and hence shared, memories are also shared and emerge from a collective of performers undertaking the practice.

Despite this distinction, a clear synergy between social practice theories and the concept of muscle memory is that both are deeply rooted in notions of performativity and embodiment. 'Performative procedural skills' (Shusterman, 2011, p. 13), for example, are said to be 'deeply entrenched' (Shusterman, 2011, p. 5) in the muscle and do not require conscious reflection or thought. Instead, they take the form of 'embodied implicit memory' (Shusterman, 2011, p. 4). These comments closely resemble Warde's (2005, p. 140) insight that 'performance in a familiar practice is often neither fully conscious nor reflective', and Schatzki's (2001, p. 3) emphasis on 'shared embodied know-how' as a crucial element of social practice theory. Practice memories can therefore be conceptualised as past enactments of practices that are embodied in their performers, leading to their resurrection in new and modified forms.

A further synergy between the concept of muscle memory and practice theory is the emphasis on the body. In muscle memory, the body is said to enact an 'unthinking spontaneous performance' (Shusterman, 2011, p. 4), and retain 'its remembered feel of certain places' (Shusterman, 2011, p. 5). Similarly, Reckwitz (2002, p. 251) proposes that social practices are primarily 'routinized bodily activities', 'movements of the body' and 'the regular, skilful "performance" of (human) bodies'. Similarities can be drawn

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